



## FRAME ANALYSIS IN FICTIONAL TEXTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the problems of frame semantics, the notion of frame as a complex knowledge structure represented at the conceptual level and encoded in language. It is emphasized that frame analysis being applied in fictional text analysis helps to decode implicit conceptual meanings represented in the text by certain frame.*

One influential theory in cognitive semantics in terms of encyclopedic meaning of linguistic units is Frame Semantics. This theory is developed by Charles Fillmore. According to his view, a frame is a schematization of experience (a knowledge structure), which is represented at the conceptual level and held in long-term memory [1]. In his 1985 article, Fillmore adopts the terms figure and ground from Gestalt psychology in order to distinguish between a particular lexical concept (the specific meaning designated by a lexical item) and the background frame against which it is understood. The specific meaning designated by a lexical item is represented by the figure, and is a salient subpart of a larger frame, which represents the ground relative to which the figure is understood.

The frame relates elements and entities associated with a particular culturally embedded scene from human experience. In other words, frames represent a complex knowledge structure including a group of related words and concepts. Frame is a hierarchical structure of linguistic data. In the theory of Frame Semantics, there will be given the frame as a background concept for other different concepts each of which we call terminals (slots and sub-slots). These slots and sub-slots are the entities that are associated with a particular scene from human experience. All terminals constituting a frame, are not independent; they are closely interconnected and interrelated with another. Each terminal indicates the conditions and circumstances of a certain situation; it is characterized by the range of features and attributes. Let's take the concept of "Marriage". This frame provides background for other words, such as *bride, groom, wedding, honeymoon, best man, husband, wife, divorce, in-law and maid-of-honor*.

Frame analysis facilitates the process of text interpretation. Frame analysis applied to the text can be presented as a step-by-step procedure including:

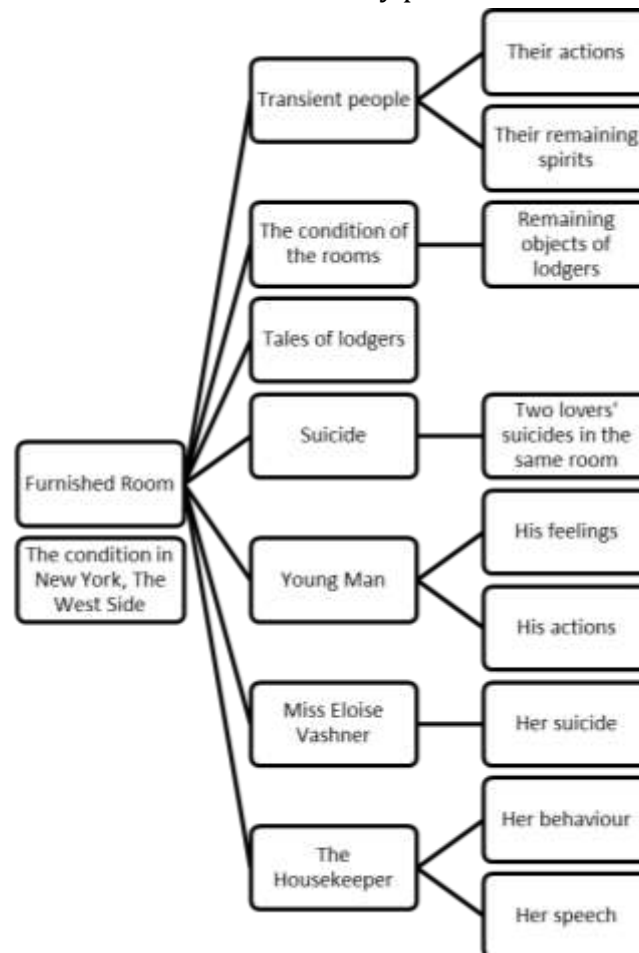
1. Searching for the verbal signals representing conceptually important frames.
2. Decoding their frames semantics, associative, figurative, contextual links.
3. Activizing knowledge structures, contextual and propositional functions.



