

Surface Conflict - Underlying Compatibility:
Reconciling Rival Theories of Language

by

Sheri Nathan

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved June 2011 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Don Nilsen, Chair
Alleen Nilsen
Karen Adams

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2011

ABSTRACT

Lakoff and Levinson claim they have discredited the theory of universal grammar. This dissertation discusses the possibility of a universal humor: If universals exist in language's most playful, least rule-governed aspect then they must exist in grammar, language's least playful, most rule-governed aspect. Lakoff and Levinson are closely analyzed to demonstrate that their claims against Chomsky are not firmly supported; that their groundbreaking theories of language, perception and cognition do not constitute data that undermine Chomskyan theory; that Levinson's theory of a universal mechanism for interaction is no stronger than the grammar universals that he strongly rejects. The litmus test of culture-specific versus universal language may be its level of rhetorical density, as illustrated with humor and naming samples. It is argued that Fillmore's deep case theory, as explained by Nilsen using semantic features and pragmatic intent, never lost its status as a linguistic universal; Chomsky's theoretical debt to Fillmore may indicate that he unconsciously used Fillmore's deep case, which for Chomsky became thematic relations, without realizing that Fillmore had been the impetus for his research. It is argued that none of the theories of universality, typology or conceptual metaphor may be considered mutually exclusive.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Diana Pak Artsi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1 UNIVERSALISTS VERSUS TYPOLOGISTS	1
2 LEVINSON: RELATIVIST AND UNIVERSALIT	12
3 GEORGE LAKOFF	49
4 DISCREPANCIES	57
5 THE LINGUISTICS - HUMOR - ART CONNECTION.....	73
6 NAMING: RHETORICALLY DENSE PERFORMATIVE	101
7 RHETORICAL DENSITY: CULTURE-SPECIFIC	113
8 EVOLUTION OF IDEAS	121
9 STRONG THEORY - WEAK THEORY	149
REFERENCES	181

CHAPTER 1

UNIVERSALISTS VERSUS TYPOLOGISTS

Levinson cites the list composed by Pinker and Bloom in 1990, in which they refer to “uncontroversial facts about substantive universals.” Levinson presents this list as having penetrated and influenced the naïve public consciousness in the idea that: “All languages have X, don’t they?” (2009, 430) Levinson then proceeds to unravel these assumptions, focusing on the specifics of language and showcasing those cultures and languages in which these elements are not shared. He accuses Chomskyans of consistently “raising the bar” (2009, 434) on the claim for universals, meaning they respond to assertions that specific elements of language have been conclusively proven to be non-universal by saying that those elements are marginal, i.e. they are not critical to the idea of a universal grammar. Eventually Levinson reaches the last bastion, the most non-negotiable grammatical category of all: Parts of speech. He cites evidence that even these do not exist in the specific languages that he has investigated (2009, 434). This work attempts to suggest that Levinson’s evidence as to the non-existence of parts of speech in the cultures he has investigated is partial, and does not actually prove the non-existence of those parts of speech in those languages. Indeed it

may even be a matter of semantics, in the popular meaning of the term, in that Levinson regards a different formulation or a different conceptualization of a familiar part of speech as not being that particular part of speech at all.

A feeling for what a language without a noun-verb distinction is like comes from Straits Salish. Here, on the analysis by Jelinek (1995), all major-class lexical items simply function as predicates, of the type “run,” “be_big,” or “be_a_man.” They then slot into various clausal roles, such as argument (“the one such that he runs”), predicate (“run[s]”), and modifier (“the running [one]”), according to the syntactic slots they are placed in. The single open syntactic class of predicate includes words for events, entities, and qualities. When used directly as predicates, all appear in clause-initial position, followed by subject and/or object clitics. When used as arguments, all lexical stems are effectively converted into relative clauses through the use of a determiner, which must be employed whether the predicate-word refers to an event (“the [ones who] sing”), an entity (“the [one which is a] fish”), or even a proper name (“the [one which] is Eloise”) (434).

Although Levinson implies he has put a decisive end to any belief in the concept of universal grammatical structures on the evidence of these languages that diverge so utterly from our conception of the most basic parts of speech, nevertheless it is perhaps possible that these linguistic tendencies are not so exotic after all. Indeed some might claim that our own English gerunds are similarly vague about their noun-like identity, or that case grammar languages also use a system of “syntactic slots.” If Straits Salish speakers must be consistent in these usages and

may not arbitrarily interchange (“the [one who] sings”), with (“the [one which is a] fish”), then these are their language’s clear and distinct noun-verb distinctions. Levinson also claims that subject/object distinctions have been “dismembered” (440) in languages such as Dyirbal and Tagalog, because the syntactic pivot around which all other constructions revolve is the object rather than the subject in these languages, which may seem somewhat “perverse,” And a child raised on UG to expect syntax to revolve around the subject “could be sorely led astray” (440). This is apparently because we have been so indoctrinated by the concept of a universal grammar that we are incapable of processing information based on variations of the grammatical themes with which we are familiar. It is disappointing that Levinson does not choose to draft the formidable tools of pragmatics into the service of reinforcing the universal grammar theory rather than the opposite. If universals were to be tested by their pragmatically consistent application (although this cannot be claimed definitively before research is conducted to clarify this question; at the moment, it is merely an intuitive hypothesis) it might be proven that subject-object distinctions remain reliably consistent throughout language diversity, whether or not they function in a syntactically pivotal role. The universal status of the noun-

verb distinction and of the subject-object distinction seems to have still remained untouched, at least in the view of this reader of Levinson's "Myth." Yet Levinson appears to feel that the public has been misled:

Unfortunate sociological splits in the field have left generative and typological linguists with completely different views of what is proven science, without shared rules of argumentation that would allow them to resolve the issue [which would have been the state of affairs that Levinson would have hoped for, but instead] – and [instead] in dialogue with cognitive scientists it has been the generativists who have been taken as representing the dominant view...Chomsky's views, filtered through various commentators, have been hugely influential in the cognitive sciences, because they combine philosophically sophisticated ideas and mathematical approaches to structure with claims about the innate endowment for language that are immediately relevant to learning theorists, cognitive psychologists, and brain scientists. Even though psychologists learned from the linguistic wars of the 1970s (Newmeyer 1986) to steer clear from too close an association with any specific linguistic theory, the underlying idea that all languages share the same structure at some abstract level has remained pervasive... (430).

"Linguistic wars" implies some highly negative phenomenon, which has the effect of reversing the positive impression created by Levinson's honest recounting of the virtues of Chomskyan theory.

One of the reasons that the cognitive science community is misguided is that "the articulate envoys from the universalizing

generativist camp [are taken] to represent the consensus view within linguistics. But there are other reasons as well: the relevant literature is forbiddingly opaque to outsiders, bristling with arcane phonetic symbols and esoteric terminologies.” This author does not possess the level of linguistic scholarship required to enable her to suggest that the remarks quoted are a case of ‘the pot calling the kettle black,’ but the briefest glance at Levinson’s “Supplementary Data” in his 2011 study of “Evolved Structure” suffices to explain to the reader how “outsiders” might have received the impression that the relevant literature was “forbiddingly opaque.” This author confesses to a need to resort to the search engines of the Internet at a minimum rate of three times per sentence when attempting to read Levinson’s data. It might be mentioned in this context that George Lakoff is not guilty in the least of producing opaque and forbidding literature, and on the contrary appears to make every effort to convey his complex and profound concepts in as transparent and reader-friendly a manner as possible.

In any case, the scientific community at large has received a wrong impression of linguistic findings, according to Levinson, and he writes in “Myth:” “We critically evaluate (sect. 3) the kind of descriptive generalizations (again, misleadingly called “universals”) that have

emerged from careful cross-linguistic comparisons, and we survey the treacherously different senses of “universal” that have allowed the term to survive a massive accumulation of counterevidence” (430).

At this point there are many students of language who will carefully read every word of the ensuing article in order to determine the weight and persuasiveness of Levinson’s claims against the validity of the Chomskyan idea. Nevertheless, there are surely a few readers (this author admittedly included, had it not been for the fact that further inquiry was unavoidable, being required for her research topic) who would be quite satisfied to suffice with what they have read, and resolve to immediately distance themselves from any further association with a school of thought that was treacherous, and suspiciously adept at surviving a massive accumulation of counterevidence. No facetious or sarcastic tone is intended here, but rather an effort to point to the fact that Levinson employs a certain level of emotionally charged rhetoric in order to reinforce his data and his theoretical formulations. One receives the unmistakable impression that Levinson feels besieged by Chomskyans.

It should be mentioned that even through the rhetoric of Levinson's critique, the difficulty with refuting Chomskyanism remains discernible.

The cognitive sciences have been partially immunized against the proper consideration of language diversity by two tenets of Chomskyan origin. The first is that the differences are somehow superficial, and that expert linguistic eyes can spot the underlying common constructional bedrock. This, at first a working hypothesis, became a dogma, and it is wrong, in the straightforward sense that the experts either cannot formulate it clearly, or do not agree that it is true.

It is entirely unclear to the reader why the experts' difficulty in formulating or arriving at an accurate description of the underlying structure should constitute proof of the non-validity of the theory. However, in the following passage, we begin to understand why Levinson might feel besieged by Chomskyanism, and how Chomskyanism seems to have wandered into the shady borderline areas of hubris.

The second was an interesting intellectual program that proceeded on the hypothesis that linguistic variation is "parametric"; that is, that there are a restricted number of binary switches, which in different states project out the full set of possible combinations, explaining observed linguistic diversity (Chomsky 1982; see also Baker 2001). This hypothesis is now known to be false as well: its predictions about language acquisition, language change, and the implicational relations between linguistic variables simply fail (Newmeyer 2004; 2005). The conclusion is that the variation has to

be taken at face value – there are fundamental differences in how languages work, with long historico-cultural roots that explain the many divergences

...that Chomskyans would prefer to simply ignore. They are unimportant compared to the great idea of the universal grammar. It is an attitude that evokes those brain surgeons who feel that the heart is insignificant, and vice versa. This is the difficult moment, when the great idea exaggerates its natural capacities and aspires to do what it cannot. It cannot and it need not account for diversity, because it is doing another task, which is to define what Levinson calls, almost derisively, the “constructional bedrock.” It is when Chomskyans dismiss diversity as an incidental and predictable outcome of generativity that they lose the reader, because an entire field of study, typological linguistics, has devoted decades of research to promoting our understanding of how diversity develops.

While Chomskyan extremists risk losing credibility in the eyes of the reader, Levinson can occasionally lose the reader as well, when he attempts to prove that there is no “constructional bedrock” to grammar, and that the very notion is a Chomskyan illusion. While his arguments for diversity are irrefutable, when he begins to dismiss the Chomskyan

idea out of hand, credibility is lowered. After listing Pinker and Blooms substantive universals, Levinson writes:

There are clear counterexamples to each of these claims. Problems with the first three are discussed in section 2.2.4 and section 5; here are counterexamples to the others:

4) Some languages (e.g., Riau Indonesian) exhibit neither fixed word-order nor case-marking (Gil, 2001).

5) Many languages (e.g., Chinese, Malay) do not mark tense...and many (e.g., spoken German) lack aspect...

6) Many languages lack auxiliaries (e.g., Kayardild, Bininj Gun-wok).

7) Many languages (e.g., Mwotlap...) lack dedicated reflexive or reciprocal constructions altogether... (431, Box 1)

The list goes on, and it is impressive. However, the problem is with the “problems with the first three” which are:

1. “Major lexical categories (noun, verb, adjective, preposition)”
2. “Major phrasal categories (noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.)”
3. “Phrase structure rules (e.g., “X-bar theory” or “immediate dominance rule) (431).

In the remark that numbers one through three are discussed later, in sections x, y and z, and we will here refute the body of the universalists’ claims – one through three being the most vital points of the argument that deal with the most non-negotiable elements of

grammar that are the parts of speech, it is here – in these small later sections where his arguments are not robust – that one feels as if the formidable weight of his scholarship is being wasted on marginal disputes and FTAs. Ideally he might have left one through three to the Chomskyans, to delight in their inquiry into the bedrock nature of underlying universals, while himself remaining free to investigate four through infinity: The typologically diverse evolutionary structures of language (2011).

We must use Brown and Levinson's dispute mitigation models (Politeness, 1987) for it appears that Levinson views the question of language universals as a dispute between the generativists and the typologists. When such an impartial and prolific scholar perceives a dispute, we can only conclude that such a dispute exists. Therefore we must seek out a context that will allow both sides some mutually acceptable framework for developing a dialogue with cognitive scientists. To accomplish this, some preparation of the ground is needed, that is the shared ground between language and cognition, and before this, the shared ground between typologists and generativists within the field of linguistics, before reference is made to the community of cognitive scientists. This may necessitate a prior project, which must take

precedence to any attempt to re-analyze the languages studied by the typologists, that is, before any attempt is made to conduct a meta-analysis of Levinson's data. We cannot afford to alienate anyone, typologist or generativist, because we are all members of the group of the seven blind men attempting to describe the elephant (Lifshitz). Perhaps we must all first elucidate our terminologies, and agree upon how we will define our requirements, or what linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive criteria we will accept as constituting the basis that qualifies as a grammatical construct.

It is beyond the scope of this work to delve into the background against which Levinson's impatience with Chomskyanism developed. The extremely exclusionary approach that characterized many Chomskyans as well as Chomsky himself, implied that theorists who did not subscribe to Chomskyan theory were thereby rendering their own investigations irrelevant. This work begins its investigation from a later point in time, after many theorists had already discerned the limiting effects of Chomskyanism upon the scope of linguistic research.

CHAPTER 2

LEVINSON: RELATIVIST AND UNIVERSALIT

Levinson argues persuasively for the existence of a universal interaction mechanism (2006) not necessarily through empirical data, but with overwhelming anecdotal and conceptual support. Yet once we have accepted any idea of any universal tendency underlying communications, that is to say, any universal principle at all that would support all communicative interaction without regard to race, culture, age, class, gender, or even language – it then becomes increasingly difficult to reject Chomsky’s universal grammar, in that grammar would seem to be the most likely of all the linguistic category candidates to attain universal status, being the least “playful,” the least “whimsical” (Nilsen, 2009) and the most rule-governed. It is assumed that Levinson would agree that the patterns of the moment-to-moment dynamics of human interaction are far more spontaneous and far less rule-governed than the patterns of grammar.

It is important to emphasize that Levinson appears to have been consistent in his efforts to maintain an open and broadminded orientation, that is, he has attempted to be as inclusive as possible in his interpretation of data. Thus the question of whether one should call

Levinson a Relativist or a Universalist seems impossible to answer, as Levinson appears to conduct research without borders and without predetermined assumptions. Nonetheless, he himself has answered emphatically that he rejects “universal grammar as an empirically verified construct” (2009, 429) and yet in other writings (2006) a strong Universalist tendency is discernible.

The prevailing theory that knowledge is socially constructed must be reconciled with Levinson's theory of the “interaction engine” (2006) a universal, specialized cognitive mechanism, exclusive to human beings, that guides all human interaction – in that Levinson espouses both views. Yet as contradictory as they seem, extensive areas of compatibility appear to exist between these two theories, although their areas of incompatibility are not denied. One possible approach to such reconciliation is to conceptually separate physical perceptions from interpersonal interaction. Perhaps with regard to sensory perceptions, Levinson is highly supportive of the theory that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed (in this sense he sides with the relativistic cognitive anthropologists) yet with regard to interpersonal interaction, he believes there is a universal cognition at work that governs the rules of interaction across cultures. Socioculturalists who are not as broad as Levinson, that

is to say that they do not have this parallel understanding of cultural diversity, are unable to provide a logical basis for rejecting exploitation. A consistent theme that appears to run throughout Levinson's work, both early and recent, seems to demonstrate that he is capable of juggling both perspectives: His support of cultural diversity is able to co-exist with his insistence upon universals. Perhaps Levinson may be called an "Interactive Performatist" in that his emphasis upon the behavioral ramifications of interaction is compatible with the Nilsens' categorization of all speech acts as Performatives (2009) based upon John Austin's definition of Performatives and his description of their endless applications (1962). Levinson's unique orientation contains a potential opening for the possibility of investigating the notion of moral universals in an interactive context.

Yet if the cognitive anthropologists, or "relativists" are right (E-museum, Minnesota State University) then the world is chaotic and humans create their own understanding of universals through arbitrary norms of classification, choosing to notice some phenomena and to ignore others (Tyler 2009) and thus all knowledge is relative. In this case, Levinson would be wrong to search for interactive universals. Alternatively, if Levinson is right, then the relativists might be considered

in error. If the above equation is valid, then it is quite surprising that Levinson himself has written an article on the subject of cognitive anthropology (2009). Levinson's breadth of scope is singular, and he exhibits the unique ability to logically embrace two schools of thought that appear, from a superficial perspective, to be mutually exclusive.

Minnesota State University's "E-museum" on the web cites Conklin's (1986) studies of naming and McGee and Warms' work (2004) on the history of anthropology to support the following view (admittedly oversimplified): The fact there are many more descriptive words for dew in English than in Koya, and more words for bamboo in Koyan than in English (and that the Eskimoes have many more words for snow than we do, for that matter) proves that we will never be able to understand them, and they will never be able to understand us. Tyler is called a relativist on Minnesota State University's "E-Museum" website, by which they mean that he believes that what is true in one culture can be false in another. It is possible that Levinson would not accept this position. It is arguable that he would cite universal linguistic norms (1978) in order to claim that given sufficient effort and good will, we can understand them and they can understand us. If Tyler is right, then Levinson might ask: Why bother conducting research? If only to reach the conclusion that one

culture cannot judge another, then this is old news. We are compelled to wonder if the editors of E-museum for Minnesota State University truly understood Conklin's position on cross-cultural research. It appears unlikely that that great researcher could have been motivated to conduct such a vast and formidable body of anthropological/linguistic research, and to publish so prolifically, presenting findings that are utterly riveting with regard to the multi-faceted nature of human linguistic response to diverse environments, or to pursue his pioneering research on ethnoscience and indigenous cultures in the Philippines so rigorously – only to reach this relatively simplistic conclusion. It is the opinion of this author that he was surely motivated by the universal need to seek knowledge and to understand the universal through the particulars.

Perhaps the field of cognitive anthropology may be divided into two distinct currents. The more radical current, represented perhaps by Tyler, maintains that all knowledge and values are relative, whereas the more moderate current of cognitive anthropology, represented perhaps by Levinson (2009) and Strauss (2006), focuses upon the immensely varied and many-splendored character of human cognitive responses to the social and physical environment, and uses cognitive anthropology to generate wider explanatory principles with regard to the mental

processes, in a search of ever-increasingly nuanced definitions of universals. Greater multiplicity brings a higher level of convergence, and there is a wider scope among the moderate cognitive anthropologists; they are capable of referring to and encompassing many disciplines, making it a truly trans-disciplinary field of research.

Innumerable studies have been conducted that have investigated the reality of cultural diversity, and that have discovered knowledge to be culturally and socially constructed. These studies have pointed toward the need for a more refined and more discerning search for universals, and this appears to have become Levinson's position. Levinson's work seems to aid us in addressing the question of how and where to search for universals, and how and where to not search for universals. (They ought not to be sought in grammar, for example. With Evans (2009), Levinson explores the diversity of the human mind and emphasizes the need to free the language sciences from grammar universals.)

The idea that knowledge is socially constructed has introduced a certain level of openness into scholarly forums, from linguistics to education to many others. Once educators might have exclaimed, with regard to their students who were members of ethnic cultures other than their own: Why, these children don't know anything at all! Today, thanks

to the new public awareness of the socially constructed nature of knowledge, teachers understand that these children may in fact know a great deal, in areas of knowledge where the teacher, if tested, would be found to be utterly ignorant. However, within the particular forum that comprises the classroom for that particular teacher, these children do not know the subject matter that the teacher has been hired to teach, and therefore the teacher must teach it to those students, yet do so in a manner that conveys an attitude of immense respect for the knowledge that the students have that the teacher does not have.

The concept of culturally constructed knowledge and cultural relativism, so often emphasized in cognitive anthropology must be given its due respect. The role it has played must be acknowledged, for it has significantly undermined the philosophical underpinnings of erstwhile socially accepted, culturally ingrained norms and practices of social repression. Nevertheless, cultural relativism may be likened to a ticking time bomb in some respects, in relation to the very goals it attempts to achieve. The assumption of the social construction of knowledge contains a subtle, internal logical flaw – so subtle as to be almost unnoticeable. Recently however, a certain discomfort with cultural relativism has begun to be felt, and it is possible that Stephen Levinson's

insistence upon a universal cognition for interaction (2006) may reflect an awareness of the flaw inherent in the more radical version of cultural relativism. It might be mentioned that subscribing to the existence of any universals whatsoever requires a certain amount of courage in an academic atmosphere that is supportive of propounders of cultural relativism. It would not be entirely facetious to speculate that if Charles Fillmore (1976) were to propound his theory of frame semantics today, he might be accused of cultural chauvinism. How can he presume to describe universals of semantic interaction in the social environment? Simply because his culture possesses features such as Buyers and Sellers and Doctors and Patients, he automatically assumes that all cultures possess these same features? (The absurdity of such an accusation is patent; in all the cultures investigated, Fillmore's features have existed, to this author's knowledge. The above is merely an attempt to emphasize that the prevailing view in academic circles appears to be rather wary of the concept of universals.)

Levinson's theory of a universal cognition for human interaction would seem to be fundamentally at odds with the theories of the socially constructed nature of knowledge and cultural relativism. One could argue that Levinson's universal cognition for interaction theory is

fundamentally at odds with only certain aspects of these theories. He accepts them more or less, other than in the specific realm of interpersonal interaction. However, the interpersonal realm is the essential realm, and it may be argued that once that is rejected, what remains? Yet this position is unnecessary because the logical flaw of cultural relativism does indeed lie exclusively within the interactive, interpersonal realm. In all the other realms, such as, for example, in descriptions of the physical environment – the true nature of a particular color, the true texture of a drift of snow, or the true quality of the bamboo – the socioculturalists seem irrefutably in the right.

The meanings of cultural relativism go well beyond descriptions of the physical environment. To limit the expressions of cultural diversity to descriptions of the physical environment is to understand cultural relativism from a reductive and simplistic perspective. In fact, different descriptions of the physical environment may reflect profound differences in perception. Levinson has found that different cultures relate differently to fundamental conceptions such as space and location. In Space in Language and Cognition (2003) he discusses the way that science understands our perception of space, how earlier generations understood space, and how “primitive” societies perceive space:

For example, the visual information from an observed scene seems to be split into object-identification features sent to the inferior temporal cortex, while information about location of the object is sent to the posterior parietal cortex, the two streams being united again in the hippocampus...Within the parietal cortex, many different subsystems seem to be geared to different reference points, some such subsystems relating the position of things observed to the position of the eyes, others to the position of the head, and so on, so that our conscious coherence of spatial experience is constructed from a vast division of labour between complex specialized neuropsychological systems...

As Einstein...put it, 'Now as to the concept of space, it seems that this was preceded by the psychologically simpler concept of place'...."

Compare A.N. Whitehead [who studied tribal cultures]: 'In the first place, the presented locus is defined by some systematic relation to the human body' (326).

Similarly, in *Grammars of Space* (2006) Levinson demonstrates how different cultural perspectives affect the very nature of prepositional usage, shaping spatial adverbials and arguably, the very way these spatial relations are perceived mentally. In "Can language restructure cognition? The case for space," Levinson maintains (together with Bowerman et al.) that human frames of reference used to compute and specify the location of objects with respect to other objects, long believed to be innate concepts, built into human neurocognition, are in fact variable cross-culturally, and children have no difficulty acquiring different systems. He argues for the centrality of language in shaping the

fundamental domain of spatial cognition, and he implies that these findings may have profound educational ramifications.

However, in Levinson's study of questions and responses in the Papuan language (2010) we find a much more moderate level of diversity. Two Papuans conversing seem to carry on their conversation in a manner that is essentially familiar, with mostly technical variation, at the interactive level. As exotic as the culture that Levinson has examined in Rossel Island may seem to us, they seem to conduct the procedures of interpersonal interaction much as we do, or at least in ways that do not seem strange to us, and that correspond to conventional sociolinguistic typologies. Morphosyntax and prosody are sometimes different and sometimes the same as in other languages, and the same may be said of facial expressions. "Most questions of all types are genuinely information seeking, with 27% (mostly tags) seeking confirmation, 19% requesting repair." (Abstract) Levinson appears to have no difficulty in claiming that language-specific and culture-specific features co-exist simultaneously with features characterized by conformity to universal paradigms.

What strikes the reader of the study mentioned above is a sense of familiarity. Rousel islander interaction, with all its exoticism, seems

oddly reminiscent of the interaction of our own experience. This latter study has a certain borderline status with respect to two distinct themes that seem to emerge in Levinson's work:

Having established Levinson's credentials as a strong supporter of diversity theories, and having demonstrated beyond doubt Levinson's belief in the need to take culturally diverse perceptions into account when dealing with diverse populations, we now move our focus to certain aspects of Levinson's thought which appear to be diametrically opposed to certain aspects of the sociocultural diversity theories. A parallel pattern may be discerned in Levinson's work in which he simultaneously embraces the idea of knowledge as a relative reality, particular to a specific culture, and rejects the idea of knowledge as a relative reality, particular to a specific culture. This is not a new theme characteristic of Levinson's most recent research, but rather may be seen as a unifying thread that runs throughout many areas of his research, both early and recent. There is a certain refusal to become dogmatic, whether for or against, and Levinson clearly possesses the erudition required to eloquently argue both sides of the debate. However, his choice of the side he will support in a particular instance is not arbitrary, but clearly rule-governed, as will be elaborated below. We will see that he

emphatically supports fundamental aspects of the theory of knowledge as social construction, yet his work implies an emphatic rejection of inappropriate or logically flawed applications of that theory.

What would constitute a logically flawed application of the idea that knowledge is socio-culturally constructed? This author believes that Levinson rejects the application of that theory to the cognition of interaction, i.e. it cannot be applied to the interpersonal realm. Consider Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage, a work as early as 1978, conducted with Penelope Brown. Collecting data from languages and cultures as diverse as English (both American and British English) Tzeltal, a Mayan language spoken in Mexico, and Tamil, spoken in India, as well as secondhand data from Malagasy, Japanese and other languages, Brown and Levinson conclude: “We believe it is legitimate to project from a careful three-way experiment in three unrelated cultures to hypotheses about universals in verbal interaction because, as will become evident, the degree of detail in convergence lies far beyond the realm of chance” (59).

It should be noted that Levinson makes reference here, as he does in much of his work, to the practical ramifications of verbal interaction. The Nilsens follow John Austin (1962) in the inclusion of the

entire spectrum of the pragmatics of language under the heading of Performatives (2009). This is exactly compatible with Levinson's consistent emphasis upon the performative ramifications of interaction. Levinson's first argument, when developing his now famous definition of FTAs (Face Threatening Acts) is that speakers and hearers "choose means that will satisfy their ends" (59). This is a clearly pragmatic posture by any definition. We see then that Levinson is highly conscious of the practical and behavioral ramifications of verbal interaction, and that Levinson believes all interpersonal interaction, both verbal and behavioral, to be governed by universal politeness norms.

In a certain sense, Levinson is the socio-culturalists' greatest supporter. He is nothing if not inclusive and developmental in his orientation. He writes that "language sciences are on the brink of major changes in primary data, methods and theory...Radical changes in data, methods and theory are upon us. The future of the discipline will depend on responses to these changes: either the field turns in on itself and atrophies, or it modernizes, and tries to capitalize on the way language lies at the intersection of all the disciplines interested in human nature." (Abstract of "Sea-change.") His theory of the existence of a universal cognition for interaction does not conflict with his belief in the need to

accept every culture's sociolinguistic norms and to break with the restrictive linguistics research models of the past. In "Time for a Sea-change in Linguistics" he argues that all linguistic research must henceforth demonstrate an openness to the new data emerging from the greater diversity, and must make variation a central component of research. If we do not embrace the rich data that has become available to us through modern research methods, the field of linguistics will degenerate. He calls for a co-evolutionary model, and proposes an integrating framework that will merge and accommodate both the "C-linguists," those who cling to the Chomskian status quo, and who have thirty years of changing research models behind them as well as an abstract universalizing framework, and the "D-linguists," those who are more open to developments and to diversity, but who lack an integrative framework. Because of Levinson's incredible intellectual abilities, he is capable of being both a supporter of the theory that knowledge is socially constructed, and simultaneously, a supporter of theories of language universals.

In his "Myth of Language Universals," the precursor of his sea-change article, he insists upon the centrality of diversity as being indispensable to the study of all branches of cognitive science:

A widespread assumption among cognitive scientists, growing out of the generative tradition in linguistics, is that all languages are English-like but with different sound systems and vocabularies. The true picture is very different: languages differ so fundamentally from one another at every level of description (sound, grammar, lexicon, meaning) that it is very hard to find any single structural property they share. The claims of Universal Grammar, we argue here, are either empirically false, unfalsifiable, or misleading in that they refer to tendencies rather than strict universals. Structural differences should instead be accepted for what they are, and integrated into a new approach...that places diversity at centre stage. The misconception that the differences between languages are merely superficial, and that they can be resolved by postulating a more abstract formal level at which individual language differences disappear, is serious: it now pervades a great deal of work done in...just about every branch of the cognitive sciences. Even scholars [opposed to the idea]...use the term *Universal Grammar* as if it were an empirically verified construct (p. 429).

Yet on the other hand, it seems that Levinson clearly rejects the idea that the basic norms of human interaction are culturally variable. It does not appear as if he would ever suggest that scholars of human interaction must place diversity at centre stage. No matter how clumsy, no matter how riddled with sociolinguistic and sociocultural static interference, no matter how fuzzy the Speaker/Hearer transmission/reception may be, people eventually realize when they have been insulted, for example, in any language. It may take them longer to discover it, or to react, or they may react inappropriately and

ineffectively when operating in an unfamiliar language and culture. Yet the emotions and the categories of behavioral response that follow in the wake of an interaction characterized by rudeness may be defined as universal.

Many studies of politeness and other interactive contexts followed on the heels of Levinson's and Brown's study, many of which supported their findings. Quite often, later studies that found fault with Brown and Levinson's original research were focused upon the need for even broader and more inclusive definitions of politeness universals, that is to say, they found that even more aspects of human interaction than those covered by Brown and Levinson should be included as universals of politeness: O'Driscoll (2007) argues that Brown and Levinson's concept of face is not nearly broad enough; Ermida (2006) maintains that Brown and Levinson's theories of hierarchy, power and politeness are perfectly exemplified in George Orwell's 1949 publication of *Nineteen Eighty Four*; Su (2009) wishes to broaden the base established by Brown and Levinson, and calls for a more comprehensive investigation of politeness and related interaction forms; Gagne` (2010) as well seems to be broadening Brown and Levinson's claims by exploring their pragmatic application to Japanese discourse. He takes these claims quite a few

levels higher, it appears, using their idea of negative face to explore deeper and more subjective processes; Kasper (1990) expands on the social and psychological factors that determine politeness forms and functions and explores the counterpart to politeness – rudeness.

These later studies, many of which found ever-increasing applications for the original politeness universals theory, may have been part of the impetus for Levinson's 2006 formulation, which found that a universal cognition mechanism lies at the heart of all human interaction. In "Cognition at the heart of human interaction," Levinson posits the primacy of interactive language use. All other forms of discourse he considers to be derivatives of this primary form (85). Always in search of essential principles, he invites researchers to put aside their "quarrels" and "rival theories" of discourse analysis, such as whether conversation analysis (CA) does or does not accept cognitive data (while they claim they do not, essentially they are more cognitively oriented than other schools of discourse analysis) and similarly "terminological-cum-methodological" arguments, in order to focus on a much more substantive question: Is there a special kind of cognition that underlies human verbal interaction? "Setting language aside for the moment" he asks if the human mind is specifically adapted for conducting social

interaction. Levinson cites Goody and Tomasello to answer this question with a decisive affirmative: “There is a very special cognition which underlies language use, which is independent of language itself, but on which discourse is built” (86). Levinson calls this cognitive specialization “the 'interaction engine,' conceived of as an ensemble of cognitive capacities and motivational predispositions which underlie human communication and interaction. Language use trades on the antecedent existence of such an 'engine', *and the 'engine' can operate without language*, so language capacities themselves are not the source of the phenomena in question.” (86, italics mine.)

Levinson then cites some of the extensive (although admittedly) circumstantial evidence that supports his theory. He cites some of the phenomena that reflect communication without language (“first contact” such as tourists in a foreign country, studies of deaf isolated adults, etc.) and then states:

[T]here seem to be rather clear candidates for strong universals in human verbal interaction, including the turn-taking and repair machineries in conversation or the greeting and parting routines involved in entry and exit from interaction...[A] glance at the primate world shows nothing remotely resembling human interaction: humans spend on average perhaps half of their waking hours in intense communicative interaction with each other, involving long, highly-structured sequences of mutually

interlocking actions. These lines of evidence provide prima facie evidence for the existence of a whole system of human proclivities that are in principle independent of language, largely universal (at least in outline), and which drive our system of verbal interaction (87).

If one wishes (as this author does), one may find an opening in this statement, or perhaps a sense that Levinson is enabling the investigation of a moral aspect of the universal cognition for interaction. Levinson's further comments would appear to support this impression. He writes with regard to the properties of the interaction engine that “our conversational responses are not to behaviours, but to the actions they perform – this requires a parsing of the behavioural stream and the attribution of intended actions to the parsed units” (87). It should be mentioned that Levinson's position here lends support to the Nilsens' claim (2009) based upon Austin's theory (1962) that all utterances may be categorized as being “performatives.” In a sense Levinson is the ultimate pragmatist; he could almost be called an “interactive performatist” as seen in his intensive focus upon the behavioral motives for, and the behavioral results of interaction.

What are some of the properties of the interactional engine?

“1. 'Mind-reading' abilities, that is, the ability to understand actions [here Levinson seems to have abandoned conversational boundaries, to refer to all interactive behaviors, any human interaction that causes a performative effect] in terms of the motivations and intentions that lie

behind them – our nearest cousins, the apes, show at most only the rudiments of this. This would seem to rely on awareness of other's beliefs and desires.

2. Reflexive or 'mirror mind-reading' abilities, that is, the ability to simulate another actor's reading of one's own behaviour. This would seem to be a necessary ingredient in deception (of any inventive kind anyway). Without it, flexible cooperative activity cannot be conducted – I need to do my part in such a way that you can see what part I'm doing.
3. The capacity for Gricean intentions (as in Grice's 1957 theory of meaning), that is intentions driving behaviours whose sole function is to have the motivating intentions recognized. This is what makes open-ended communication possible, communication beyond a small fixed repertoire of signals...
4. A raft of quite specific ethologically-grounded behavioural proclivities. These include: a) access rituals, as in greetings, and...leave-taking rituals; b) the multimodal character of human interaction: simultaneous signals in the gestural, gaze, facial and vocal channels; the rapid alternation of speaking and recipient roles; and d) *the motivational system that drives humans to seek cooperative interaction.*" (87, italics mine.)

If understood correctly, Levinson appears to be claiming a universal motivational system, i.e. one that is common to all human beings, regardless of culture, and regardless of socially constructed knowledge and regardless of culturally situated practices. Here again we seem to find strong support in Levinson for a potential theory of universal behavioral norms.

Levinson cites his experience with a deaf Rossel islander who would "home sign" quite efficiently, and was able to make his wishes known. Even Levinson himself eventually learned to exchange relatively

successful signals with him, to create the semblance of conversation,
and this seems to prove that

Gricean intention recognition may partially motivate some of the basic, universal properties of conversation structure...[E]very pragmaticist knows that in everyday language use what is communicated far exceeds what is said, and the gap is at least partly filled by the Gricean mechanism. So the presence of developed language doesn't let this essential mechanism go on holiday (88).

Levinson explains the basis for his claim that human behavioral tendencies in communication are driven by cognitive predispositions:

Take multi-modality: the production of simultaneous behaviour streams in distinct channels is not just multi-tasking – the streams interlock to constitute a single communicative act. It is highly unlikely that this is a learned skill, akin to playing the organ: multimodal signaling is universal in the strong sense, exhibited in infancy, and is likely to have special brain bases. In a similar way the intense interest in prolonged sequences of alternating communicative turns is already exhibited in the 'proto-conversation' of pre-linguistic infants and their caretakers, arguing for a motivational basis deep in the human psyche. Cooperation of the kind found within human groups also seems to have an instinctual basis, as shown by cross-cultural experiment..." (88).

Levinson is proposing the idea that human cognition is specialized around a highly structured, cooperative ability to facilitate interaction, and that this cognition is independent of language. Language amplifies this communicative ability immeasurably, but language is dependent upon the more primary and more primal "interaction engine," which explains

why its mechanisms are established first. Interactive patterns are established in the first year of human life, preparing the ground for the development of language in the second year. Levinson is claiming the existence of a specialization in human cognition. His finding has the potential to reverse normal assumptions about language:

a) The prevailing presumption is that it is language and its expressive power that has revolutionized human mind and society, while the principles of language usage will follow from entirely general properties of human cognition. On the 'interaction engine' hypothesis, the open-ended expressive potential actually lies in the Gricean intention recognition system, and every utterance exploits the specialized machinery for intention-attribution and cooperative action design. A whole package of language-independent cognitive predispositions drive human communication, and language is possible only because of this infrastructure.

b) It seems likely that the substantive, absolute universals of human communication lie in this underlying infrastructure for communication, while languages themselves differ widely according to the quirks of culture and history (Levinson, 2000). *We are looking in the wrong place for strong universals, which is why after half a century of linguistic typology we have found hardly any*” (89, italics mine).

One receives the impression that Levinson has been consistent in his research orientation throughout. Levinson's recent “interaction engine” thesis (2006, 89) seems to be simply developing, broadening and elaborating upon views expressed in the past. Thus he expresses ideas in “Pragmatics,” a 2001 article in which he writes of the purpose served by the new discipline within linguistics known as Pragmatics, which seem

to foreshadow the ideas discussed above that were formulated six years later: “[P]ragmatics is especially concerned with implicit meaning, with inference and the unsaid, and with the way in which language structure trades on this background of the presumed and the inferred. Pragmatics has come to play an important part in general linguistic theory, partly because it has important intrinsic subject matter neglected elsewhere, partly because it promises explanations for other linguistic phenomena, and partly as a response to over idealization in contemporary grammatical theory” (abstract).

We see then that Levinson seeks (and finds) universals in the realm of fundamental interpersonal norms. This realm is not culturally relative. Rather, the interactive space is regulated by universal norms. Though the discussion revolves around politeness, interest in the interpersonal nuances has expanded (Su, 2009; Yabuuchi, 2006; Gagne` 2010) to the point that it might be argued that this reflects a new trend in research, a new movement toward seeking universals of interpersonal behavior.

This author believes the above to be a welcome development, in that sociocultural relativism has become to some extent a source of intellectual confusion. From Harvard to Arizona State University, increasing numbers of students ask lectures questions such as: “I

personally dislike what the Nazis did, but who is to say that they were morally wrong?” “What is morally wrong with exploiting women? I personally support feminist goals, but who is to say that the theoretical idea of women being subordinated to men is morally wrong?” “Not that I’m for it, but how can it you claim that black slavery is morally wrong? So many intelligent cultures practiced it.”

Cultural relativism, when taken to its logical extreme, supports these students’ positions: Different cultures have different values. For centuries, humanity has been happily victimizing Jews, exploiting women and practicing black slavery. Along comes a new society – a culture that is immature – and decides unilaterally that all of the above are abominable practices. An obviously eccentric, idiosyncratic culture ignores millennia of human history and does everything differently, reinventing the moral wheel. The lecturer questioned is often at a loss to respond. For her, the immoral nature of exploitation had been an assumed first premise. The logic of diversity theory asks: On what is this assumption based?

The radical relativists – true believers in the socially constructed nature of knowledge, values and beliefs – cannot answer these questions. They can only assent: Indeed, ours is an idiosyncratic culture

– we cherish such peculiar beliefs – we are living proof that all knowledge, values and beliefs are purely relative.

Yet Levinson's theory that there exists a universal cognition for interaction, if taken to its logical extreme, can effectively rebut all of the discriminatory positions expressed above. It is true that Levinson focuses in large measure on verbal interaction, or face-to-face non-verbal interaction. However, if we might think in terms of a logical continuum, it is quite possible that acceptance of a theory of universal cognition for interaction would effectively open the way for acceptance of a theory of universal cognition for all human interaction, its moral aspects included. It would seem that if a significant base of data existed to support the position that human interaction is governed by universal principles, and if we were to combine that data, as Levinson does, with a performative orientation, then we might hypothesize the existence of universals of interactive behavior that can identify the universally immoral nature of interaction that result in exploitation.

Preceding Levinson – and arguably preparing the moral ground and establishing the direction and trajectory of his inquiry – were the first psycholinguists. Slobin, Crystal and other early psycholinguists studied the grammatical systems of toddlers and young children, setting the tone

for the equation of language acquisition and the acquisition of cognitive mechanisms in general, as well as setting the tone for the inclusion of diverse cultures in the study of language and cognition.

The past decade in developmental psycholinguistics has brought a vast increase in our knowledge of how English-speaking children acquire their native language. The present decade promises to place those findings in broader perspective. Developmental psycholinguists are beginning to reach out to other language communities, in order to study children acquiring other native languages and in order to make contact with the findings of foreign colleagues... At the same time we are beginning to relate our work to the psychology of perceptual and cognitive development...Developmental psycholinguistics is thus moving from particularism to universalism in two significant ways: from the particularism of English to the acquisition of language in general, and from the particularism of linguistic development to cognitive development in general. We are just beginning to sense the intimate relations between linguistic universals and cognitive universals, and are far from an adequate developmental theory of either. The psychology of cognitive development promises an eventual universal theory of the growth of the mind...To the extent that a universal course of linguistic development can be confirmed, a language-free acquisition model is called for...Such a model brings certain operating principles to bear on the task of learning to speak (1973, 176).

When we consider the extent to which psycholinguistics has consistently assumed the existence of fully developed grammatical systems in every culture, we realize that it would be the height of chauvinism to assume that “exotic” cultures may be less linguistically

developed than western toddlers. Furthermore, the contemporary researchers who have been studying these cultures are utterly remote from any trace of chauvinism, manifesting, on the contrary, a profound respect for the vast diversity they have encountered with every discovery of every cultural expression. Therefore it behooves us to re-examine and re-analyze the new grammars that have been identified using the precise tools and the identical criteria that these psycholinguists used to extract the grammars that had been constructed by the toddlers they studied. Then upon close examination and comparative analysis of all the grammars, we will find the answer. We will discover whether these grammars are any more different from ours than the grammars of all “civilized” cultures are different from one other. We will also discover whether they are any more different from ours than a contemporary western courtship ritual is different from an aboriginal Australian or a Papuan Island courtship ritual. The differences between these rituals were not great enough to make Levinson reconsider his theory of a universal cognition for interaction. Therefore the difference between the “exotic” grammars and our own grammars would have to be greater than the differences between the abovementioned courtship rituals in order to

justify Levinson's rejection of the Chomskyan theory of grammar universals.

Humor Universals

The oppositional stance that appears self-evident between Stephen Levinson and Victor Raskin, who for our purposes represents the Chomskian school, may not be as oppositional as it appears. Their conflicting theories are arbitrated by a middle ground represented by Nilsen (2009). Raskin's theory that humor is universally generated cannot be accepted by Levinson, who does not accept the universally generated nature of language. However, if humor were to be viewed as human interaction, then Levinson could perhaps accept Raskin's theory that humor is universally generated, because Levinson believes that there is a universal human "interaction engine" (2006, 89) that informs human cognition and enables us to communicate with one another. In any case, in those language contexts that are not universally generated, a culture-specific diversity informs language use, and especially the "playful" aspects of language (Nilsen 2009). The playful aspects of language are the more rhetorically dense aspects, in that they are not grammar-based, but refer to multiple texts of cultural experience. The description of the playful aspects of language as "intertextual" is inspired

by Raskin's description of culturally embedded semantic references as "scripts". Extrapolating from humor, it is suggested that an even more rhetorically dense phenomenon than humor is naming, in that names are replete with cultural reference (Nilsens 2007).