4. Conceptualizing textual information (generalizing, making conclusions, inferring knowledge on the basis of verbal signals). [2]

In the process of frame analysis, the missing, implicit frame components and their links can be restored; implications and inferences can be drawn. Most interesting is the fact that frame structures can be deliberately used in the works of fiction. [3]

The story “The Furnished Room” by O. Henry can be illustrative from the point of Frame Semantics. The title “The Furnished Room” is given deliberately by the author; it has an implicit meaning. Proceeding through the text one might disclose the idea that the room is actually furnished with tales of vagrant lodgers who flit from one place to another, although the room is furnished with real decorations. These all decorations tell you the story behind them. The described situation can be schematically presented as:



The name of the frame is The Furnished Room. The words “Furnished Room” denoting one of the rooms of the houses in the West Side of New York City, contain implicit information allotted to the stories that are veiled in mystery. The frame includes the following slots: TRANSIENT PEOPLE, THE CONDITION OF THE ROOM, TALES OF LODGERS, SUICIDE, YOUNG MAN, MISS VASHNER, THE HOUSEKEEPER.

**New York City, West Side**-west part of the New York City which is full of houses where transient people live. The city is described as “restless, shifting, fugacious as time itself”.

TRANSIENT PEOPLE-lodgers who live in one of these rooms in a short period of time. The slot of the frame describing transient people presents both explicit and implicit information. They are described by the following repetitions: *transients forever — transients*



*in abode, transients in heart and mind. Let us analyze the following extract from the text where procession of guests is described:*

*One by one, as the characters of a cryptograph became explicit, the little signs left by the furnished room's procession of guests developed a significance. The threadbare space in the rug in front of the dresser told that **lovely women** had marched in the throng. The tiny fingerprints on the wall spoke of little **prisoners** trying to feel their way to sun and air. A splattered stain, raying like the shadow of a bursting bomb, witnessed where a hurled glass or bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the pier glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name **Marie**. It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room had turned in fury - perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness - and wreaked upon it their passions. The furniture was chipped and bruised; the couch, distorted by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more potent upheaval had cloven a great slice from the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular cant and shriek as from a separate and individual agony. It seemed incredible that all this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been the cheated home instinct surviving blindly, the resentful rage at false household gods that had kindled their wrath. A hut that is our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.*

It is clearly seen that the lodgers of the rooms are young ladies, prisoners, a girl named Marie. They left their marks behind them. All of these marks tell about the people who dwell there. They are so in a rage and agony in their lives that they burst all their malice and injury upon the rooms.

CONDITIONS of the room-the atmosphere around the house is foul and dank, these descriptions are characterized by the following epithets: *foul and tainted, decayed, chipped and bruised, distorted* and so on.

TALES of lodgers-each room is furnished with tales of dwellers. Such propositional schemas as "*Hence the houses of this district, having had a thousand dwellers, should have a thousand tales to tell, mostly dull ones, no doubt; but it would be strange if there could not be found a ghost or two in the wake of all these vagrant guests*", "*there drifted into the room furnished sounds and furnished scents*" convey that each room hide some kind of mysterious tales of dwellers. Although they leave these rooms, their spirits might be mitigated into the atmosphere of the rooms which tells about the each room's history.

SUICIDE- one of the interesting points of the described room is correlated with the action of suicide. Not knowing each other's suicides, two lovers take their lives in the same room. One of distinguishable factor in O. Henry's stories is that they mostly have twisted endings. In this story, the writer describes young man who is searching for his beloved for five month of ceaseless interrogation, he decides to suicide himself in the same room where his beloved Miss Eloise Vashner did the same action a week before.