Levinson insists upon an assumption of the centrality of diversity as being indispensable to the study of any of the branches of cognitive science. We reiterate his position, for it summarizes Levinson's skepticism about all things Chomskyan:

A widespread assumption among cognitive scientists, growing out of the generative tradition in linguistics, is that all languages are English-like but with different sound systems and vocabularies. The true picture is very different: languages differ so fundamentally from one another at every level of description (sound, grammar, lexicon, meaning) that it is very hard to find any single structural property they share. The claims of Universal Grammar, we argue here, are either empirically false, unfalsifiable, or misleading in that they refer to tendencies rather than strict universals. Structural differences should instead be accepted for what they are, and integrated into a new approach...that places diversity at centre stage. The misconception that the differences between languages are merely superficial, and that they can be resolved by postulating a more abstract formal level at which individual language differences disappear, is serious: it now pervades a great deal of work done in...just about every branch of the cognitive sciences. Even scholars [opposed to the idea]...use the term *Universal Grammar* as if it were an empirically verified construct (p. 429).

One wonders if there may not be an element of exaggeration in Levinson's statements. Though suprasegmental elements of language may swing widely and vary drastically from one culture to another, if by assignment of status to categories (Hall 105-112) or by conventions of interjection and affixation (Sapir 4,5, 56-60) or by the contextual clues that create "sign-situations" (Ogden and Richards 48-76) or whether these differences are a result of the cultural differences that comprise "knowledge" (Schiffrin 139) or culturally differing approaches to "indexing" (Lee 87-114) time distinctions (Whorf 20) verbal compulsions (Bridgman 25) insertion sequences (Mey 264) deixis (Nilsen, personal correspondence) or any other element of human communication – this cannot change the fact that grammar is the black sheep of this family of linguistic categories, in that the rules of grammar are remarkably comparable from one language to another, despite the profound differences between the languages themselves. This is not to say that the rules of grammar are not broken from one language to another, in that correct grammar in one language, if transposed directly, becomes incorrect grammar perhaps, yet nevertheless it remains utterly comprehensible. There are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. It is the suprasegmentals, or Lee's "facts of life (87-114) that insert difference

into the rules of communication. If there is any reliable universal, it lies in the basic grammar, in this author's opinion. That word order is variable from one language to another (Levinson 2011) cannot detract from the reality that these constructs are mutually comprehensible, and communication between languages on the basis of grammar translation is certainly possible. Without even requiring membership in the same language family, grammars are comparable. To say, as Nilsen does that generative grammar theory does not entirely account for certain basic phenomena in language use, is not quite the same thing as calling generative grammar theory either empirically false...or misleading (Levinson, "Myth," 2009, 429).

As it is impossible to accuse Levinson of harboring a personal distaste for Noam Chomsky, the propounder of the generative grammar theory (1966) we must assume that Levinson's views of grammar are empirically based, yet it would appear that his expectation of absolute correspondence between grammars in order for them to qualify as strong universals ("With Diversity in Mind," 2009) is what disqualifies grammatical rules from attaining the status of universals in Levinsonian theory. If we were to alter the criteria somewhat, and

determine that inter-language comprehensibility is all that is required, then we can indeed find a great many strong universals in grammar.

The same cannot be said of humor. This author is ignorant of Chomsky's position on humor, and being unable to ask him, must speculate that perhaps Chomsky would not have attempted to apply his generative grammar theory to humor, and may have allowed the assumption that rather than being generated by underlying universals, humor may be culturally variable. Assuming this less radical position on Chomsky's part, and wishing to place language theorists along some sort of conceptual continuum, we would then be required to place Victor Raskin at the extreme opposite end of the conceptual continuum from Levinson. That is to say that Raskin's opposition to Levinson's views might be even stronger than Chomsky's would have been, had we been able to interview Chomsky regarding his views on Levinsonian theory. Raskin presents generative grammar as a model of generative humor (2008). Raskin's Ontological Semantics theory (2004) may be extrapolated to produce the conclusion that not only is grammar universally generated, but that even humor is universally generated, and that a universal humor underlies all humorous utterances. It seems safe to speculate that Levinson would reject the idea of a universal humor,

since he maintains that even grammar is not universally generated, and that indeed none of the elements of language are universally generated. A language's non-transferability is even reflected in culturally diverse perceptions of actual physical reality. ("Can Language Restructure Cognition" and "Grammars of Space" among other studies.) The main reason we are capable of communicating with one another is that there exists a "universal interaction engine" (2006, 89) that is not dependent upon language. "Interaction engine" is the term Levinson uses in his fascinating description of the uniquely human mechanism that generates our proclivities for successfully producing communication with other human beings (2006, 86). We might speculate that Levinson could accept Raskin's universal humor theory if we were to change our definition of humor. If humor could be considered less a function of language than a function of human interaction, then Levinson would be able to accept Raskin's ontological semantics, whereas if we were to maintain that humor is a function of language, then Raskin's ontological semantics would be entirely incompatible with Levinson's view of the non-universal nature of language rules. These two giants of linguistic theory contribute to our ability to conceptualize language, grammar and humor. Nevertheless, each appears to be potentially vulnerable to an

overly one-sided interpretation. This author does not possess the scholarly stature required to critique these venerable theorists, possessing the lower stature of an observer from the sidelines of a scholarly dispute.

A balanced middle ground is offered by Nilsen (2009): Nilsen points out that Chomskian theory and the generative grammar theorists who are students of Chomsky, such as Raskin and Nirenburg (2001) have given us computer languages. Chomsky's findings are indispensable for most efforts to apply language to technological uses. Nevertheless, for the creative and spontaneous contexts of linguistic usage, such as art and humor, Chomskian theory becomes inadequate. Generative grammar cannot explain jokes; it cannot explain poetry, slang, etc. That is to say that a significant body of language use falls outside of the realm of Chomskian theory.

It might be suggested that grammar is the point at which the culture encounters the intellect. Levinson's statement that "languages differ so fundamentally...sound, grammar, lexicon, meaning..." ("Myth," 429) could perhaps reflect a mingling of disparate categories. Sounds after all are physical, whereas meanings are cultural, while grammar is

purely intellectual. This may explain Nilsen's pointing to the playful aspects of language as falling outside of the realm of Chomskian theory. These are the less abstract and more interactive elements of language use, and thus difficult to explain by resorting to grammatical phenomena. We may speculate further that this may explain Levinson's reluctance to accept evidence from generative grammar, in that Levinson's studies have focused extensively on interactive and social contexts ("Questions and Responses in Yeli Dnye" and many other studies). For linguistic studies of a purely intellectual nature, which more closely describes the Chomskian orientation, an emphasis upon grammatical phenomena is more appropriate.

Universality applies to many interactive issues, yet some areas of linguistic usage are hermetically sealed or embedded within a culturally specific context. This latter formulation applies aptly to the study of humor. Ciaro does not call humor untranslatable (2008) and points to many jokes that contain versions in different languages, yet she also points to and explains the specific changes and re-fittings that these jokes are required to undergo – beyond direct translation – in order to transfer successfully to another language and culture. This clearly removes these jokes from any grammatical basis. Perhaps what endows

us with our ability to remake jokes in order that they may succeed under conditions of cultural transfer is Levinson's "universal interaction engine." Another aspect of humor that could possibly qualify as universal would be the element of tendency (Nilsen 1988). Yet our inability to transfer jokes from one language to another as they are, unaltered, may reflect the innately embedded and culturally specific nature of the humor phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3
GEORGE LAKOFF

Lakoff has pioneered groundbreaking studies that have persuasively proven the principle that bodily experience shapes cultural concepts, and that it is physical, embodied experience that creates individuals' sense of "spatial relations concepts, action concepts, aspectual concepts, and primary conceptual metaphors" (1990, 9).

According to George Lakoff, some obsolete ideas that hamper the progress of research in the cognitive sciences include the following: "Grammar is a matter of pure form" (9). As discussed above, the veracity of this claim may be easily determined by a profession-wide re-definition of grammatical constructs, followed by a comparative study of all the grammars spotlighted by Lakoff and Levinson, in order to determine whether there is or is not a certain underlying pure form common to all of them. Lakoff claims that this idea "must fall by the wayside," (9) yet perhaps it would be premature to let it fall before we have re-defined and conducted such an intensive comparative analysis of the grammars – the grammars specifically, as distinct from all other features of language and custom – of all the cultures that cognitive science has studied. This would appear to be the most pressing agenda

for future research, and the most relevant direction for the goal of resolving the question of the existence of grammar universals.

Other claims made by Lakoff can be confusing in that some tend to detract from the force of his own argument, yet are presented as if they were supporting his argument. Lakoff writes, for example, that Eleanor Rosch's findings may have refuted Whorfian theory. Rosch found that the Dani knew only two color distinctions: *mili* – dark/cool and *mola* – light/warm. Rosch taught them sixteen more color terms. These were arbitrarily chosen words, used to designate color distinctions. After she had taught them these words and made the association with the color distinctions clear to the children who served as her student subjects, they were able to successfully make sixteen more color distinctions, although the focal colors (a focal color is the shade of a particular category of color that represents the best example of that category) were learned more successfully than the non-focal colors (1990, 40).

An additional example of Lakoff's affinity for Whorfian theory

relates to color again:

The neurophysiological account only characterizes the primary colors: black, white, red, yellow, blue and green. What allows us to "see" other colors as being members of color categories? What about orange, brown, purple,

etc.? Some cognitive mechanism in addition to the neurophysiology is needed to account for those. Kay and McDaniel suggested that such a mechanism would make use of something akin to sfuzzy set theory...thus, orange is characterized in terms of the fuzzy set intersection of the red and yellow curves...The second advantage of fuzzy set theory is that it permits an intuitive account of basic color categories...According to the Kay-McDaniel account, the boundaries, as well as the focal colors, should be uniform across languages. But this is simply not the case (28, 29).

Slobin has argued persuasively against Whorfian theory. “There is a sort of Whorfian notion of linguistic determinism on the grammatical level, and I think it will turn out to be false when all the data are in” (183). Slobin bases this belief on Piaget’s discovery that cognitive levels of development were not affected when linguistic tools such as syntactic or vocabulary structures that were characteristic of higher cognitive levels were taught to children. The children did not advance to a higher cognitive level as the result of this linguistic training (184). Slobin’s suggestion that there are limitations to the application of Whorfian theory appears to be soundly grounded in the Piagetian studies.

Nevertheless, Lakoff’s claim that Rosch’s data refutes Whorfian theory does not appear persuasive. This author has occasionally experienced doubts as to the applicability of Whorfian theory, based upon the “chicken-or-the-egg” dilemma. Yet Nilsen (personal

correspondence) points out that the question of origination does not weaken the applicability of Whorf's theory, in that the relationship between language and thought is bi-directional. Just as one might theorize, with Whorf, that one's language constrains and sets the limits of one's perceptions, so might one theorize, in an equally persuasive manner, that one's perceptions (based upon diverse environmental conditions and heredity) may constrain and set the limits of one's language. Nilsen does not address the narrow, popular understanding of Whorf's theory, but the broader original version (see Alford below) which emphasizes the effect of lexicalization upon thought and perception. Yet even according to the popular understanding, many doubts about Whorf are nearly settled by Rosch. Rosch's data seem to substantiate Whorfian theory in a most powerful manner. If one's language sets the limits of one's reality, as the popular understanding presents the claim made by Whorf, and if before the children of the Dani had been taught a vocabulary for color distinctions they had been unable to make color distinctions because they had actually failed to perceive them, and if once they had acquired a vocabulary and been taught a language for color distinctions, they had become capable of successfully distinguishing, and of actually seeing these colors (40) there may be

many who would view these data as overwhelming evidence in support of the validity of Whorfian theory. It is true that the differences in the ease of acquisition of different categories might give pause. The fact that focal and non-focal colors are different in terms of ease of acquisition would imply that there are certain objective (perceptual) contingencies that constrain language acquisition. Perhaps one should extrapolate from this that language does not constrain perception, but rather that perception constrains language. However, it would be difficult to deny that these children discerned differences they had never before discerned, as soon as they were given the language tools. Perhaps one could use Rosch's data to suggest a weak-versus-strong version of Whorfian theory. That is to say that language normally shapes perception, except where perception must constrain language, due to the difficulty or subtlety of the perception.

An additional source of confusion derives from the fact that if the above argument were in fact persuasive – that Rosch had refuted Whorf – this would detract considerably from Lakoff's argument for the non-universal nature of cognition. "Lakoff accepts a weak Whorfian theory," according to Nilsen, and this unavowed position is born out consistently in Lakoff's writings. Nevertheless, there is no indication of any

acceptance of any version of Whorfian theory whatsoever in Lakoff's review of Rosch's research:

In a remarkable set of experiments, Rosch set out to show that primary color categories were psychologically real for speakers of Dani, even though they were not named. She set out to challenge one of Whorf's hypotheses, namely, that language determines one's conceptual system. If Whorf were right on this matter, the Dani's two *words* for colors would determine two and only two *conceptual categories* of colors. Rosch reasoned that if it was language alone that determined color categorization, then the Dani should have equal difficulty learning new words for colors, no matter whether the color ranges had a primary color at the center or a non-primary color. She then went about studying how Dani speakers would learn new, made-up color terms. One group was taught arbitrary names for eight focal colors, and another group, arbitrary names for eight nonfocal colors (Rosch 1973). The names for focal colors were learned more easily. Dani speakers were also found (like English speakers) to be able to remember focal colors better than nonfocal colors (Heider 1972) (40).

Some readers might interpret Rosch's data above as a powerful support for a very strong version of the weaker version of Whorfian theory. However Lakoff's tone leads the reader almost unambiguously toward a mental conclusion that Whorf has been refuted and that Lakoff has no further interest in Whorfian theory. Perhaps Lakoff writes as he does only in order to achieve a shock-value rhetorical style. After all,

upon closer examination we realize that Lakoff himself has never taken any stand whatsoever against Worfian theory. Rather, “In a remarkable set of experiments, Rosch...set out to challenge one of Whorf’s hypotheses...If Whorf were right, the Dani [could possess] two and only two conceptual categories of colors. Rosch reasoned that if it was language alone that determined color categorization...” (40). After these highly approbatory statements about Rosch, more approbatory statements follow (and more approbatory statements have preceded them as well. Indeed, the very title of the chapter conveys a stunning, if indirect approbation: “From Wittgenstein to Rosch.”) and there is in fact no more mention of Whorf (the reader concludes that Whorf is not important enough to be addressed since his thesis has been so roundly refuted, but only as an afterthought. Whorf had after all never even been the target of Lakoff’s powerful intellectual arsenal. He was a mere pause on the path toward the great battle against categorization theory) and Lakoff’s text continues with its expository descriptions of prototype theory’s superiority to conventional categorization theory. One can almost discern a certain “baby with the bathwater” momentum in Lakoff’s writing, which seeks to reject any wisdom cherished by any prior generation, even when the basis for this rejection is questionable and

even when this investment of effort in order to refute an accepted wisdom runs counter to the tendency of his own argument.

(Interestingly, Levinson asks: "Does the entire baby have to go out with the bathwater?" Is it necessary to throw out fifty years of comparative linguistics and everything Chomskyanism has ever achieved? He suggests that Chomskyanism is valid in that his rules exist but must be viewed as side effects of pragmatic principles ("Sea-Change," 7.)

CHAPTER 4

DISCREPANCIES

Through in-depth textual analysis of selected excerpts from Lakoff's writing, an attempt will be made to demonstrate two simultaneous tendencies in Lakoff's thought: On the one hand, Lakoff presents highly robust and uniquely original formulations of cognitive theory (metaphor, embodiment and others, discussed below) based upon intensive research and powerful intuitive reasoning, and on the other hand, and simultaneously, he appears to present somewhat less robust paths of reasoning that imply that the Chomskyan theory of grammar universals "must be left behind" (1990, 9). A similar attempt will be made with Stephen Levinson, who appears to work with a parallel approach. That is to say that Levinson too presents highly original and persuasive formulations of cognitive theory based upon intensive research (Yeli Dnye, "Case for Space," many others) yet these formulations co-exist with less persuasive paths of reasoning that lead to his conclusion that Chomskyan theory has been discredited ("Myth," 429). Following are a very few of the examples of claims by Lakoff and Levinson that combine powerful research results and robust formulations of cognitive theory with a conclusion – that Chomskyan theory has been

invalidated – which appears to require a certain logical leap, in order to bridge the gap in the line of reasoning.

Lakoff occasionally surprises the reader by presenting what might be considered oxymoronic statements. That is to say that certain seeming, though unavowed oxymorons occasionally surface in Lakoff's writing, and upon these logical non-sequiturs, a structure of interpretation is built. For example: "There is a correct, God's-eye view of the world – a single correct way of understanding what is and is not true" (1990, 9). One does not need to be a believer in monotheism or conversant with the principles of Divine omniscience in order to be able to follow its basic logic: A God's-eye view, for the monotheistic religion that formulated the concept of God's eye, is understood as the ultimate inclusive: the One Who generated all the cultures, "sees" the vast spectrum of diversity, and knows and contains all of their cultural norms of thought, logic, cognition and conceptualization. This definition is not esoteric, but widely understood by most of the cultures that are related in some way to this monotheistic religion. Whether they admire it or reject it, they are to some extent familiar with its basic argument, which is arguably the most broadminded and pluralistic formulation possible in the realm of theological thought. This author recalls an adolescent fashion of some

decades ago, in which return addresses on letters would be written with reference to the “God’s-eye view.” For example, the sample received by this author read as follows: “Fifteen Winona Court/Denver, Colorado 80204/United States of America/Northern Hemisphere/Planet Earth/Solar System/Universe/Eye of God.” Apparently young adults are just as preoccupied with the attempt to find their own sense of place as they are with the attempt to find their own sense of identity (Nilsens, Names and Naming). If such was the popular understanding among young people, then for a thinker of Lakoff’s intellectual stature to equate the “God’s-eye view” with “a single correct way,” when Lakoff cannot possibly be accused of not comprehending, or of being unaware of the fact that these two positions are mutually exclusive, seems to somehow suggest that Lakoff is encouraging his readers to equate the “God’s-eye view” with “a single correct way.”

Expanding on Freud’s theory of “tendentious humor,” which maintains that the form humor takes is shaped and constrained by an underlying sexual message or goal, Nilsen (1988) broadened the Freudian position to include all underlying pragmatic goals, and all interactions including but not limited to humorous interaction. Thus there is a pragmatic communicative goal, that is to say a real-world result that

the producer of the communication wishes to achieve, and all of the forms that this communication will take will be constrained by, and bent and tend toward the direction of this goal. This pragmatic tendency will constrain semantics, syntax, grammar, pronunciation – indeed every element included in the pragmatics-driven communicative act.

Nilsen's broadened definition of Freud's concept of tendency (1988) is indispensable for any analysis of Freudian texts. Freud's own discourse is a most salient example of discourse tendency, perhaps not necessarily in the Freudian sense of repressed sexual messages, but certainly in the Nilsenian sense of pragmatic goals constraining the tendency of the discourse. In a review of Joseph Frank's Doestoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849, Paul Roazen focuses on Frank's "Freud's Case-History of Dostoevsky," located in the appendix of this immense work:

Frank demolishes Sigmund Freud's famous 1928 paper "Dostoevsky and Parricide."... Although other of Freud's so-called applications of psychoanalysis to history have long been challenged, until now his essay on Dostoevsky has escaped critical examination... Frank establishes that Freud was essentially using the figure of Dostoevsky for the sake of propagandizing pre-conceived psychological convictions... Frank documents how Freud twisted scanty biographical evidence... Frank also objects to Freud's characterization of Dostoevsky as a latent homosexual; as Frank irreverently puts it, "there are no male friendships in Dostoevsky's life comparable in length and emotional importance to Freud's own friendships with, for example...(763)

One can make a claim for Freud's discourse tendency that is even more extreme than the one made by Frank, as cited in Roazen. The possibility exists that the end result of tarnishing Dostoevsky's image could have constituted a pragmatic goal for Freud. Perhaps the need to lower the great public esteem in which Dostoevsky was held by the public eye – stemmed from Freud's desire to conceal the fact of his own failure to attribute:

Freud was not the father of modern psychology. It was Dostoevsky. It was not Sigmund Freud. All of the important, original innovations that psychology has contributed to the modern awareness – were lifted directly from Dostoevsky by Freud: The idea of the subconscious mind. The idea of an alter ego. The dream symbolism. Repression. There is nothing good or original in Freudian psychology that was not lifted directly from Dostoevsky's writings. (Lifshitz).

Nilsen does not distinguish between the pragmatic goals that constrain discourse tendency, which emanate from self-interest, and those that emanate from a philosophical conviction. This distinction is not needed in "The Importance of Tendency," as it intends only to awaken hearers' awareness to the fact that there are underlying pragmatic goals constraining tendency. Even when they are not sexual in nature, they may nevertheless constitute constraints that are equal in

power to those imposed by Freud's sexual tendency. In discussing Lakoff's discourse tendency, however, this distinction becomes necessary, as it focuses upon a form of discourse tendency not addressed by Freud or Nilsen. That is, philosophical discourse tendency, in which a philosophical belief constrains the elements of discourse as powerfully as if it were a pragmatic goal, thereby arguably acquiring the status of a pragmatic goal.

It is possible that such an expanded definition of Nilsen's already expanded definition of Freud's "tendency" may be helpful in understanding Lakoff. Unlike the pragmatic tendency that reflects self-interest, it may be possible to speak of a philosophical tendency that reflects a philosophical interest. It is such a tendency that seems to constrain and shape Lakoff's writing, and in some instances as, for example, with Eleanor Rosch's data, to shape his presentation, interpretation, and indeed (following Whorf) possibly even his perception of data. A philosophical tendency is disinterested in nature; the author encourages his readers to accept his own philosophy of existence, believing that it is the single correct way. To support this message – this tendentious dialectic – Lakoff presents arguments that, upon examination, are found to be less robust than his highly robust and

indeed powerful models of cognition, which he presents in a context unrelated to his philosophical tendency.

The evidence we will be considering suggests a shift from classical categories to prototype-based categories defined by cognitive models. It is a change that implies other changes: changes in the concepts of truth, knowledge, meaning, rationality – even grammar. A number of familiar ideas will fall by the wayside. Here are some that will have to be left behind: (9)

If these statements appear to be somewhat broad – some might even call them sweeping – they are nothing compared to the first familiar idea that Lakoff lists, as needing to be left behind. In case the reader has not yet become aware that Lakoff is demanding nothing less than a complete, global paradigm shift in the individual reader's perception of reality, Lakoff implies that it has become obsolete to believe that: "Meaning is based on truth and reference: it concerns the relationship between symbols and things in the world" (9). That is to say, Lakoff is questioning the very phenomenological and epistemological assumptions that are the basis for our interest in his book. The question of how the reader can be expected to accept this position when it is based upon the symbols in Lakoff's book that refer to the things in the world that he is discussing – is not addressed.

That “the mind is separate from, and independent of, the body” (9) is another obsolete idea. This claim that Lakoff makes, that the notion of the independence of the mind has been discredited, is problematic in a manner parallel to the problematic nature of the entire rejection of Chomskyan theory. That there are also physical factors at work in many of the ways that we form conceptual constructs, that much of our thought is metaphoric (1984) and embodied (2001) does not appear in any way capable of refuting the claim that the mind can also be trained to operate independently of the body. In a parallel line of reasoning, the fact that we have also (thanks to Levinson and others) discovered multiple layers of diversity (“Grammars of Space,” 2006, “Evolved Structure,” 2011, many others) in the numerous other elements of language and cognition across cultures does not appear in any way to be capable of refuting the claim that there is an underlying grammatical structure that is universal. Both of these arguments seem to be considering phenomena that could easily co-exist, as if they were mutually exclusive.

Lakoff’s dismissal of universalist theory goes well beyond Chomskyan grammar, as seen in his statement that “[recent studies] make obsolete the idea that thought is a version of formal logic, and also

refute certain central ideas of analytic philosophy: the correspondence theory of truth, the view that all meaning is literal, the classical theory of categories as defined by necessary and sufficient conditions, and so on.” (G. Lakoff, “Artificial Intelligence,” 197). This “obsolete” understanding of cognition that Lakoff rejects has also been called binary by many post-modern theorists (Aronowitz and Giroux). They speak of the pressing need to renegotiate the old binaries. Renegotiating something is a euphemism for ousting it from the arena of legitimate discourse. Yet many thinkers are incurably attached to the true/false binary, and persist in using it as the basis of their cognitive activity. Such thinkers maintain that the true/false binary is the highest level of cognition, with “embodied” thought being cognitive activity of an inferior sort. However, this is again a binary: Superior/Inferior. As such it is not necessarily valid cognitive currency in a research environment that focuses upon a fluctuating matrix of input that surrounds and shapes cognition, as suggested by Lakoff’s description: “Conceptual metaphors are cross-domain mappings that permit abstract concepts to import most of their inference structure from concepts with a direct sensory-motor basis. There are thousands of such metaphoric mappings characterizing modes of abstract inference for speakers of all languages” (Artificial Intelligence, 197).

Many scholars make a conscious and deliberate effort to exclude what Lakoff calls “concepts with a direct sensory-motor basis,” believing that these distract from the investigation of truth’s “correspondence” and “literal” nature. Likewise, they uphold “the philosophical idea of functionalism, that the mind can be studied independently of the brain and body” (196). There are schools of thought whose members are formalists in the extreme, yet quite flexible within the rigorous requirements of logic, as are all great intellectuals including, paradoxically, Lakoff himself.

Contemporary Chomsky advocate Victor Raskin, who comments on humor (2008) as well as generative grammar (2001) seems to almost echo Chomsky’s writing style on occasion. In contrast to Raskin’s writings on humor, when Raskin discusses generative grammar, or his version of it as applied to humor – “ontological semantics” – he becomes in some respects as abstruse as Chomsky himself. George Lakoff, however, though he is not specifically an advocate of Chomskyan theory, gives an extensive, detailed and wonderfully lucid description of the essential features of Chomskyan theory in Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. Some of the characteristics of the Chomskyan theory according to Lakoff contain features that may or may not be true to Chomskyan

theory. Following are some of what Lakoff feels are the salient features of Chomskyan theory, which Lakoff dismisses:

“-Meaning is based on truth and reference; it concerns the relationship between symbols and things in the world” (9).

(Lakoff does not make clear how – simply because contemporary research has discovered additional sources of meaning – this has effectively removed meaning from its truth-and-reference basis.)

“-Biological species are natural kinds, defined by common essential properties” (9).

(It was science that determined, established and named the biological categories. Therefore Lakoff, as a scientist, is certainly authorized to dismantle these categories. Lakoff emphasizes the subjective nature of scientific taxonomy (Linnaeus) pointing out that intuitive and readily named and identified members of groups are all somehow categorized at the genus level.)

”-The mind is separate from, and independent of the body” (9).

(It is not clear where we find evidence, in Lakoff’s metaphoric mapping theory, that an abstract mind does not exist, or if it does exist, that it does not have the potential to become separate from, and independent of, the body.)

“- Grammar is a matter of pure form” (9).

(Multiple linguistic expressions have been studied, many of which contain cultural expressions that support the theory of cultural relativism, in that many of its constructs range from strange to incomprehensible for non-members of those cultures. Yet it is not clear how these data prove that grammar may not be also a matter of pure form, in addition to exhibiting these other characteristics. This appears to be less a refutation of Chomsky than simply the discovery of other perspectives on grammar.)

“ – Reason is transcendental, in that it transcends – goes beyond – the way human beings, or any other kinds of beings, happen to think. It concerns the inferential relationships among all possible concepts in this universe or any other” (9).

(It is not clear if by “reason,” Lakoff means ‘truth’ or ‘linear logical process.’)

“Mathematics is a form of transcendental reason” (9).

Lakoff apparently considers mathematics relative, whereas perhaps Chomsky considered it absolute. Yet again the point must be re-stated: If quantum physics has been discovered, this does not prove that Euclidian mathematics is no longer true. Actually, the concept that we

call “true,” may be irrelevant in Lakoffian theory. If we have discovered that there are relative and ever-changing mathematical expressions, it is not clear how this precludes the possibility that mathematics may also take the form of transcendental reason.)

“ – There is a correct, God’s eye view of the world – a single correct way of understanding what is and is not true” (9).

(Levinson might not accept this particular Chomskyan construct. Yet there are certain fundamentally appropriate and inappropriate norms of interactions that it seems Levinson would, in fact, accept. Thus there may be – if not a single way then at least – a unified way of understanding what is correct and what is not correct in politeness theory.)

“ – All people think using the same conceptual system.”

(Levinson might accept this, in that he posits a universal cognitive ability for interaction. Perhaps interaction operates separately from the conceptual apparatus. Conceptual system is quite a broad term. A dearth of definition appears to accompany Lakoff’s highly agreeable and memorable phraseology.)

Lakoff expands Rosch’s claim that for the classic conception of categories to be valid, it cannot make use of prototypes, i.e. it is not

possible to find that one member of a category is more representative, or prototypical of that category than any of the other members (1990, 40). For example (according to this author's understanding) if we wish to adhere to classical categorization theory in discussing the category of red, we may not claim that Japanese oxblood red is any redder a member of the red category than is pale pink, or Communism. If we nonetheless insist upon claiming that it is obviously much redder after all, then we are using prototype theory, rather than categorization theory. One remains wondering, however, exactly how prototype theory – as valid as it may be – disproves categorization theory. Furthermore, the reader wonders where exactly the rule might be written – that one member of a category may not be any more prototypical than another, in order for categorization theory to be legitimate. Why Lakoff should wish to merge epistemology with social democracy, by calling for equal membership rights for all category members – rather than simply assuming overlap from other categories which might qualify or even compromise membership in a simultaneous category – may seem incomprehensible to readers who do not realize the immense popular appeal of such rhetoric.

Lakoff finds that Rosch has proven our entire concept of categorization – the one our civilization has been employing for the past two thousand years – to be unfounded. It is interesting that Rosch herself changed her interpretation, regarding her own data. Initially Rosch found her data to be evidence for the internal structure of the category in mental representation (43) which sounds almost as though it were some sort of universal feature of mental activity. Only later, under Lakoff's influence, did Rosch reinterpret her data to develop her prototype theory.

One does not expect to encounter a philosophical tendency in the writings of George Lakoff. Encountering Lakoff's cognitive models, one finds that they resonate powerfully with anecdotal experience. Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory and his mathematics-as-a-metaphor-for-collections-of-physical-objects theory (1999, 95, 96) among many others, resolve centuries-old cognitive mysteries. Lakoff's lucid, human reasoning about human reasoning (1999, 234) has implications for mathematical and all other branches of education, and the tools that Lakoff's mathematical metaphor theory (1999, 14-18, 52-54) provides for educators of mathematics and the sciences have yet to be fully explored. This statement expresses recognition of the fact that Lakoff's cognitive

theory is groundbreaking. This fact makes it even more difficult to comprehend Lakoff's tendentious rejection, not only of Chomskyan theory, but of other seemingly unrelated or even supportive theories, such as Whorfian theory – all of which remain persuasive, Lakoff's data and dialectic notwithstanding.

CHAPTER 5

THE LINGUISTICS - HUMOR - ART CONNECTION

Raskin's wonderful sense of humor saves him from succumbing to the Chomskyan hubris. Although he makes gigantic claims for the potential of universal grammar, it is always with a light touch. He never strays into the shady areas where the idea overshadows the data that supports it. Raskin's claims for ontological semantics imply that universal grammar theory can generate humor. However, he does not indicate that it can account for all humor. Still, his faith in ontological semantics occasionally appears to border on the extreme:

Raskin's ordinal script based semantic theory of humor was based on the notion of script/frame/schema – “denotes a structured chunk of information...People's semantic competence [s] is organized in bunches of closely related information.” However, the use of ontological semantics as applied to humor theory represents a much higher level of humor theory. The ontological version is more powerful, and has been empirically tested in linguistics and in computational linguistics. Its time has come; it may now be tested as a tool for humor research (7).

[It] uses a few resources and programs to represent comprehensively, the meaning of each sentence and ultimately the entire text in a simple, LISP-like [this is a description of a

beneficiary human

Using first the preprocessor taking care of special characters, removing the markups, stemming the morphology, and performing the minimal syntactic parsing driven by the SYN-STRUC zones of each lexical entry, the semantic processor called the OntoParser transforms the sentence (3) into the simplified text-meaning representation (TMR) also – believe it or not – somewhat simplified, in (4)

(3) Dresser Industries said it expects that major capital expenditure for expansion of U.E. manufacturing capacity will reduce imports from Japan.

(4) [Here follows a diagrammatic structure with which complexity the diagrammatic structure above pales in comparison.] Essentially, the TMR is a set of embedded events, with the properties for each event filed with the appropriate case role fillers. Lower events fill a case role for a higher event. Notably, events and objects do not correspond at all to the verbs and nouns in the sentence. The modalities, aspects, co-references and other “parametric” elements *make the meaning of the sentence even more explicit than it is for the native speaker* (italics mine) (8-11).

What we are seeing here is the ultimate Chomskyan claim: Cultural and linguistic diversity does not constitute an interfering factor in linguistics, nor any possible impediment to communication, to clarity, or to lexical and syntactic transparency – once one has uncovered the underlying structures of language phenomena. Raskin points to his dilemma as far as humor relates to ontological semantics: Ontological semantics disambiguates beautifully – this is one of its chief “bragging

rights” (11) – yet humor requires ambiguity. Nonetheless, ontological semantics is equal to the task.

Raskin admits that ontological semantics does not yet fully account for humor, but this may simply be because the computerized semantic parser is not yet fully developed. When it is complete, he humorously warns the humor research community that they will discover that “linguistic imperialism” is a force to be reckoned with in humor research, and we must prepare ourselves for increasingly complex “formalisms” (12). Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder if ontological semantics is equal to the task of accounting for Raskin’s own endlessly flexible and spontaneous humor. Even perusing his densely erudite Introduction to his *Primer of Humor Research*, readers find themselves chuckling frequently. How would one parse the following, for example?

It was there and then that this author conceived the idea of the *Primer* as the one-stop place for a not so quick and dirty introduction to the multidisciplinary area of humor research. He had just resigned, after 12 years, as the founding editor of *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* a year earlier and apparently wanted to continue to dominate the field from a different venue. His idea (does everybody understand that *his* is *my*?) was to select the major, leading author in each major discipline contributing to humor research and suggest a more or less rigid template for a 30-50

pp. essay on the approach. Their task was not to propose original research nor to push forth their own particular school of thought too much; rather, their mandate was something like this, “You are awakened in the middle of the night and asked to deliver a two-hour lecture on the subject to a reasonably educated audience without any specific knowledge on humor or your area. You deliver it. Now write it up. This is what I need.” Not every body was happy with the task: some felt lazy, others just resisted the tyranny – and then there was Elliott. But most authors answered the call and did it valiantly – at various speeds. Other projects intervened, including the editor’s major involvement in further research in ontological semantics and applying it to information security and meaning-based Internet search. A significant effort was spent on developing a particularly brilliant and highly select group of young scholars, one of them a difficult and reluctant part-time genius, already planning her escape from this author’s clutches. And procrastination took its toll, the editor’s as well as, obligingly, some contributors’. In the meantime, new developments in humor research have emerged, and the editor was out of live classics, and as the dead ones, including the ever grouchy Sig, refused to cooperate, he went for the young firebrands, the future classics, most of them recognized by ISHS as emerging scholars and awarded the eponymous prize at its meetings (two of those were members of that select group of the editor’s advisees). So a bit of nepotism kicked in also, and the project thus matured (2).

Certain humorous samples from the citation above could perhaps be parsed through a Humor as Self-Effacement category. Yet much or most of it falls into Charles Fillmore’s category of micro-culturally

embedded humor (1994). Appreciating and enjoying such humor requires shared knowledge of the event for maximal effect, though shared knowledge of similar such events allows the somewhat less initiated reader to appreciate some of the humor as well. A non-member of a culture familiar with western academic conventions would find the humorous references entirely incomprehensible, thus disqualifying them as humor universals, and qualifying them for Levinson's typologies. (It would be interesting to investigate how a typology for humor might look.) It seems safe to say that the unique category into which Raskin's brilliant wit falls – could not have been generated by the "OntoParser."

Driving the semantic content of Raskin's rhetorically dense prose is his pragmatic intent. Raskin is conveying sympathy for his overworked colleagues, and encouragement, in order that they will persevere despite the taxing demands on their time, and he is giving them praise for having done so. If we may delve further into the dynamics of the pragmatic intent, following Levinson, we may say that Raskin is employing mitigating strategies in order to soften prior and current face threatening acts. The prior FTA may have been his insistence that his colleagues produce their articles for the Primer when they may have had other more pressing priorities, and the current FTA may be the fact that Raskin has

accepted the status of editor, which in Brown and Levinson's Power/Distance/Rank calculation might establish him as higher than and increasing his own distance from colleagues, friends, and even researchers who may be more senior than he. Raskin seeks to de-emphasize the PDR gap, and to state bald on record that he considers the contributors to be his close friends and teachers. He uses in-bonding humorous markers, or "in jokes" amusing only to the close circle of Primer contributors or to fellow humor researchers, to achieve this pragmatic goal. The levels of rhetorical density generated by the intensity of his pragmatic intent place his humor samples beyond the reach of his own OntoParser, being pragmatically and micro-culturally constrained, and constituting the antithesis of a grammar-based or logic-driven humor universal.

Yet certain jokes are obviously generative in nature and origin. Even without the help of the "OntoParser (12)" that was then (in the year 2008) being developed, Raskin demonstrates that a generative basis clearly exists for certain humor samples, such as for example, his highly sophisticated "sparrow" joke.

One key to ontological semantics' explanation of humor is "missing links." The more the humor depends on missing links, the more

sophisticated. “Look for missing links.” (Personal correspondence with Victor Raskin.) The complexity of the inferences required of the hearer, Raskin guesses, may account for the sophistication (12). For this reason, the sparrow joke is one of the most sophisticated jokes Raskin has ever heard or told, which explains why almost no one is capable of appreciating it. Psychological tests have shown that the more sophistication exists in humor, the fewer people “get it” (13).

“What’s the difference between the sparrow? No difference whatsoever. Both sides are identical, especially the left one.” [Raskin demonstrates the parsing of this joke, as explained by ontological semantics:]

- Difference between the Sparrow and ??: no bail-out>>have to make your own two out of one>>divide the one you have into two halves
- “Identical halves”: no work
- “Especially the left”: no possible interpretation>>absurd>>funny (13)

[Raskin concludes:] Perhaps sophistication correlates with the number of missing links in inferencing like in [jokes that required inferencing] above, and not just in humor. My own sophistication about sophistication is still growing: it is a work in progress (13).

Upon the OntoParser’s completion, it may be proven that the generative grammar of ontological semantics is capable of accounting for sophistication. From the opposite perspective of this highly naïve and unsophisticated author, it appears that if the powerful mind of Victor

Raskin can only guess at what generates sophistication, the OntoParser will not surpass Raskin in this ability.

There appears to be an austerity to Chomskyan linguistics that might be related to Raskin's idea of sophistication. Minimalism appears to be a key element in his view of sophistication; it is the raised intellectual eyebrow, rather than the guffaw. Austere is here intended not in the sense of rigid but in the sense of absolute. There is no arguing with a universally generated grammatical category. It seems to be almost the antithesis of Pragmatic theory, which according to Levinson (2001) requires the researcher to take quantities of data into consideration, and to be infinitely flexible and open to perpetual change. Chomskyan grammar, is both inflexible and immutable, and indifferent (might we say immune?) to context. Sociolinguistics and Lakoff's embodied cognition through language, all of these categories of linguistics are wholly contextual. They must encompass all the physical, emotional, mental, interpersonal and cultural details of language interaction. With generative grammar, one sifts through the details of culture and language for the underlying structural principle that has generated them. The process at work with Lakoffian and Levinsonian studies of cognition and language moves in precisely the opposite

direction. We must study all of the myriad details of language and culture, for they combine to produce (to generate?) the linguistic structure.

It is interesting to consider how Lakoff and Levinson arrived at their distinctive approach, arguably so different from earlier, more structuralist theories of language. Earlier accounts of linguistic structure preceded the views of Lakoff and Levinson, and it behooves us to consider them. Victor Raskin's early script-based theory of humor seems to be compatible with Charles Fillmore's theory of frame semantics (2000). Raskin's later humor theory seems to have moved toward a more Chomskian perspective, viewing humor through the lens of ontological semantics. Raskin's earlier views seem almost as persuasive as his later views, if we consider Nilsen's description of humor as a playful language phenomenon, which by its nature might elude the structured categories of ontological semantics. However, Nilsen scrupulously avoids any construable rejection of ontological semantics.

Nilsen's mentor, Charles Fillmore, formulated the concept of "frame semantics" (2000) and this theoretical model has been applied to humor, including the suggestion that there are basic categories of jokes (Nilsens cited in Raskin, 2008). This would imply that jokes are as eligible for

categorization into semantic frames as any other grammatical or communicative category. Fillmore postulates the importance of semantic frames, and of annotating grammatical structures according to semantic and not merely according to syntactic tags (2000).

Humor scholars, with the notable exception of Raskin (2008) do not frequently resort to Chomskyan theory in that it is assumed to be inadequate in accounting for humor. Fillmore's humor study (1994, 308) focuses specifically upon differences in personality and variation in modes of human perception. Humor perception is not just culturally embedded, he writes in his "Humor in Academic Discourse" study. It is in fact micro-embedded to an extreme degree. He does not appear to be attempting any facetious message (necessarily) when he describes the different maxims that constrain the sociolinguistic behavior of a certain personality types. Thus he illustrates the Humorist's Conversational Principles, a somewhat altered version of Gricean Implicatures:

The humorist's conversational goals are these:

1. I want to participate maximally in every conversation I am a part of. I know, of course, that if I bore people they will go away, so I have to let them talk at least part of the time, and I have to make my contributions somehow rewarding to them.
2. I want to ingratiate myself with the others, so they will like me, and I want to let the others know how clever I am, so they will respect me.

3. In order to ingratiate my self with my conversation partners, I must show that I am no threat to them, I must be amiable, and I must try to amuse them.
4. When my own esteem is threatened in front of my audience, I should show that I am not affected, either by ridiculing my opponent, or by displaying a mood which is incompatible with my supposed loss of face.

These principles must be adapted to certain realities; frequently conversations have pre-assigned purposes...Corollaries to the humorists's conversational principles that recognize such realities are:

1. If there were no constraints on what I am allowed to talk about, I would spend the whole time telling jokes, leaving time for others to tell jokes since they would otherwise lose interest in my own. However, I have entered this conversation under conditions determined by society. And I have to cooperate. When I have a conversational assignment, I must carry out that assignment honestly and cooperatively. If I can say something amiable in the process, of course I will. If the assigned purposes of the conversation are totally engaging to the participants (they're negotiating a labor contract, or planning a prison break) I may have to suppress my joking inclinations altogether.
2. During the time that other participants in the conversation are carrying out their conversational assignments, I must interrupt only if I'm sure I an get away with it. I can get away with it if my contribution is brief, amiable and amusing, or if I have a position of power in the group and the others can't rule me out of bounds; but in either case my contribution must be somehow relevant to the current topic, and my interruption will be forgiven if my contribution is amiable and amusing (308).

Fillmore shows us how profoundly embedded in culture humor often is, for in his study he feels as though he is a non-member of the amused culture, though in the eyes of a genuine cultural

outsider, Fillmore would seem to enjoy an identical cultural affiliation with those whose laughter appears inexplicable to him.