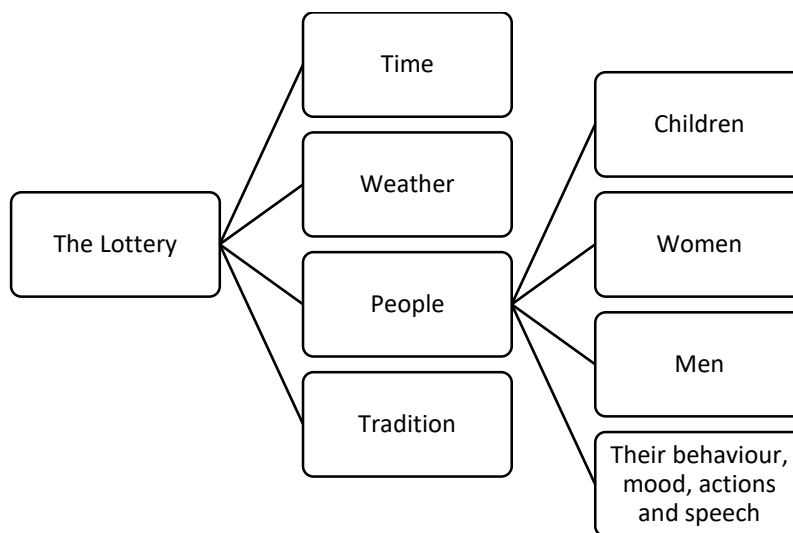
HOUSEKEEPER - is one of the cheating members of the society who cheats her lodgers, not telling them the secrets, mysterious stories which might be hidden in the rooms. She is described as "*an unwholesome, surfeited worm that had eaten its nut to a hollow shell and now sought to fill the vacancy with edible lodgers*". She keeps her life by cheating people, one of the ills of a society. She lay about the last dweller who lived in the room before young man came



and questioned whereas his beloved lived there or not. But from her speech at the end of the story it is obvious that she cheated about the last lodger.

So, frame analysis of this text helps understand it better, uncover and list conceptual features and entities, decode the conceptual information about the lifestyle of the people in New York City, their behaviors, actions and so on.

Let's take another example from Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery" and analyze it from the positions of Frame Semantics. The title "The Lottery" is deliberately given by the author and has its function in the story, as you proceed through reading the story, you come to conclusion that it is not an actual lottery which ends up one person winning the lottery. In the story, "winner" of the so-called lottery should be stoned to death as the ritual demands from people doing this action. According a ritual, people in a village follows a tradition in which one has to sacrifice his own life in order to please God and persuade him to make this year's harvest good. The frame of this situation can be schematically presented as:



The name of this frame is The Lottery (a name of an odd tradition). The word **lottery** denoting a game in which one wins a lottery and rewarded, contains implicit information about a tradition which is weird and ends up killing a member of residents in a village as a sacrifice. The frame includes the following slots: TIME, WEATHER, PEOPLE, TRADITION.

TIME – in the story time is 27<sup>th</sup> of June, in the middle of summer before the harvest.

WEATHER- clear and sunny day of summer. It is described in these propositional schemas *“the morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green”*. Although it is a day of a cruel action takes place, the weather is depicted as a good day to do this odd ritual.

PEOPLE- children, men and women, all in all, 300 people in the village are participating in this tradition. These sentences describe the people who are taking part in the traditions: *“The children assembled first, of course. School*

*was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands.”; “Soon the men*



*began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands."*

Subplots of the terminal PEOPLE-their behavior and actions. At the beginning of the story people pretend to be participating a joyful event, but at the end it is known that one is killed by the residents of the village, because that person who has drawn a slip of paper with a dot can be aggressively stoned to death by the people according to the rules of the ritual. Although Tessie Hutchinson, "winner" of the lottery resists and protests against it, people is reluctant to listen to her and automatically throw stones to her like "robots".

TRADITION- this is a tradition in which people choose a slip of paper, people who have chosen a blank paper are losers, one who has chosen a dotted paper is the "winner" of the lottery: *"The children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson few pebbles. Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head. Old Man*

*Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him. "It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her."*

So, in the process of frame analysis, implicit information is restored. In the story above, it can be concluded that if people follow traditions unreasonably or illogically, it may end up with fatality and aggressive, cruel behavior of people. This story questions the themes of scapegoating and mob mentality in the society.

In summing up, the following conclusions can be made:

- Frame is a schematisation of experience, a complex knowledge structure represented at the conceptual level and encoded in language.
- The theory of Frame Semantics has crucial relevance to the cognitive interpretation of texts.
- Frame analysis is aimed to conceptualize meanings and uncover new conceptual senses.

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