The realization that as an outsider I did not know when to laugh at what the members laughed at brought home to me very clearly how snugly the spontaneous humor of natural conversation is embedded in the lives and experiences of the people among whom it is exchanged. Davies (1983, p. 1) describes conversational humor as typically “non-reportable”: One almost never succeeds in communicating to others what it was that seemed so funny. Studies of naturally occurring conversational humor, in fact, tend not to be entertaining (271).

As amusing as Fillmore’s Implications for the Humorist may be, they contain the underlying suggestion that there are rules for breaking rules, i.e. that even language’s playful aspects are in fact universally rule governed (Nilsen, personal correspondence). Furthermore, Delia Ciaro (in Raskin) has revised ethnic jokes in order to render them universally applicable. Additional support for the idea of a universal humor is provided by the theory of Victor Raskin, an acknowledged pioneer in the field of humor research, who does in fact find Chomskyan theory to be adequate for explaining the humor phenomenon. The rationale behind the presentation of this constellation is that it may enable the following argument: If humor, the most unlikely candidate for proving linguistic

universals, can be shown to exhibit a tendency toward the production of universals, then it follows that an *a` fortiori* line of reasoning would necessarily contend that grammar – the branch of linguistics probably considered to be the least “playful” and the most rule-governed of any and all the elements of language – must be even more capable of exhibiting a tendency toward the production of universals.

Willibald Ruch’s theory of humor (as extrapolated from his theory of the human sense of humor) seems incompatible with Raskin’s application of ontological semantics to humor theory. Ruch’s theory even seems somewhat incompatible (though less so) with Raskin’s earlier, more Fillmorian affinity for the human side of the language experience, which seemed to inform Raskin’s script-based theory of humor.

Willibald Ruch and Franz-Josef Hehl (Ruch, 1998) maintain that humor’s most prevalent mode of expression is response to humorous stimulus. They therefore devote their study to the human capacity to appreciate humor, indicating that the majority of humor theory relates to humor production. Citing Goethe’s view of humor as a test of character and the fact that humor responses are widely used in clinical assessment, they hypothesize that the sense of humor may be a function of esthetic preference. These researchers downplay the role of physical

and social factors, considering them somewhat relevant but not reliably measurable, and not very significant to a theory of humor appreciation as a personality characteristic. They feel that while humorous material and humorous stimuli have been widely researched, humorous response has been less widely researched. For example, whether something is funny because two scripts have clashed or because it is reflecting an underlying deep structure of humor – this question only tells us how funny stimulus is produced. It does not address the element that creates the response. Two scripts have clashed, yet the response of hilarity remains unexplained. There may be an underlying deep structure that generates humor, but some laugh and others do not. Neither of Raskin's theories addresses this question. Even within the realm of humorous response research, the focus has been mainly upon empirical data about response, listing types of responses, or eliciting subjects' feelings about their humorous responses. Ruch and Hehl feel however that the very nature of the response to humor has not been studied, meaning that a theoretical basis for the concept of humorous response has yet to be formulated. "Is it an emotion, perhaps an aesthetical emotion (Frijda 1986), feeling, quality of perception, or a purely cognitive response? This issue is not discussed and too often the response is reduced to its

technical aspect and treated as a “judgment”, “rating”, or “scaling” behavior” (Ruch 111).

They find this technical approach valid only if humor appreciation is viewed as a typical behavioral style. However, when addressing the hypothesis that they appear to cautiously favor – that humor appreciation is a category of “taste” – criteria become more rigorous. There may be good taste and bad taste once we attempt to define humor as an esthetic perception. Testing for taste would grant high scores for finding the right jokes funny, the wrong jokes aversive, and demonstrating the ability to “get it, or in their terminology, “an ‘ability’ (e.g., ‘the ability to understand and enjoy messages containing humor creativity...’)...[or] whether the recipient fails to understand the joke at all...” (111). It is from this perspective that they suggest the notion of a taxonomy of humor appreciation.

In 1983 Ruch had designed a test (3WD) to assess humor perception. On scales of three, measuring funniness to aversiveness, subject’s responses to incongruity-resolution humor, nonsense humor and sexual humor were measured. These categories overlapped and interfaced with many differently configured combinations, ultimately coming up with test scores; test subjects were actually graded for their

level of humor appreciation ability, their grade indicating at what stage they fit into Ruch's humor taxonomy. In this article, Ruch discusses the question of whether his taxonomy is universal or culturally biased. He cites studies from other countries that have used his taxonomy, which indicate that sensitivity to degrees of nonsense and incongruity resolution were comparable in the different cultures. He adds that while there do not seem to be obvious spatial limitations to his taxonomy theory, there are surely temporal limitations, because new humor items are constantly being added, while old ones are constantly falling out of circulation. Nevertheless he finds the concept of a universal taxonomy of humor appreciation to be sound.

Ruch and Hehl point out that the philosophy of humor began as a study of esthetics. Just as there were the categories of tragedy, beauty, and harmony, there was the category of comedy. Just as one might ask what factors combined to produce something beautiful, so one might ask what factors combined to produce something funny. Ruch and Hehl cite Berlyne's advocacy for the affinity of humor and art. "The structural features of humor have much in common with the so-called "collative" variables (e.g., novelty, surprisingness, complexity, ambiguity, or incompatibility) and can be discussed in that context" (113).

If we step into the world of art appreciation for a moment, prompted by Ruch, we discover indeed that elements that we have become accustomed to associating with humor appreciation are specifically discussed as fundamental elements of art appreciation. In The Psychology of Art Appreciation, Bjarne Sode Funch writes:

According to Berlyne (1971, 69) the visual elements of the stimulus pattern that he calls the collative properties are most significant for aesthetics. These are formal or structural properties with the potential to excite the viewer through qualities such as novelty, surprise, complexity, and ambiguity. The term collative refers to the fact that it is necessary to compare or collate information from two or more sources in order to determine how novel, surprising or complex a pattern is. Sometimes, as with novelty or surprise, it is a matter of noting relations of similarity of similarity between something that is present at this moment and something that has been encountered in the past. At other times, as with complexity or incongruity, it is a matter of noting, putting together, and summing up characteristics of several elements that are present simultaneously (27).

These terminologies from the halls of art sound oddly reminiscent of the humor theorists. Ruch mentions also that Berlyne considers the “collative” variables to have “much in common with the information theorist’s concept of “uncertainty”, “information value”, and “redundancy”. Research on individual differences in humor appreciation has tended to neglect this affinity with art” (121). Ruch concludes that “there is indirect evidence of a relationship between preferences of humor and aesthetics”

(122). The predictors of humor enjoyment correlated strongly with the enjoyment of the collative variables and were proven capable of predicting aesthetic preference. Ruch and Hehl admit that these findings are not conclusive in that there is considerable content and method overlap. They would like to see future tests administered using different material and identical structures, and then again, different material with related structures. Ruch and Hehl reason that people who prefer complexity may prove to also prefer asymmetry and ambiguous stimuli, whereas those who prefer simplicity may also prove to prefer symmetry and unambiguous stimuli. In general they seem to imply that individual variation in terms of levels of sophistication and complexity of personality directly affects individual variation in terms of levels of response to humorous stimuli.

None of the conclusions suggested by Ruch and Hehl with regard to humorous response as a personality trait would seem to necessarily support Raskin's ontological semantics theory of humor. An ontological semantics theory of humor would seem to be more applicable to the genres of humor that are based upon linguistic correlations that produce ambiguity. Examples of linguistic ambiguity humor are many (as in Jacob Mey's ambiguity joke sample: "The missionaries are ready to

eat”). There is a deep structure that accounts for the grey area of linguistic confusion inherent in such linguistic ambiguity jokes, and it is this confusion that generates humor. Indeed the ontological semantics model accounts perfectly for this genre of humor.

However, in non-ambiguity-based humor, as in those areas of humor studied by Ruch and Hehl, in which a taxonomy of esthetic perception might be said to apply to the personal appreciation of humor – a deep structure theory would not appear to persuasively account for its various expressions.

Esthetic perception is most often associated with works of art. Thus if we would wish to force ontological semantics upon humor, then the study by Ruch and Hehl would compel us to ask: Perhaps there is a deep structure for art, an ontological semantics for the parsing of art forms. Victor Raskin might thus conceivably apply the principles of ontological semantics to a Rembrandt painting. In a similar vein, these assumptions make it reasonable to attempt an investigation into the underlying deep structures at work beneath the surface structures of a Dostoyevsky novel.

This author does not know the answer to these questions, being insufficiently versed in humor theory, as well as being insufficiently

versed in the philosophical underpinnings of the concepts of deep structure and ontological semantics. The foregoing disclaimer is meant to indicate this author's openness to the possibility that a deep structure does indeed exist for art, and that such a discovery could have vast implications for linguistics, computational linguistics, English studies and even those areas traditionally considered remote from the world of linguistics, such as art and literature. The attempt to answer this question could lead to a fascinating investigation. The starting point of such research would necessarily be Victor Raskin's theory of the ontological semantics of humor, combined with Ruch and Hehl's view of the esthetic nature of humor appreciation. Combining these two conceptual foundations, we would be well equipped to begin our search for the deeper underlying universal structure, for the fundamental ontological semantic that forms the basis for all works of art.

Ciaro's findings (2008) seem to support both a universalist approach and a culture-specific approach to humor research:

- Before the joke can be discharged in all its swiftness there is much to be apprehended about cultural and social facts, about shared beliefs and attitudes, about pragmatic bases of communication.
- We share our humour with those who have shared our history and who understand our ways of interpreting the experience. There is a fund of common knowledge and recollection, upon which all

jokes draw with instantaneous effect. (Nash [1985]: 9; Chiaro [2008]: 585)

There are untranslatable jokes, yet one can find jokes that seem to be unqualified ethnic slurs, and yet unexpectedly demonstrate their universal nature. Chiaro points to an ethnic group stupidity joke and then dismantles it to demonstrate how it applies in an equally satisfactory manner to another group:

An Irish Joke in Italy:

- What do they write on the bottom of Guinness bottles in Ireland?
- Open at other end.
- TRANSLATION:
- Che cosa scrivono sul fondo delle lattine di Coca Cola che si trovano nei distributori di bibite nelle caserme dei carabinieri?
- Aprire dall'altro lato.
(Chiaro [2008]: 583)
- The Irish are the butt of English stupidity jokes, so a different stupidity group needs to be used in Italian.
- In Italy, the stupidity group is not ethnic, but is professional—the carabinieri (one of Italy's police forces).
- There is no national drink in Italy.

- Furthermore, Italians consume alcohol usually at meals and from glasses, not bottles.
- So “Coca Cola” is used instead of Guinness.
- Finally, Italians see a bottle as having a top and a bottom, so “bottle” had to change to “can.”
(Ciaro [2008]: 583)
- What do they write on the bottom of Guinness bottles in Ireland?
- Open at other end.
- TRANSLATION:
- Che cosa scrivono sul fondo delle lattine di Coca Cola che si trovano nei distributori di bibite nelle casere dei carabinieri?
- Aprire dall’altro lato.
(Ciaro [2008]: 583)

We thus find that Ciaro, Nilsen and Fillmore find humor to be universal as well as “snugly...embedded” (Fillmore, 1994: 271).

Although we might paraphrase the old adage, different jokes for different folks, it is quite possible that Ciaro’s Humor Translation methodology combined with Fillmore’s frame semantics theory would be capable of rendering many supposedly embedded, culture-specific humor samples as universals. Yet the question must be asked: Where and how and at what point does universal shift into culture-specific and vice versa? Are

there markers that might clue the humor consumer as to which category is being deployed by a particular humor sample? This author believes that the point of shift occurs when rhetorical density is encountered. This refers to the introduction of schemes (low-level rhetorical devices that address morphology and syntax, such as rhyme and alliteration) and tropes (high-level rhetorical devices that address semantic and pragmatic content, such as metaphor and irony) into the basic sentence, in order to reinforce the tendency of the message (Nilsen 1989, 263). It appears that the level of rhetorical density seems to constitute a reliable marker of whether a humor sample is to be designated as universal or as culture-specific. The relationship between cultural embeddedness and rhetorical density is discussed in Chapter 7.

Sophisticated Humor

Use of the elements of rhetorical density is considered sophisticated language use, or sophisticated speech. This should not be confused with the concept of sophisticated humor, which according to Raskin apparently requires a different definition entirely. Indeed sophisticated humor seems to have nothing at all in common with rhetorical density, and may in fact partake of rhetorical minimalism. Raskin is working toward a theory of humor sophistication, but finds that

it is very difficult to define what generates sophistication in humor. He claims that his sparrow joke (13) is the height of humor sophistication, perhaps because of its extensive missing links yet he does not elaborate unduly in this direction. Nevertheless, it seems we might be able to make use of Raskin's earlier script theory to explain sophistication in humor, if we were to combine it with Charles Filmore's semantic frame theory, which would appear to be almost indispensable to an explanation of what makes humor sophisticated. Raskin explains that the humorous surprise element emerges the moment a script is switched, with the ending of the script corresponding to a different script category than the beginning of the script. This incongruity or surprise results from a sleight of hand in dealing a change in the scripts in the middle of their progression, as they are in the very process of enactment. For example, in the Medical Script/Sex Script switch, the patient inquires in his bronchial whisper: Is the doctor at home? Whereas the doctor's wife responds in a conspiratorial whisper: No. Come right in. The scripts have been exchanged without warning, generating surprise and humor.

It might be suggested that the narrower the semantic frame or script, the more subtle the humor. Thus the above humorous unit is not subtle because the exchange of scripts that were exchanged were of a

most broad category: Medical versus sexual. Thus literally anyone familiar with those categories is capable of appreciating this humor. As the category of semantic framing narrows, the category of individuals capable of appreciating its humor narrows. Thus Raskin finds it difficult to even convey the causes that account for the sparrow joke exerting its hilarious effect upon him, while simultaneously, it exerts only a rather lukewarm effect upon his colleagues. Yet if we reconsider Raskin's own earlier script theory of humor in the context of Charles Fillmore's definition of semantic frames, we find that it may be possible to explain firstly, why the sparrow joke is funny, and secondly, why it is not funny for everyone. (What is the difference between two elements – is a question most individuals comprehend. Subsequently, the frame narrows, and the listener discovers that a difference being sought within only one element, which is logically absurd. Logical absurdity is a narrower semantic frame, and therefore the joke becomes sophisticated, i.e. somewhat exclusive in that only those individuals having experience with that semantic frame can be expected to enjoy this more sophisticated humor. It must be clarified in this context that sophistication is not necessarily to intellect, but is equated rather with life experience in addition to artistic sensibility (Ruch) which would enable

the humor consumer to appreciate a wider and also a subtler range of semantic categories. This type of more subtle appreciation can generate two tracks of subtler or more sophisticated humor: On the first track, a narrow, subtle semantic frame will be exchanged for another narrow, subtle semantic frame, without warning, generating humorous response in a sophisticated audience, while a non-sophisticated audience will not discern the exchange. In the second category, a broad semantic frame will be exchanged for a narrow semantic frame. A broad category of script shifts into a subtle category of script without warning, generating a humorous response in a sophisticated audience.

Humor sophistication may or may not be universal, and could constitute a fertile ground for future humor research. It would appear that sophisticated individuals responding with immense enjoyment to a sophisticated joke cannot readily explain their enjoyment. This could account for Raskin's candidly admitted lack of clarity as to a definition of sophistication in humor. He himself could not explain why the sparrow example had struck him as so very amusing. It should be pointed out that Raskin's later ontological semantics may or may not account for sophisticated humor. This question is beyond the scope of this author's scholarship. However, it seems clear that Raskin's sense of a need to

abandon his earlier script theory and turn to the more complex field of ontological semantics was a response to the frustration of being unable to account for sophisticated humorous response using his script theory. This author feels that the script theory is too valuable to be rejected in favor of ontological semantics, as effective at humor definition as ontological semantics may be. The simple inclusion of an additional factor, that is to say, the simple linking of Raskin's scripts to Fillmore's semantic frames and allowing broader-to-narrower categories of semantic frames that generate the scripts - could salvage Raskin's script theory and restore it to the limelight of humor scholarship.

CHAPTER 6

NAMING: RHETORICALLY DENSE PERFORMATIVE

It may be possible to cautiously venture an *a fortiori* extrapolation from the culturally diverse nature of humor to the culturally diverse nature of names and naming practices. There may be no linguistic phenomenon that is more culturally specific than naming, which may be the answer to readers who occasionally wonder why serious linguists (Conklin and other early anthropologists, as well as many moderns, including the Nilsens in Names and Naming) have devoted such extensive resources to the study of naming. Beginning students who find this surprising (such as this author at the beginning of her academic career) are reflecting their own lack of awareness of the intensity of the density of the level of rhetoric that is embedded in every name.

The culturally specific nature of names leads individuals who are members of minority cultures that wish to assimilate into a majority culture to deny their culturally specific names. Thus an Asian student named Thuang might tell his university instructor, "Just call me Tony." This cultural self-repression, although arguably inevitable, contains tragic elements according to language maintenance proponents such as Fishman.

An even more acute awareness of the characterization potential inherent in the act of naming, and in the need to invest in the sociocultural power of a name, is demonstrated by adolescents and young adults, according to Nilsen and Nilsen. This topic is treated extensively in Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature, (2007) with extensive examples cited that reflect not only the creativity with which young people relate to names, but also their acute awareness of the sociolinguistic weight that every name bears. The relative social status that inheres between a student who is nicknamed Flame, or Scorpion, vis a` vis a student who is nicknamed Worm – can be said to speak for itself. Hearers of the nickname (nicknaming is arguably the vernacular version of more culturally formalized naming actions) do not have to be members of the sociolinguistic grouping that produced the nickname in order to comprehend its sociolinguistic implications. This comprehension is translatable at some level. (Perhaps this is thanks to Levinson's "universal interaction engine." Our universal ability to interact with every other human being, no matter how culturally distant he or she may be from us – assuming one subscribes to the universal interaction engine – allows us to discern the way that others react to names.) Thus no matter how foreign sounding the actual name might be, we sense (with a bit of

guidance from the authors, Nilsen and Nilsen) that “Many Horses” is obviously a more positive name than “Zero Horses,” and we can invent our own, once we understand the principle, construing “Laughing Water” to be nicer than “Muddy Water.” There is also No Last Name at all, which reflects the lowest possible sociolinguistic status as well as the greatest human tragedy. Without sharing the cultural relationship with naming that another culture has, we are able to relate to its social consequences.

Demonstrating an acute awareness of the pragmatic effect worked by names, the Nilsens demonstrate how Harry Potter series author J. K. Rowling appears to have done what must be considered the impossible (unless one subscribes to Levinson's universal interaction engine.) We discern from Names and Naming that Rowling has adopted Native American naming norms of using individualized lexical items, then adapted them to Anglo-Saxon pragmatic norms, and then even expanded upon them to convey her literary messages, maximizing to the utmost the characterization potential inherent in the act of naming. Countless messages are thus communicated to the matriculating world, for example, in the single performative act of naming a teacher “Madeye Moody. Adapting the ancient Chinese adage to the Nilsens’ study of

naming, we might conclude that one name equals a thousand words. Nilsen and Nilsen's Names and Naming covers a wide field of intercultural scope in young adult literature, demonstrating that no matter how diverse the cultures, whether Latin, Native American, Anglo-Saxon or others, the life-enhancing or life-diminishing power of a name is a universal of human interaction. This author has often considered the Nilsens' apparent compatibility with Stephen Levinson. Their work on naming would seem to confirm the Nilsens' support of the Levinsonian principle of universals of human interaction within a framework of cultural diversity. One may conclude from a reading of Names and Naming, though this is never specifically stated, that a universal mechanism of social interaction exists, which operates among adolescents and young adults (culture notwithstanding) to demarcate status and relationships through the creative use of naming practices.

Non-scholarly literature and popular culture address the profound implications of naming as well, at a more instinctual level. Thus the young woman who is the sole survivor of her tribe from the Island of the Blue Dolphins (O' Dell) tells us that you must never divulge your real (secret) name, for knowing your real name gives another person power over you. Therefore you must have also a public name by which you are

generally called. A cultural supremacist might sneer at this, and conclude that this tribe's "obsession" with names reflects an adolescent mentality. A more soberly realistic view of this culture's unique attitude toward naming might conclude that there is more to names than mere status bids by adolescents, and that naming reflects a deeper understanding of identity than is commonly understood.

The profundity of names may be explained by the fact that they are fundamentally intertextual. It might be suggested that the act of naming is an Intertextual Performative. How do names perform their intertextual references? Texts in this context refer to bits of shared semantic reference. If Raskin calls such bits "scripts," in order to demonstrate humor's qualification for the category of sophisticated speech, by the fact of its rhetorical density, then we may also call them "texts" in order to demonstrate the same about naming.

The intertextuality of the nature of naming is commonly assumed, even at the non-scholarly level as mentioned above. Consider the popular website, "Wonderings of an Onomast:"

For girls, Olivia comes in first place...having only entered the Top 10 the year before. Jessica has dropped 2 places, thank goodness, and Grace is now in second place. Surprising entries were Ruby which jumped from #42 to #5 in one year - she's suddenly red-hot! ;) *Keira continues to rise, now at 33, thanks to the success and popularity of Keira Knightley* (Italics mine).

In some cultures, the “intertextually performative” nature of naming is overt. That is to say that the conscious performance of a social act through naming is deliberately made explicit, taking on narrative and historical significance.

A collection of names from two early census records taken on Guam, one in 1728 and the other in 1759, tells the story of the horror and despair of a people brutalized by war, disease and slavery...[A certain political event triggered vicious retaliation by the Spanish, resulting in a war that lasted until the end of the 17th Century. The war, and European diseases to which the Chamoru people had no resistance, came close to annihilating the Chamorus. Their population dropped from an estimated 40,000 before the wars to fewer than 4000 at the beginning of the 18th Century. The Spanish rounded up the survivors and forbade them to go near the sea. They were afraid that the surviving Chamorus would attempt to escape, reducing the slave population even further. Although the period of open warfare was past, the people continued to resist by preventing and terminating their pregnancies. They did not want to bring into the world children who would suffer the horrors that they were suffering...The nature of 18th Century Chamoru names: The old census records recorded the names of persons grouped by household and village, along with their gender and an indication as to whether the person was a child or an adult. A casual glance at the name list reveals that each person had a Spanish first name and a Chamoru second name, just as you would be likely to find on Guam today. But a closer look reveals a very significant difference: among the Chamoru second names, there are very few duplicates. Almost everyone has a unique name. This tells us two things. First of all, the Chamoru names here are not surnames. That is, they are not family names. This tells us that the people of Guam at this point had two given or "first" names, a Spanish baptismal name and a Chamoru name which was

presumably used in everyday life. Secondly, the lack of duplication tells us that the ancient Chamorus did not draw their names from a collection of name words, as we do in English, but instead, drew their names from the lexicon of everyday language, as is done by the Chinese. In the 1728 census, we find a very small number of duplicate names, and they are used randomly for males or females. In other words, names or words are not associated with a particular sex as they are in European languages. In the 1759 census, we find the beginnings of a trend toward the European system of naming. Although most names are unique, there are some names that have become very popular, and that are used predominantly for one sex or the other. In modern Chuukese culture, people change their names freely throughout life. Dr. Rosa Palomo, a Chamoru language specialist at the University of Guam, believes that the same thing may have been true of the ancient Chamorus. This means that the name recorded in the census record may not have been the person's birth name, but one acquired later in life. **What the names are saying:** If names are drawn from everyday words, people can use their names to convey any message they like. Whereas a great many Chamoru names have positive meanings of the usual type, such as **Dahi**, "friend" or **Faasi**, "clean," an unusual number have names that express despair, hardship, striving, and deprivation. We also see many names involving basic needs such as food or the desire for such things. Following are the names of despair. References to the sea, wind, fishing and sailing probably refer to the Spanish policy of forbidding the Chamorus access to the sea.

A comprehensive list of Chamoru names and their translations follows this historical overview. Brenna Lorenz (Chamoru Names Website) calls these names one-word essay narratives of anguish. They may thus be considered exemplars of rhetorical density. This does not mean that names are a rhetorically dense linguistic phenomenon, replete with intertextual reference, simply because an Anglo-Saxon hearer will

not know that the name Tayigi means “not defeated” in Guam, and that the name Abi means “to sustain,” and therefore the hearer misses all of the layers of cultural and historical reference embedded in those names. If that were the case, one would need only a translator who possessed the most rudimentary lexical proficiency in the Guam language. The intertextual difficulties become more obvious with names such as Guiram – Fish, Taitasi – No Sea, Tahayo – No Wood, and Tailagua – No Net. After our translator has helped us, we remain as confused as before. We do not know the cultural and historical implications of having no wood and no net. It is true that we can conjecture, and probably with a fair degree of accuracy, that lack of a natural resource, or the lack of a tool for acquiring what is probably one’s livelihood – must denote a negative state of affairs. Yet this is a far cry from the weight of the affective message that is conveyed and received by members of that speech community upon uttering or hearing those names. Sitting in Tempe, Arizona, working at one’s computer and reading of the exotic practice of naming one’s child “No Net” one fails to perceive the depth of chagrin and despair that such a name must have conveyed in the maritime Guam culture during the era that used that name. We also miss the sense of relief and the joyful certainty of financial security that is

densely embedded in the name Fish. At the affective level, the layers of shared experience encapsulated in names remains encapsulated within the culture that has undergone its particular shared experience. What we are seeing here is a rhetorically dense Performative: The actual child, after all, is neither a net nor a non-net, neither a fish nor a non-fish, but only a child. The act of naming the child No Net or Fish is the introduction of the trope of metaphor into the discourse, upgrading it through the use of this rhetorically denser element to attain a more sophisticated level by referencing shared cultural knowledge.

William Shakespeare was the master of the intertextual performative that uses naming as its ultimate expression. To his question, “What’s in a name?” we might imagine the following answer in a dialogue with the great Bard: In fact, Mr. Shakespeare, all of the culturally embedded references that comprise the texts that inform individuals’ unconscious associations are in a name. In fact, however, Shakespeare was most profoundly aware of the performative power of naming. Shakespeare's professed freedom from any of the prejudice created by mere names – as in “What's in a name?” or “That which we call a rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet” in Romeo and Juliet – does not alter the fact that he chose his names and his naming

actions with the utmost care. Thus Bianca may be said to connote the character of whiteness, connoting whitewashed, as in hypocrisy; Kate may connote a character that is straightforward, to the point and unembellished (by deceit) and the name Petrucchio has an amoral ring to it (Taming of the Shrew). Romeo sounds romantic and Juliet sounds jewel-like. It might arguably be theorized that names represent the ultimate in rhetorical density in that they are consummately intertextual, the 'text' in this context being a culturally embedded emotional association.

There is also the phonological factor, which constitutes the one absolutely non-negotiable factor in translation. The best translator in the world cannot make Romeo sound like romance in Hindi, or make Juliet sound like a jewel in Chinese. If there are any onomatopoeic references in the Guam names, whether reflecting hope or despair, these references are utterly and entirely lost in the English translation. In this context, the pronunciation of words and of names and of shifty vowels (Nilsens, Pronunciation Contrasts 7, 21) becomes critical. We may argue further that while names may refer to “texts” of cultural experience, reflecting a level of rhetorical density in comparison to which mere prose, no matter how sophisticated, pales by contrast – differing pronunciations

of the same name go even further, referring to ever subtler micro-cultural textual references within the larger culture.

An Anglo-Saxon, upon reading Conklin's pioneering naming studies might exclaim: What kind of a name is Hanunoo? I can't even pronounce it. The Anglo-Saxon speaker is not concerned that his or her non-membership in the Hanunoo culture will be revealed. However, very often speakers wish to be identified with a particular sub-culture. It is not that they wish to be mistaken for actual members but simply viewed in the sympathetic light of non-outsiders, yet their pronunciation sets them implacably apart from that group. Very often, it is a problem with vowels, or with the more liquid consonants, as the more solid consonants are more stable, with consonant shift occurring much more gradually than vowel shift. Orthography is of little value in this context, phonetic transcription is somewhat more helpful, but is often unavailable, as when a university instructor reads the roster of student names, and every slight error betrays the fact that the speaker lacks any knowledge of the intertextual references of that culture. It is not that the instructor would wish to pass for a member of a particular population in which he or she is not in truth a member. However, the instructor would prefer to avoid being immediately branded an alien in the unconscious mind of the

student, which is too often the affective consequence of the gross mispronunciation of students' names. Pronunciation has repercussions and implications for student-teacher rapport to an extent that has perhaps not been fully investigated. Vowel shift becomes the ultimate elusive (Nilsens 2010) the primary divider between a member of a speech community and an outsider (Menzer). One who wishes to be considered an insider – or rather to avoid being branded an outsider – must first and foremost master a speech community's vowel system and its more liquid consonants (as in Labov's final 'r' study).

CHAPTER 7

RHETORICAL DENSITY: CULTURE-SPECIFIC

Many humor samples favor the relativists, being rich in rhetorical density, which makes them culturally embedded in the extreme. They abound with Lakoff's "image-schemas, force-dynamic-schemas, X-schemas, frames, conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, mental spaces, conceptual blends, and prototype structures of various kinds" (1990, 9). Folk tales, jokes, poetry, slang, allusion and metaphor – indeed all of the elements of rhetorical density – express Lakoff's principle that bodily experience shapes their cultural concepts - their "spatial relations concepts, action concepts, aspectual concepts, and primary conceptual metaphors" (9).

It is interesting to note that embodied metaphors seem to possess, almost by definition, an affective aspect, and that conversely, affective aspects possess an embodied expression. For this reason, the affective elements of the pragmatic goals that drive rhetorical density may not be overlooked in any discussion of conceptual metaphor and embodiment. Thus when speakers employ elements of rhetorical density, it appears that mere comprehension is not the central goal. For humor and naming to be successful, they must elicit the desired affective

result of a Performative. In humor, for example, if the hearer did not laugh, this indicates that the pragmatic intent was not fulfilled: The Performative failed to result in the performance. If hearers are not culturally proficient (in the culture from which the joke emanates) they will never “get it,” no matter how linguistically proficient they may be (in the language from which the joke emanates.) The same may be said for allusion, for metaphor, for intertextuality or for any of the other elements of rhetorical density.

A curious point that seems to almost cry out for further research is the absolute dearth of rhetorical density in Rowlings’ nicknames. The contrast is especially stark when juxtaposed with the densely saturated rhetoric in her designation of proper names. Her nicknames are devoid of cultural embeddedness. They usually consist of a single, unambiguous lexical item, the referent of which contains a high level of affective content. This affective content, whether positive or negative, is universal. It may be an animal that evokes fear, loathing or admiration. Phonetics are drafted in the service of the universal nature of the nickname, so that no cultural knowledge is required to absorb the immediate Performative effect of the nickname. For a negative Performative (insult, exclusion) the nickname will be “unsoundly,” to

borrow from the sense of sight the idea of an “earsore.” The reverse will be the case for the positive Performative goal of a nickname, which is also much rarer. The fact that this feature of cultural embeddedness/rhetorical density with nicknames is not slightly different than with names but in fact diametrically opposed would seem to indicate that nicknames fulfill an entirely different function than proper names, even perhaps occupying a separate Performative category. For with proper names, the element of cultural embeddedness is the most salient feature. The bearer of a name that is attached to noble historical associations was given this name for a specific cultural purpose. To a non-member of Anglo-Saxon culture or to one who has not been raised on English literature and mythology, Rowlings’ names for example are long and incomprehensible clusters of phonetic units. To a culturally competent member of Rowlings’s milieu, these names are richly laden with allusion, evoking powerful affective responses. We shudder at the sight and sound of the word Severus Snape (Names and Naming). This is not merely because ‘snape’ evokes a combination of snake and ape, two creatures that are universally feared. This is a mere lexical hybrid, which can be explained to a non-member of the culture. It could almost function equally well in the capacity of a nickname; it is only slightly too

complex. Yet as a proper name, it plays a distinct role in the decoding of the culturally embedded messages of this name: The reader is first puzzled by the name Severus. It might be a technical, perhaps an electrical problem. But then why such a frightening last name? And why the peculiar suffix, that archaic suffix that seems to breathe with ancient horror once we have read the last name. All these affective responses are a function of Raskin's "backtracking" decoding techniques, a human proficiency that ontological semantics attempts to duplicate (2008, 11).

We must backtrack, to use Raskin's explanation of his frame theory of humor, which he has perhaps programmed into his OntoParser. We shed our first hypothesis and start from scratch (11): Then it is not a phone connection being severed? It must be a terribly ancient use of the word sever, if it is followed by a Latin suffix. The ancient memory in this culture evokes the association of bloody rivalries and severed heads. Nonetheless, the fact that we have made use of Raskin's back-tracking theory does not make it any more universal. It seems unconvincing to attempt to say that the creation of the name Severus Snape from ancient Latin forms was a process generated by universal underlying structures. It seems so clearly a product of an idiosyncratic, creative, spur-of-the-

moment phenomenon co-constructed in collaboration with the many elements of diversity.

Fillmore's frame semantics, upon which Raskin based his script theory of humor, appears to be so broad as to adequately account for both of the major categories of humor found in this study. Non-culturally embedded, low-level rhetorical density humor samples use universal frames, and culturally embedded, high-level rhetorical density humor samples use culturally-specific frames, but the use of frames appears to be global. Even the Incongruity Theory of Humor (Morreall, 225) may be said to be based primarily on frames, and that humor results from the incongruity of discovering that an expected semantic frame has been exchanged for an unexpected semantic frame.

If we may speak of rhetorically dense and rhetorically sparse language use, and if the elements of density are the affective supplements that emanate from culturally embedded sources, while sparsity denotes the bare structure of language at its basic, universal level, then perhaps the same may be said of interaction. There are thousands of ways to be polite, as Brown and Levinson have told us. These are culturally embedded to an extreme, with one culture's politeness often constituting another culture's unforgivable rudeness (as

in the affective clash between members of negative and positive politeness cultures). Affective elements are abundant in the specific and culturally embedded choice of politeness forms. Perhaps we can say that the interactive (according to Levinson's use of the term) equivalent of rhetorical density would be Brown and Levinson's Positive Politeness, while the interactive equivalent of rhetorically sparse would have to be a universally accepted interactive norm rather than a culturally embedded one, and this might be Brown and Levinson's Negative Politeness. S will not intrude on H's space; S will not threaten H's face. These forms of politeness are universally desired. In contrast, S wants H's wants, S will promote H's wants – these are culturally embedded. Affective responses to affective supplements from another culture are often characterized by recoil: "Get away from me!" Not being universal, they will not promote successful interaction if S and H are members of different cultures. S may not know H's wants and may be utterly incapable of promoting H's interests. S's attempting to achieve H's wants can backfire in the most disastrous manner and be interpreted by H as the worst insult. Just as what we might call "interactive density" is culturally embedded, so is rhetorical density culturally embedded. The failed attempts to comprehend culturally embedded humor, or the attempts to produce the

rhetorically dense elements of a foreign language, such as Intertextuality and slang – with results that too often can only be described as embarrassing – all attest to the culturally embedded nature of any of the affective supplements of communication, whether of the linguistic sort or of the far broader meta-linguistic sort that Levinson calls “interactive.”

It may be possible to postulate that rhetorical density is related to typological diversity. Perhaps the more rhetorically dense a linguistic artifact, the more it is derivative of a culture-specific typology that has evolved with the progression of a specific historico-cultural process.

Perhaps wherever rhetorical density exists, we find also, in co-existence with this rhetorical density, a rich diversity of typological elements that derive from what Levinson calls “deep historico-cultural roots.” If we compare samples of greater versus lesser rhetorical density, a fascinatingly consistent pattern almost seems to emerge, in which the rhetorically sparse sample is devoid of any cultural reference and reflects instead the pure intellect, or the pure and straight lines of the grammars of logic (to borrow Levinson’s usage in “Grammars of Space”) whereas the rhetorically dense sample is built upon culturally specific typologies and makes no reference to the grammars of logic. Thus

Raskin's sparrow joke may very well be replicable by the OntoParser: "What's the difference between the sparrow?" "No difference at all. The two halves are identical, especially the left one" (13). The pure line of intellect can generate and isolate the point at which sense leaves off and nonsense, or "straightforward absurd" (Raskin, personal correspondence) begins. This joke is universal, and rhetorically sparse to the point of minimalism. Yet almost anyone from almost any culture can almost always recall a rhetorically dense joke that is based upon that person's specific cultural/intertextual reference system, which would be completely inaccessible to Raskin's OntoParser.

CHAPTER 8

EVOLUTION OF IDEAS

Levinson's expressions of disaffection toward "UG" lead the reader to assume that Levinson himself is not sensitive to the extent to which his theory of a universal cognition for interaction engine is compatible with and supportive of a universal grammar, or "UG," perhaps less in the Chomskyan sense than in the Fillmorian sense. Perhaps the hubris of certain few Chomskyan advocates has caused Levinson's apparently visceral distaste for UG in general, because in reality, Levinson's call for the investigation of a universal human capacity to generate interaction is utterly generative and transformational in essence. Perhaps a distinction would be appropriate here between the Chomskyan view of language universals and the Fillmorian view. In what is arguably a more profound, or more underlying formulation of the ways in which language is generated – Charles Fillmore's "The Case for Case" (1968) laid the groundwork for Chomsky's idea of language universals, yet ultimately Fillmore is most compatible with Levinson. It is suggested here that Levinson's understanding of pragmatics closely overlaps Fillmore's understanding of semantics. (FRAMENET Project) Fillmore did not focus on the technical and minimalist view of semantics

that seems to go beyond morphology since it does not only focus on the words themselves, and it seems to go beyond syntax, in that it does not only focus on the structure of the sentence, yet ultimately it is a reductive understanding of the concept of semantics that indeed borders on the morpho-syntactic, because it essentially asks only, what does this combination of linguistic elements mean? Fillmore implied a much deeper question: What does this combination of linguistic elements do? Fillmore's case definitions, such as Agent and Patient are an expression of semantics in its broadest, most Performative (Nilsen 2009) (Austin 1962) most pragmatic (Levinson 2001) sense. This grey area between semantics and pragmatics perhaps parallels a grey area between syntax and semantics. Chomsky addresses these grey areas where the borderlines overlap:

There are fairly clear-cut cases of violation of purely syntactic rules, for example, (15) (i) sincerity frighten may boy the (ii) boy the frighten may sincerity – and standard examples of purely semantic (or "*pragmatic*" [italics mine]) incongruity, for example...both of John's parents are married to ants of mine...I'm memorizing the score of the sonata I hope to compose some day...The examples...have a borderline character, and it is much less clear how their aberrant status is to be explained. In other words, we must face the problem of determining to what extent the results and methods of syntactic or of semantic analysis can be extended to account for the deviance and interpretation of these expressions. It goes without saying that the same answer may not be appropriate in all of these cases, and that purely semantic or purely syntactic considerations may not provide the

answer in some particular case. In fact, it should not be taken for granted necessarily, that syntactic and semantic considerations can be sharply distinguished (Aspects 76, 77).

It would seem that the same overlapping quality might apply to semantics and pragmatics, as seen in Fillmore's current FrameNet project. Semantics and pragmatics merge, though it seems that by definition Fillmore believes the pragmatic goal of the social contextual reality to constrain the semantic content, which in turn shapes the syntactical structure

Furthermore, it is possible that Chomsky's difficulties with syntax can be resolved by Fillmore's ergativity principle (1968) in an entirely adequate manner. The endless combinational possibilities of 'sincerity may frighten the boy' only arise if we remove ergativity from the picture. One can imagine that Fillmore might respond by saying that the first and foremost consideration must always be the deep case differentiation, and in English this is done by the use of word order, while in other languages it is done by the use of case affixes. Fillmore's most important deep case categories are Agent, Instrument, Experiencer and Patient (Nilsen, personal correspondence). Thus, only one single English-language word order combination for our particular semantic (or pragmatic) intention is possible, and that is: Sincerity may frighten the boy.

Chomsky is not the only one to have misunderstood or minimized the universal implications of ergativity. Much was written on the subject of the concept of ergativity following Fillmore's "Language Universals: The Case for Case" (1968) and many of the writers were students of Chomsky's, or so it appears from the acknowledgements (Legate 1, and Bobaljik 88). If these studies were conducted under Chomsky's advisement, this indicates that he did not comprehend or did not wish to recognize the underlying universal structure of the ergativity principle. Analyzing the diversifying structures that are all an expression of one underlying ergativity principle, and pointing to this diversity as evidence of the non-universal nature of the ergativity principle, is to misunderstand or to ignore its universal implications.

Approximately 25% of the world's languages are described as "ergative languages" because they present argument-marking phenomena that differ from the more widespread nominative-accusative pattern. Despite the growing body of research on ergativity during the last decades, there is still no shared understanding in linguistic theory on the ultimate nature of ergativity, and whether it constitutes a uniform linguistic property. Also, despite the advances made in the last decades in the study of language acquisition and processing, it is still unknown what the impact of ergativity and associated phenomena might be in these areas. This workshop gathers experts on various areas of language research (theoretical linguistics, typology, acquisition, processing) to discuss their latest proposals and results as well as to assess (*sic*) resilient problems in the study of ergativity as a linguistic trait.

The above is cited from a website called “ergwork,” which addresses the concept of ergativity in its popular version that does not showcase its deeper meaning, analyzing only the surface structures occasionally associated with it, thereby placing the universal status of the concept of ergativity in doubt, and suggesting its possible removal from the exclusive category of grammar universals, of which it may be one of the very few members.

In contrast to deep ergativity, surface structures can be rather slippery and unreliable affairs, even when they appear to be solid, as Nilsen shows (1971, 8). Even an old faithful standby such as the use-with correlation, which a researcher as rigorous as Lakoff considers basic – “ ‘with’ and ‘use’ share so many co-occurrence constraints that they are actually derived from the same underlying base” (cited in Nilsen, 10) – can betray grammarians who rely upon its stable performance. “Several case grammarians have relied on this use-with relationship as a means of identifying the Instrumental case” (10). Chomsky questions the exact synonymy between the two words, and points out that there are certain use/to pairings that work in a similar manner, but do not have Instrumental adverbs acting as the objects of with (in Nilsen, 12). Nilsen points out that there is a hierarchy of Instrumentality, and the use-with

paraphrase is not operable when an Instrument is actually controlled by another Instrument. He cites Fillmore's example: "John used a stepladder to change the lightbulb" is an acceptable statement, whereas "John changed the lightbulb with a stepladder" is a humorous statement. Fillmore explained that the reason the sentence was unacceptable was semantic: Only the Instrument that is the most direct cause of action usually rises to the surface structure of a sentence (in Nilsen, 15). Furthermore, total semantic overlap is lacking in the with-use relationship. In comparing "John squashed the eggs with his boots" to "John used his boots to squash the eggs," we find that the former sentence leaves open the question of whether the action was intentional, while the latter clearly marks the action as intentional. With entails the semantic feature of //Cause// while use entails the additional semantic feature of //Intent//. We see then that *surface and intermediate structure constraints sometimes interfere so as to block* [this correlation] (15, italics mine).

Nilsen cites Fillmore's assertion that a particular deep case structure may appear only once in a simple sentence. If it seems to appear more than once, it must reflect a different underlying category of deep case. Nilsen finds that this statement, as true as it may be, is

inadequate to distinguish one case from another. It certainly does not tell us how to define or identify deep cases (16). What distinguishes the cases absolutely is a breakdown of their respective combinations of the two non-negotiable semantic features: Cause and Animate. Thus Agent equals plus Cause plus Animate. Experiencer equals minus Cause plus Animate. Instrument equals plus Cause minus Animate, and Patient equals minus Cause and minus Animate. These semantic features account for innumerable variations in the elements of surface structure. Just one of many examples is topicalization:

The ranking of cases according to amount of action is crucial since it provides a clear and simple explanation for topicalization. Primary topicalization, which in some languages is equivalent to subject marking, is predictable from this hierarchy since the most active cases are the most likely to receive it, while the least active (and most receptive) cases are least likely to receive topicalization. This fact allows us to predict correctly that the hierarchy of cases for primary topicalization would be Agent, Causative, Instrument, Patient, etc. Zero topicalization which in some languages is equivalent to Direct Object marking, reverses this hierarchy so that the least active cases are more likely to be zero topicalized and the most active cases are least likely to be zero topicalized. From this it is possible to predict correctly that the hierarchy of cases for zero topicalization (Direct Object marking) would be Patient, Instrument, Causative, Agent, etc. Neutral topicalization, which in some languages is equivalent to preposition attachment, applies to those cases which are neither actors (and therefore marked as subjects) nor receivers (and therefore marked as Direct Objects). The result of Neutral topicalization is that the Arguments thus marked have freedom of movement within the sentence and may be deleted from the surface structure" (66).

Fillmore's deep cases, identified and predictable by their semantic features according to Nilsen, are the bedrock, to use Levinson's term for what he rejects in the idea of grammar universals. According to Levinson, there is no bedrock. Every culture does grammar differently, to which claim Fillmore and Nilsen would agree with regard to the surface structures of grammar. However, with regard to their underlying causes, Fillmore and Nilsen find the bedrock, or more precisely, the underlying categories from which all grammars proliferate. Nilsen writes: "For Fillmore, deep cases and the predicates to which they are related are the primitives which constitute the universal linguistic base from which the various surface structures in particular languages can be derived by the application of language-dependent transformations" (1971, 1).

The claim might be made that Chomsky's (apparently justified) dismissal of his opponents' later findings as being inapplicable to any possible refutation of his theory in that they address surface structure variation rather than deep structure – could apply equally well to his own students' findings that attempt to evict ergativity from its status as a universal grammar constraint. We cite Chomsky again, as it applies to his own students' critique of ergativity: "[I]t has been emphasized that

the deep structures for which universality is claimed may be quite distinct from the surface structures of sentences as they actually appear. Consequently, there is no reason to expect uniformity of surface structures, and the findings of modern linguistics are thus not inconsistent with the hypotheses of universal grammarians (Aspects, 117, 118).”

One almost receives the impression that Fillmore has lost interest in this dispute. The question of whether ergativity is universal or not, as well as the question of whether grammar universals exist at all – to which Fillmore would almost certainly respond in the affirmative – seems not to preoccupy him any longer. There is a much more important constraint upon language use, to the investigation of which he seems to have dedicated his life, and this is the semantic frame, which in Fillmore’s usage borders on an implicit reference to the pragmatic frame. This is the meta-universal, or the mega-universal beside which grammatical constraints pale, and from his utter and prolific involvement in this work, one imagines that Fillmore believes that even grammar universals must bow in the presence of the pragmatic frame.

Fillmore’s recent work is thus less oriented toward ergativity, and more oriented toward pragmatics. His *Frame Elements in the FrameNet*

Project address undeniably pragmatic contexts. Some representative frames are Medical (Doctor, Patient) and Commercial (Buyer, Seller) yet there are many others, and Fillmore continues to formulate new frames to define human social experience in its linguistic context. It must be mentioned again that Fillmore uses the term semantics in its richest sense to cover pragmatic constraints. His frames appear less to address the minimal lexical content, and more to address the socio-pragmatic intentions of speakers and hearers. In the medical frame, the pragmatic intention is to cure or be cured. In the commercial frame, there is an explicit pragmatic goal of purchase or sale. Fillmore's semantics is rarely expressed in a context severed from its performative basis.

Semantics are decisive, rather than syntax (Nilsen) that is to say that language is semantically driven rather than syntactically driven. Though both Patient and Agent are both noun phrases, it is our meaningful intention that drives the rules of language. This is where Fillmore's universal ergativity principle comes into play. Whether or not Jelinek has shown that Straits Salish has no noun-verb distinctions (Levinson, "Myth," 2009) which is fundamentally a grammatical/syntactical distinction, the fact remains that Straits Salish has some way for speakers to convey to hearers – at the pragmatic level

– that the Agent is not the Patient, and vice versa. This is a severely oversimplified caption to refer to Fillmore’s ergativity principle. The study of syntax is not the focus of this work, but it is possible to extract from Fillmore’s formidable erudition the single principle that the semantic content constrains the grammar. Speakers universally formulate linguistic rules, as diverse as they may be, which work the common effect of separating Agent from Instrument, Experiencer from both of these latter, and Patient from all of the above. To the question “All languages have X, don’t they?” which Levinson (“Myth,” 2009) presents as the naïve popular misunderstanding, one might answer in the affirmative. If X is any rule-governed convention that allows the hearer to distinguish Mary from the ball in terms of Agent and Patient, then all languages have it. No language heretofore studied, to this author’s partial knowledge, permits speakers to leave the question open as to whether Mary threw the ball or the ball threw Mary. As to the question of whether these distinctions are marked only semantically and pragmatically, i.e. through deep case, or whether they are marked by surface case i.e. morphologically and syntactically, this is the point at which the typological stream of linguistics enters, to explain the historico-cultural roots out of which the particular expressions of diversity have

grown and from which the multiple faces of the ergativity principle have emanated.

Levinson comments that linguists' writing bristles with formidable, opaque data ("Myth," 2009) which deter the public from attempting to engage with it. This may be even truer of the syntacticians, whose diagrammatic and terminological conventions may give even the most stout hearted a moment of pause. The profusion of syntactic data may represent the many forms of diversity that can result from the merger of ergativity – a universal – with the typologies that grow from the deep historico-cultural roots (Levinson, "Myth," 2009) of every language. Yet Fillmore seems to imply that there is an even higher source of linguistic generativity than semantics, and this is pragmatics. That is to say that Fillmore's semantic frames constrain syntax, yet the speaker's pragmatic intention constrains the semantic frame. Fillmore himself has moved in that direction with his FrameNet project. This author believes that it is this pragmatic intention that generates rhetorical density. Thus for example, if we would consider a sentence such as 'John finished all the work,' the semantic content will constrain the grammatical rules of every language to generate clear distinctions that will enable hearers to know clearly that it was John who finished all the work, and that it was not all

the work that finished John. However, to raise the level of analysis a step higher, the pragmatic intention of the speaker can generate richer forms. Thus, if the speaker's pragmatic goal is for the hearer to appreciate John, this goal can generate a sentence that is more rhetorically dense, such as 'John labored selflessly.' It might be interesting to investigate the extent to which the level of rhetorical density is tied to the level of pragmatic intensity. What seems certain however is that syntax is not the prime linguistic mover, but only a tool in the hands of the higher linguistic mover – semantics – which may itself be mostly a tool for the even higher linguistic mover that is pragmatics. Fillmore's FrameNet project appears to be pointing in this direction, in that the semantic frames he describes border very closely on pragmatics. They do not address the rudimentary meaning of the lexical item but the pragmatic goal being addressed. Fillmore's semantic frames could easily be termed pragmatic frames. The overlap between these two categories is extensive and rich in the FrameNet project, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WORD?

Inheritance: An IS-A relation. The child frame is a subtype of the parent frame, and each FE [frame element] of the parent is bound to a corresponding FE in the child. An example is the Revenge frame that inherits from the Rewards_and_punishments frame" (FrameNet The Book, 7).

Fillmore claims these frames to be universals of human language. Fillmore's earlier work on ergativity supports his present work, which has moved in an increasingly pragmatic direction in the FrameNet Project. For a severely oversimplified definition of ergativity, it appears to refer to the tendency of every language in every culture to mark a distinction between the deep cases. Ergativity is a universal of human language. Both of these universals, frames and ergativity, appear to be quite difficult to refute, and they appear as well to be utterly compatible with Levinson's theory of a universal human mechanism of cognition for interaction that produces universal rules of human interaction.

Yet Fillmorian theory generated Chomskyan theory. The concept of language universals was expanded by Chomsky, and then expended further by Chomsky's followers. First claiming that the universal underlying principles of grammar could be transformed into any of the grammatical constructs of any language, he later claimed that the universal underlying principles of grammar could generate any of the grammatical constructs of any language. Critics called this view – which perhaps we could call strong Chomskyanism, in that it had moved away from the Fillmorian approach, as opposed to what we might call weak Chomskyanism, which was basically compatible with Fillmorian theory –

too extreme, while advocates understood it to herald a new understanding of language that opened up infinite possibilities. It's success with computer languages was irrefutable (Nilsen 2009) and Raskin collaborated with computational scientists to develop the OntoParser (2008) which aside from its computer language generating talents, might also be capable one day of generating jokes. It is at this point that one is required to either extend the hypothesis to its extreme, and hypothesize that the Universal Grammar theory is capable of generating anything, or to call a certain stop to claims for its capacities and maintain that a line must be drawn between what Universal Grammar is capable of generating and what it is not capable of generating. If one takes the first option and extends the UG claim indefinitely, then according to the linear path of strict logic, UG must be capable of generating art. As many would find difficulty with such a claim, and insist that it is not plausible to claim that universal grammar was the impetus behind, for example, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, then the question remains as to where the line is to be drawn in order to determine the generative capacities of underlying grammar universals, and in order to point to the cultural products that cannot be ascribed to underlying grammar generativity. This author believes that the line is

drawn by rhetorical density. That is to say that for a cultural product that is rhetorically dense, it may be possible to assume that universal underlying grammatical principles have not generated that language construct. For a cultural product that contains no trace of rhetorical density, it may be possible to assume that universal underlying grammatical principles have indeed generated that particular language construct. This is not to say that we have already managed to formulate or to identify the particular underlying dynamic that is responsible for generating that cultural product, but that perhaps given enough time, dedication and talent of the sort that Victor Raskin brings to this pursuit, it should be possible for the ultimate OntoParser to be perfected, which might be capable of isolating the exact grammar universals responsible for generating these cultural products.

Berlyne's "collatibles" can be said to parallel Levinson's "deep historico-cultural" roots. We reiterate Berlyne's views cited above in Bjarne Sode Funch:

The term collative refers to the fact that it is necessary to compare or collate information from two or more sources in order to determine how novel, surprising or complex a pattern is. Sometimes, as with novelty or surprise, it is a matter of noting relations of similarity between something that is present at this moment and something that has been encountered in the past. At other times, as with complexity or incongruity, it is a matter of

noting, putting together, and summing up characteristics of several elements that are present simultaneously (27).

These features that constitute collatives seem highly characteristic of culture-specific artifacts. Various elements that are present simultaneously, or that evoke elements of the past, do not evoke the idea of a universally generated underlying structure but rather the idea of a complex amalgam of culturally diverse elements that come together as stimuli to the art (or humor) consumer in order to inspire the intended response. The idea of collatives summons up Levinson's idea of deep historico-cultural roots, which combine together to constrain experience, perception and cognition. It may be reasonable to surmise that Berlyn's collatives have no relationship whatsoever to universally generated structures.

Nevertheless, Raskin believes that these universal structures are capable of generating humor. Thus we may be forced to extrapolate that if Raskin is correct that Universal Grammar can generate humor then it may follow that UG can generate art. Yet if this is too extreme a claim for Chomskyanism due to the collative factor, perhaps we should attempt to formulate a weak Raskinian theory of humor. Perhaps we can posit

that UG can only generate some humor, but not all humor, being that much of humor is dependent on the deeper historical and cultural roots that comprise Levinson's claim for typological theory. From Nilsen's position that both Universalist theory and Typological theory are necessary for an adequate accounting of language, we must conclude that UG may be capable of generating only certain forms of humor, and as a corollary, UG may be capable of generating only certain art forms.

Syntactically Driven Versus Semantically Driven

Fillmore postulates the importance of semantic frames, and of annotating grammatical structures according to semantic and not merely according to syntactic tags (2000). For Fillmore, Baker and Lowe, grammatical tags should reflect their semantic context in order to accurately describe their function within the sentence, in that the semantic function is a truer indicator than the more general grammatical labeling of noun, predicate, etc. Each generic event frame has its own set of tags, 'tagsets' that are unique to it. A generic event is a category of human interaction with fixed roles that relate universally to that interaction, regardless of particular circumstances. Generic events can be classified into categories of human endeavor, such as medical, commercial transaction, etc. The tagsets of a medical frame for example would include the archetype categories of healer, patient, disease, wound, etc. The tagsets of a commercial transaction frame would include the archetype categories of buyer, seller, merchandise, currency, etc. Features of sub-categories of these events will have their own additional tagsets, and in addition, they will "inherit" the elements and semantics of their parent category. Thus a real estate transaction inherits the semantic frame elements of the generic frame of commercial

transaction, as far as buyer, seller, payment, goods, etc. Fillmore, Baker and Lowe point out that technically this would have to be considered world knowledge rather than linguistic knowledge, but it is such a minimal level of world knowledge that it is required even for analyzing the most basic grammatical meanings. They bring the example of "buy a candy bar with a red wrapper" versus "buy a candy bar with a \$20 dollar bill" (Fillmore, Baker and Lowe 1997).

Fillmore, Baker and Lowe's generic event frame principle would seem to be compatible with Victor Raskin's theory of humor, which includes Raskin's attempt to apply the principles of ontological semantics to humor. Raskin discusses the conceptual basis for this application in his introduction to a collection of articles that forms the foundation for humor research, which he has compiled into The Primer of Humor Research (2008).

The principles of ontological semantics are in fact even more generic than the generic event frames described by Fillmore, Baker and Lowe. As a sort of *a fortiori* deduction, we might conclude that a humor theorist such as Raskin – who propounds what we might call the ultimate generic of humor, meaning an almost Chomskian universality that generates the deep structures of humor – would surely accept Fillmore,

Baker and Lowe's much milder tendency to categorize the particulars within the generic, so that it is quite likely that Raskin would accept Charles Fillmore's theory of semantic case frames as being relevant to humor research. Fillmore after all asks only that we take heed of the semantic context of grammar:

We take the view that word meanings are best understood in reference to the conceptual structures which support and motivate them. We believe, therefore, that any description of word meanings must begin by identifying such underlying conceptual structures.³ Frames have many properties of stereotyped scenarios – situations in which speakers expect certain events to occur and states to obtain.⁴

In general, *frames* encode a certain amount of “real-world knowledge” in schematized form. Consider the common scenario which exemplifies the commercial transaction frame: the elements of such frames are the individuals and the props that participate in such transactions (which we call FRAME ELEMENTS):

Fillmore, Baker and Lowe's case frames appear to be much more tolerant of the particulars of a linguistic event than the Orthodox Chomskian deep structure theorists. Thus the structural relationships in a “commercial transaction” frame might differ linguistically from the structural relationships in the “medical” frame. Fillmore, Baker and Lowe's tolerance for the more specific, or perhaps we should call it the more surface – as opposed to deep – categories, would perhaps put him at odds with Raskin's later affinity for pure ontological semantics, yet

Fillmore, Baker and Lowe's semantic frames seem highly compatible with Raskin's earlier theory of script-based humor.

Let us consider for a moment the extremely structured nature of the theory of ontological semantics, and how radical a notion is Raskin's attempt to apply such structure (one is almost tempted to say rigidity) to humor, which is the most playful and flexible aspect of an already playful and flexible category – language. It is even more puzzling when we consider the extremely playful and flexible brilliance of Raskin's writing style, as reflected in the very text (Introduction to Primer) in which he espouses the application of ontological semantics to humor theory.

Raskin's earlier theory may have tended to the more Fillmorian, while his later humor theory may be viewed as tending to the more Chomskian. An early citation of Raskin by a book reviewer (1989) in a review of a Raskin article published in the very first volume of the *International Journal for Humor Studies*, focuses on Raskin's script-based approach. This script-based approach, in which the semantic content of two scripts (two linguistic expressions, each of which reference a particular semantic environment) clash with one another to produce humor, seems to be far more compatible with Fillmore's case for

semantic case frames than Raskin's later preference for ontological semantics.

“[We examine] Victor Raskin's (1985) script-based semantic theory of humor. Raskin has argued that in order for a text to be "funny," it must be compatible with two different lexical "scripts" that are related, but are opposed, to each other. A "semantic recursion trigger" enables the text to evoke more than one script” (Handelman 1989).

Raskin's script-based focus evolved into his interest in ontological semantics, expressed in his Ontological Semantics (Raskin 2004). In a 2006 review of Ontological Semantics, Raskin's and Nirenburg's theory was praised for its comprehensive approach to linguistic phenomena (Nemec 2006).

Ontological semantics tackles some of the most basic infrastructures of language. The system relies heavily on the use of external knowledge, which is divided into four components: the ontology, the fact repository, the lexicon, and the onomasticon. The ontology represents a concept (type) hierarchy. The actual instances of a type (e.g. London of type City) are present in the fact repository. The language expressions (e.g. the word "London") representing a proper name are listed in the onomasticon and linked to the entities of the fact repository. The lexicon contains all other language material and is linked to the ontology. A separate chapter describes ways of acquisition of this material. With these components at hand the authors describe at various levels of detail the functionality of the

subsystems corresponding to the respective microtheories: disambiguation of valency frames via matching of selectional restrictions, restriction relaxation in certain contexts, ellipsis resolution, modality, event phase, iteration, temporality and establishment of coreference relations. Discourse processing at the suprapropositional level is also discussed (1).

As we can see from the above, there is no more talk of scripts. Raskin has apparently moved past such human-experience-oriented reference, or moved higher perhaps, into the rarefied realms of pure science. Ontological semantics is beguiling in its power to explain all phenomena but one wonders how much of the human experience of language it actually accounts for. For this author, the question must remain one of wonderment, as she does not begin to understand the depths of Raskin's most casual reference.

Raskin here seems to abandon much of his affinity for the semantic theory of Charles Fillmore, in favor of deeper ontological theories, which to the average reader might appear Chomskian. ('Deeper' here is not intended in the sense of more profound, but in the sense of more underlying and less related to the surface particulars of the environment in which the humor function is being enacted.) The use of the term 'semantics' appears to refer only to the most technical,

absolutely minimal sense of the term, i.e. the semantic content of a grammatical function, rather than Fillmore's broader understanding of semantics as a network of world-knowledge meanings being referenced in the environment in which a linguistic act is taking place.

This author regrets the fact of the script-based model's removal from the limelight of humor theory. Although the particulars of the generic event semantic frame model formulated by Fillmore seem to be exactly compatible with a script-based theory, the more important fact is that both of these seem to be more compatible with one's intuitive sense of humor as being a personal and localized experience, which Chomskian approach does not address. While deep structure is incomparable for its application to computational linguistics, it seems rather ill at ease in the realm of humor because of the playful and non-structured nature of humor. To apply again a humor sample used earlier in a different context: "Is the doctor home," asked the patient in his bronchial whisper. "No," answered the doctor's young and pretty wife. "Come right in." These two clashing scripts that generate the humor of this joke correlate precisely with Fillmore's generic event frames: The medical frame has clashed with the sex frame. Fillmore's frames are effortlessly reinterpreted as Raskin's scripts.

Certain jokes that Raskin has analyzed using the tools of ontological semantics, seem as if they would have done so much better had they been analyzed with the script-based model. “I don’t recall which one I chose.” A joke based on sexual allusion, cited in Raskin’s introduction to the Primer (13) is put through the tortuous paces of ontological semantics, when its humorous element could have been readily, fully and rigorously accounted for by a script-based model that would have been simplicity itself: A fairy tale script (or frame) clashes with a sex script (or frame).

Some linguistic scholars (Nemec 1) have viewed ontological semantics as a problematic theory, or perhaps not so much problematic as inadequate to account for the breadth of the phenomenon of language and humor (Nemec 1).

It is important to realize that the described system and the presented examples [in Ontological Semantics] are more a vision of an ideal system rather than a description of any actual implementation.” Unfortunately, the authors do not make this distinction explicit (sometimes they even remark on the slightest details of a particular implementation) thus tacitly leaving the reader with the impression that the presented - very difficult - examples are handled by some existing system systematically, robustly and with high coverage. No present existing system would be able to match such performance (2).

The person writing above was addressing a forum of mathematical linguists, whose mathematical affinities are well suited to structural linguistics' inexorable insistence upon near-mathematical precision. Their criticism may therefore be more carefully considered. In view of it, and if we consider also Nilsen's suggestion that Chomskian deep structure theory does not seem to account for playfulness in language use, and if we consider further that Victor Raskin's ontological semantics seems to follow a Chomskian-style focus upon deep structure, and if we consider last but not least that Raskin's own writing style is nothing if not playfulness in language use at its most brilliant, then we may conclude that Raskin's ontological semantics is unable to account for his own writing style.

The question might also be asked as to whether ontological semantics does not also partake of ontological syntactics. Syntax here seems to play a rather disproportionately weighty role, when we consider the name of this field of inquiry. It appears that the term semantics covers a fairly broad semantic field, which overlaps in the direction of syntax at one extreme end of the continuum, while overlapping in the direction of pragmatics at the other extreme end of the continuum of its semantic field. Perhaps there may be richer/poorer or stronger/weaker

distinctions in ontological semantics, and in the use of the term semantics in general. It seems obvious that Fillmore's use of semantic frames places semantics squarely in the realm of pragmatics, inquiring as to which social and practical goal is being pursued that creates and constrains a particular semantic frame, or Frame Element. With Raskin, semantics represents the most minimalist, stripped-down sense of the meaning of a lexical item, with no reference to any social or cultural context. Here again we see the pure intellect at work, with Raskin as the Chomskyan, promoting a theory of humor that is effective in generating jokes based upon logic, but not those based upon cultural context.

CHAPTER 9

STRONG THEORY – WEAK THEORY

Levinson's claim regarding generative grammar theory's failure to produce "strong universals" ("With Diversity in Mind," 2009) can only be supported if one defines "strong" to mean – identical in structure and rule-governance. With such a rigorous and unrelenting definition, Levinson's own claim for underlying universal norms of interaction must fall by the wayside. However, once one permits a bit of leeway, and defines "strong" as a stipulation that certain basic structural parallels are required, then it is possible that the universals that would be discovered in a comparison between Dani, Yeli Dnye, Dyirbal, and even Chinese and English grammars would be far more "strong" than the interactional universals that would be discovered in a comparison between those same cultures' sociolinguistic and pragmatic behaviors. This same leniency of definition could then also retrieve Levinson's theory of a universal cognitive mechanism for social interaction (2006).

Although one must hesitate considerably before seeming to contradict statements made by the great and senior scholars of language and cognition, it might be pointed out that the claim – that a claim for "strong" universals exist in all grammars has not been proven ("[I]t is very

hard to find any single structural property [that all languages] share.” Levinson, “Myth,” 429) may have itself never been proven. This author assumes the claim to be correct, based upon the authority of the source of the claim, and therefore requests greater leniency in the criteria for the designation of universals. However, if a rigorous definition as to what constitutes a grammatical construct were to be combined with extensive comparative studies of grammars, and if such investigation were to show that every language employs a grammatical structure based upon our re-definition of the parts of speech in order to accept their different formulations, as long as they fulfill the same linguistic and pragmatic functions of deep case) then perhaps the claim that grammar universals are not “strong” would want to be reconsidered. In a recent study (2011) that makes use of a formidable body of data, Levinson proves the non-universal nature of grammar, “at least with respect to word-order” (abstract). This claim seems curious, and almost seems to support the hypothesis that a strong universal basis must exist at the infrastructure of grammar. This may be only in terms of rule-governance tendencies, such as the tendency of all languages to follow a deep structure of thematic relations, of “branching rules,” “selectional rules,” and “grammatical relations” (Chomsky, Aspects, 112, 113). (It was the idea

of thematic relations that Chomsky seems to have taken from Fillmore. Chomsky had been thinking in terms of syntax, and after the publication of "Case for case," his idea of a universal grammar evolved toward thematic relations.) We need only to make this claim for a universal skeleton of grammatical structures. It is likely that universalists would suffice with the claim that this grammatical skeleton of languages is universal. It might be rather difficult to find a universalist advocate who would make a similar claim with regard to word order. Levinson's emphasis upon word order in such a recent study seems to be a surprising choice for a research topic, in that many beginning students of many second languages have discovered from their first lessons that word order is not universal. Perhaps Levinson feels that in his "Myth of Language Universals" he has already debunked all of the Chomskyan myth (such as the existence of subjects and predicates) but as has been indicated, his claims in "Myth" (2009) seem broader than his data can support. The cognitive base of this diversity in word-order is fascinating, as is the claim that word order is culturally evolved, and Levinson's discovery of the perceptual difference that lead to the linguistic difference opens new pathways in our understanding of human cognition. However, it is unclear how this discovery bears upon the effort

to discredit the validity of universalist theory. Word order diversity is not new, though the 2011 study implies that it is, and some might feel that the “Myth” article does not offer robust evidence that the theory of grammar universals is invalid.

Lakoff and Levinson are not alone in the tendency to mount a massive attack against an intellectual icon based upon inadequate evidence. It appears not to be new. In the year 1980, Alford protested the “Demise of the Whorf Hypothesis,” wrought by the proponents of Noam Chomsky. First vulgarized and then distorted, Alford claims that Whorf’s linguistic theory was actually much broader than the public’s current understanding of it (the public perhaps including Rosch via Lakoff). He accuses academic fashion of determining the status of particular theories, and their prominence or lack thereof. Strong versus weak versions were later developments, often formulated by opponents of Whorfian linguistics, with the strong version attributed to Whorf himself (by his opponents) whereas the weak version was considered something that might be accepted by other, more reasonably minded linguists who did not want to make false or exaggerated claims, but did see some value in the Whorfian perspective. Alford maintains that Whorf’s massive writings on language, culture, cognition, psychology and many other

subjects were never narrowed into any single hypothesis, and if one were to wish to do so in an accurate manner, such a narrowing would never parallel the so-called strong version that has come to be called linguistic determinism.

This indicates that foundational theories might perhaps best be viewed first through the eyes of an advocate, rather than through the eyes of an opponent. The view of Chomskyan theory through the eyes of an advocate is different from the view through the eyes of an opponent in many interesting ways, although Lakoff's (an opponent's) list of basic Chomskyan principles is wonderfully lucid, as outlined above.

Nevertheless, Slobin's discussion of Chomskyan theory is far more moderate – even cautious – in its claims. Slobin writes as though he is conceding that

'language-definitional' universals are simply a construct that one must assume as a given, and then work from this assumption. The forms and functions of language are universal across all cultures and all ages of life. Every culture's language does the same thing: It employs utterances for the performance of communicative functions [what the Nilsens would call Performatives] such as asserting, denying, requesting, etc, and these express underlying semantic relationships that are universal, and that similar models of formal means are employed, such as units of sound that combine to form units of meaning that further combine, and that all language is grammatical, in the sense that the abovementioned elements on their own cannot fully comprise all of that language's utterances' potential

meanings, and that grammatical rules constrain meaning further (179).

These claims by Slobin are so “low-key” and difficult to take issue with that one wonders if even Lakoff could find fault with them. The sweeping assumptions Lakoff finds in classic Chomskyan theory are nowhere evident in Slobin. Nevertheless Lakoff might respond that Slobin is not truly representative of Chomsky but rather expresses a more diluted version of generative grammar theory.

However, Lakoff might find the need to say the same of Chomsky himself. Certain writings by Chomsky are expressed in a most moderate, conservative manner, making such modest claims for a universal grammar that many would be hard put to fault them. Perhaps Chomsky’s later writings were less cautious, and perhaps Chomskians have become more extreme than Chomsky himself, to wit, Victor Raskin, who suggests that there are generative universals for humor. Nevertheless, it appears as if the rejection of Chomskyanism is sometimes rather too strong, when we consider some of Chomsky’s more persuasive formulations, which are nothing if not conservative:

To say that formal properties of the base will provide the framework for the characterization of universal categories is to assume that much of the structure of

the base is common to all languages. This is a way of stating a traditional view, whose origins can again be traced back at least to the *Grammaire generale et raisonnee* (Lancelot et al., 1660). To the extent that relevant evidence is available today, it seems not unlikely that it is true. Insofar as aspects of the base structure are not specific to a particular language, they need not be stated in the grammar of this language. Instead, they are to be stated only in general linguistic theory, as part of the definition of the notion "human language" itself. In traditional terms, they pertain to the form of language in general rather than to the form of particular languages, and thus presumably reflect what the mind brings to the task of language acquisition rather than what it discovers (or invents) in the course of carrying out this task. Thus to some extent the account of the base rules suggested here may not belong to the grammar of English any more than the definition of "derivation" or of "transformation" belongs to the grammar of English. CF., SS 6 and 8, Chapter 1. It is commonly held that modern linguistic and anthropological investigations have conclusively refuted the doctrines of classical universal grammar, but this claim seems to me very much exaggerated. Modern work has, indeed, shown a great diversity in the surface structures of languages. However, since the study of deep structure has not been its concern, it has not attempted to show a corresponding diversity of underlying structures, and in fact, the evidence that has been accumulated in modern study of language does not appear to suggest anything of this sort. The fact that languages may differ from one another quite significantly in surface structure would hardly come as a surprise to the scholars who developed traditional universal grammar. Since the origins of this work is the *Grammaire generale et raisonnee*, it has been emphasized that the deep structures for which universality is claimed may be quite distinct from the

surface structures of sentences as they actually appear. Consequently, there is no reason to expect uniformity of surface structures, and the findings of modern linguistics are thus not inconsistent with the hypotheses of universal grammarians (Aspects, 117, 118).

It might be mentioned that none of the refutations presented by Levinson in his “Myth of Grammar Universals” address the claims cited above, as presented by Chomsky himself.

Though some might conclude from the discussion above that Levinson was to Chomsky only as Chomsky was to Fillmore, it must be clearly stated that Chomsky does not appear to have been to Fillmore as Freud was to Dostoevsky. It is highly unlikely that Chomsky wished to impeach Fillmore’s credibility in order to conceal his own lack of attribution. It is indeed most likely that Chomsky’s lack of attribution was entirely unintentional and even unconscious. Having absorbed Fillmore’s formulation of the ergativity principle, Chomsky then may have automatically reset his syntactical orientation toward universal grammar to focus upon thematic relations. As he was researching this massive topic, he came to the conclusion that linguists have indeed been discussing language universals since the seventeenth century. It seems most likely that his profound absorption with this topic simply clouded his earliest memory of encountering case, the concept of fundamental

thematic relations – that is to say, grammatical relations that are deeper than syntax – especially as Fillmore moved on in a different direction to explore frame semantics.

The approach outlined above rejects the gloomy view of linguistic inquiry that sees researchers held in the grip of an academic Darwinism in which the fittest survive by narrowing their theoretical formulations to exclude any others, including their own theoretical predecessors. These have prepared the ground for their successors' thinking, whether the latter are conscious of it or not. Rather than evolving toward an increasingly complex and inclusive understanding of language and cognition, our inquiry can deteriorate into sterile cycles in which one relatively narrow perspective simply replaces the previous one, with Chomsky's narrowing and discrediting of Whorfian and ergativity principles is followed by Lakoff's narrowing and discrediting of Chomskian principles, etc. The similarity of these patterns cannot be overlooked in that Chomsky's complaint that his opponents have examined only the surface structures rather than the deeper underlying relationships, and have made use of only the superficial details of these structures in order to discredit his theory of language universals – is oddly reminiscent of Chomsky's own tendency, and of that of his

students under his guidance, with regard to ergativity, to discredit the profound linguistic universals identified by Fillmore. The Chomskyans claimed to have proven the non-universal nature of the ergativity principle by analyzing the superficially non-ergative structures of various languages rather than addressing their deeper semantic/pragmatic, profoundly ergative relationships.

It might behoove us to exclude this exclusive approach and consider the profound mutual compatibility that inheres among these theorists. Even though Levinson does not mention this, his theory of a universal cognition mechanism underlying all human interaction strongly supports Fillmore's ergativity principle as a language universal. Fillmore himself is nothing if not inclusive in his approach. When dispute modes appear to accelerate (or aggravate, to use Levinson's term) Fillmore turns to more interesting pursuits. From the beginning Fillmore has been inclusive, as seen in "Case for Case," which in spite of its groundbreaking character, nevertheless maintains a tone of immense respect for every possible source of influence, and maintains an arms' length distance from any expression that might be construed as exclusive, or as making the claim that its own position possesses a monopoly on valid theories.

Speculation on language universals has not always and everywhere been viewed as a fully respectable pastime for the scientific linguist. The writer recalls a Linguistic Institute lecture of not many summers ago in which it was announced that the only really secure generalization on language that linguists are prepared to make is that 'some members of some human communities have been observed to interact by means of vocal noises'. Times have changed, it is a pleasure to report, and this is partly because we now have clearer ideas of what linguistic theories are theories of, and partly because some linguists are willing to risk the danger of being dead wrong.

Scholars who have striven to uncover *syntactic features* (italics mine) common to all of the world's languages have generally addressed themselves to three intimately related but distinguishable orders of questions: (a) What are the formal and substantive universals of syntactic structure? (b) Is there a universal base, and, if so, what are its properties? (c) Are there any universally valid constraints on the ways in which deep structure representations of sentences are given expression in the surface structure?

Concerning formal universals we find such proposals as Chomsky's that each grammar has a base component capable of characterizing the underlying syntactic structure of just the sentences in the language at hand and containing at least a set of transformation rules whose function is to map the underlying structures provided by the base component into structures more closely identifiable with phonetic descriptions of utterances in that language (Chomsky, 1965, pp. 27-30).

A representative statement on substantive syntactic universals is Lyons' assertion (1966, pp. 211, 223) that every grammar requires such categories as Noun, Predicator, and Sentence, but that other grammatical categories and features may be differently arranged in different languages. And Bach (1965) has given reasons to believe that there is a universal set of transformations which each language draws from in its

own way, and he has shown what such transformations might look like in the case of relative clause modification...(1)

Fillmore is meticulous about attribution to known sources, yet as we will see below, he is no less meticulous about unknown sources, that is to say those sources that could never be identified as having been the impetus of his theory had he not pointed to it. His source would not have been identified because superficially there seems to be no relationship between the popular understanding of Whorfian theory and what Fillmore is proposing below, and also because Fillmore is here pioneering uncharted territory and raising the state of the art, yet he refers to a source that was beginning to lose prestige at the time of his writing (Alford).

The present essay is intended as a contribution to the study of formal and substantive syntactic universals. Questions of linear ordering are left untouched, or at least unresolved, and questions of markedness are viewed as presupposing structures having properties of the kind to be developed in these pages.

My paper will plead that the grammatical notion 'case' deserves a place in the base component of the grammar of every language. In the past, research on 'case' has amounted to an examination of the variety of semantic relationships which can hold between nouns and other portions of sentences; it has been considered equivalent to the study of semantic functions of inflectional affixes on nouns or the formal dependency relations which hold between specific nominal affixes and lexical-grammatical properties of

neighboring elements; or it has been reduced to a statement of the morphophonemic reflexes of a set of underlying 'syntactic relations' which themselves are conceived independently of the notion of 'case.'. I shall argue that valid insights on case relationships are missed in all these studies, and that what is needed is a conception of base structure in which case relationships are primitive terms of the theory and in which such concepts as 'subject' and 'direct object' are missing...Two assumptions are essential to the development of the argument...*The first of these is the centrality of syntax...*The second assumption I wish to make explicit is *the importance of covert categories*. Many recent and not-so-recent studies have convinced us of the relevance of grammatical properties lacking obvious 'morphemic' realizations but having a reality that can be observed on the basis of sectional constraints and transformational possibilities. We are constantly finding that grammatical features found in one language show up in some form or other in other languages as well, if we have the subtlety it takes to discover covert categories. Incidentally, I find it interesting that the concept 'covert category' – a concept which is making it possible to believe that at bottom all languages are essentially alike – was introduced most convincingly in the writings of Whorf, the man whose name is most directly associated with the doctrine that deep-seated structural differences between languages determine the essentially noncomparable ways in which speakers of different languages deal with reality (see Whorf, 1965, pp 69ff.).

Indeed the tone of "Case for Case" is as the title suggests.

Fillmore is pleading the case for case before a jury of critics whom he considers to be his peers at the very least. His open-mindedness

suffuses the entire research process: “Whether the cases should be represented as categories dominating NP’s or in some other way is an issue which seems to me to be fairly wide open” (87). Fillmore’s approach to scientific investigation is the antithesis of the hubris characterized by what Lakoff calls the Predicate Calculus view of research. Focused more intensively on rejecting one another due to occasional manifestations of extremism in both camps, language theorists may miss the opportunity offered by the inclusive approach personified in Fillmore.

Reconciling Conflict

Levinson, Lakoff and Chomsky may be reconciled by Nilsen and Fillmore. It has been mentioned that there appears to be an underlying compatibility between Levinson's and Nilsen's approaches. Lakoff's cognitive models may be shown to be fully compatible with these theorists as well. It might even be demonstrated that Levinson's theory of a universal human cognition for interaction reflects and is supported by Nilsen's call for a more Fillmorian definition of language universals. Levinson explains the cognitive mechanisms that support what Fillmore maintains human beings do when they interact with language. Fillmore's approach here is utterly compatible with Lakoff's concept of interactivity, in that the human mind (Levinson's interaction cognition) interacts with Fillmore's language universals in order to produce Nilsen's Performatives as formulated by Austin (1962) which then interact with the real world.

It is possible to reconcile Chomskyan theory with the theories of cognitive theorists who believe Chomskyan theory to have been discredited. The thought of George Lakoff and Stephen Levinson, two major cognitive researchers who do not consider the Chomskyan theory of grammar universals to be helpful in accounting for language phenomena (Levinson's "Myth" and "Sea-

Change” and Lakoff’s Women, Fire and Dangerous Things) overtly reject Chomskyan theory; this rejection is a continuously recurring theme in much of their later work. The robust nature of the findings of these pioneering cognitive researchers has been demonstrated, and also the fact that these findings open up new avenues of exploration in our knowledge of the workings of the human mind. Nevertheless, it is maintained that their findings are inadequate to discredit Noam Chomsky’s theory of grammar universals (1965, 1966).

The very fact that Chomsky and his students strove to distinguish between the ergative and the non-ergative languages, as though the existence of such a distinction was self-evident, places Chomsky squarely with the typologists, and also suggests that he did not fully grasp Fillmore’s meaning with regard to ergativity. Technical breakdowns may be applied to the myriad forms that ergativity can take within the highly diversified cultural settings, and here Chomsky’s students’ studies confuse us somewhat, in that they seem to imply that it is intrinsic to the principle of ergativity to be manifested through diverse expressions. However, there is no breaking down the universal nature of

the ergative phenomenon itself, and here there are no typologies and no language categories that divide according to the manner in which each one respectively treats the deep case distinctions. All languages are ergative because they all possess this, and however diverse their grammatical constraints for indicating this distinction, the fact of this distinction being always indicated by non-ambivalent markers is not subject to diversity.

Nilsen insists that none of the theoretical constructs and none of the schools of thought discussed above may be considered dispensable, “obsolete” (Lakoff 1990, 9) “false” or “misleading” (Levinson “Myth” 2009, 429). He never permits us to forget that Chomskyan theory has given us artificial intelligence. Although Lakoff is constantly referring to artificial intelligence, and his articles even appear in the publication of that name, it is hard to find any suggestion in Lakoff’s writing that generative grammar cannot be entirely obsolete if it is accomplishing so formidable a linguistic feat as creating artificial intelligence. It does not seem that anyone questions the legitimacy of artificial intelligence as a linguistic form. Nilsen discusses adequacy in linguistic theory, even when it is partial, i.e. there are elements of language use that a particular theory does not account for, though it adequately accounts for other elements.

Thus Chomskyan theory cannot account for the “playful” aspects of language, such as humor, poetry and slang. Levinsonian/Lakoffian theory would have difficulty generating artificial intelligence. Thus far it would appear that all of linguistic theory falls into this category defined by Nilsen, in that none account for everything, but all account for something, and a salient feature of the partial nature of many theories is their rejection of other theories.

It does not seem that Lakoffian theory allows for personality differences. Even though he claims that everyone acquires knowledge in different ways, it almost seems that no one acquires knowledge in the Chomskyan way. There is a certain liberalism in the ability to encompass an acceptance of universal theory simultaneously with an acceptance of theory of cultural relativism. At the conceptual level, the way these two contradictions may co-exist in harmony is by attributing different rules of perception to different personalities. The embodiment of mind has been established according to Lakoff, but we may allow for personality differences. It is not impossible that some individuals possess embodied minds and others possess the tendency toward disembodied symbol manipulation. Otherwise Chomskyan theory could not have had such success in the real world. The reality is that it

produced artificial intelligence, which is a human construct, whatever one may think of it. Therefore, if we may believe the popular saying that “you only get out of a computer what you put into it,” then someone’s mind must be designed according to a formalist nativist paradigm. Therefore it may be possible to suggest that some perceive the world through formal intellectual constructs, and others through embodiment and metaphor. That recent studies contradict the Chomskyan idea that thought is disembodied is not technically a claim that one can make, to this author’s understanding, simply because the subjects in those studies responded according to another paradigm of cognitive functioning.

What is certainly embodied in language is its rhetorically dense structures. What also appears certainly to be embodied in language is anything that is culturally embedded. If we may conclude, as the results of this study appear to suggest, that rhetorical density is largely a culturally embedded proficiency, this makes the vast majority of language use an embodied process. The Chomskyan structures are purely intellectual. Lakoff does not accept the detachment of the physical brain from the abstract notion of mind. However, generative grammar does not appear to flexibly conform to each individual’s respective brain’s ability to program it. It seems almost possible to say

that generative grammar shapes the structure of the brain as much as the structure of the brain shapes generative grammar. Chomskyan structures are like mathematics: They seem indisputable. Yet Lakoff claims that even mathematics is embodied. Not daring to enter into an argument between these two titans of linguistic theory, one can nevertheless safely say that all the other aspects of language that have been so extensively studied (to a large extent through Lakoff's formidable erudition) appear to fall under the category of "embodied," i.e. dependent upon the body's physical perception of input in order to shape mental perceptions.

It might be argued that Lakoff's insistence on the absolute and exclusively embodied nature of cognition is a reaction to historical extremes of disembodiment theories of western culture, that have lead to arrogance, or what the Greeks – who may have invented disembodiment – called hubris. Perhaps it was Descartes who originated the idea of intellectual hubris as an institution. Although Plato separated the mind from the body with his Platonic Ideal, and did indeed describe the Idea as the rather exclusive domain of the Philosopher class, bodies presumably being the domain of women and slaves, nevertheless we do not see Plato dismissing the body as a source of data. The tendency to

weed out all data other than the cerebrally derived and to dismiss all other sources as irrelevant seems more characteristic of Descartes.

We might consider the ramifications, for Lakoff, of Descartes' famous saying: "I think, therefore I am." One imagines Lakoff's response: You think, therefore you are? Who do you think you are? You cannot assume on the basis of the evidence of your senses and your emotions that you are? Your body and heart are not adequate proof of your existence? You must bolster the hypothesis of your own existence with the evidence of your brain's activity? You are certain that it is an incontrovertible fact that you are in the process of thinking? How do you know how you think? You are not aware of the processes that shape your thinking. Have you ever considered the possibility that you only think you think?

Descartes approach represents the classic separation theory that has been discredited by Lakoff. Lakoff's embodied mind theory has demonstrated how inseparable the mind is from the body, and if we may postulate that human nature has not changed drastically from Descartes' time to our own, then according to Lakoff, Descartes senses, therefore he feels and therefore he thinks. He imagines that he has freed his mental activity from his body, but he is merely deluding himself, for the

basis of his thought is embodied. Without this embodied basis, he cannot think, and therefore he cannot be, in that he despises the evidence of the physical. He therefore can only imagine that he thinks, and following his own narrow logic, he can only imagine that he is. However, he imagines his thinking to be superior to the embodied variety, and therefore imagines his own existence to be superior to that of more body-oriented individuals. This form of intellectual hubris personified in Descartes is the focus of Lakoff's antagonism, in that it marginalizes the larger part of human existence. This marginalizing is often carried out by social classes who fall into Freire's Oppressor category, in that they possess the means and the leisure to devote themselves to intellectual pursuits, which teach them to despise non-intellectual pursuits as inferior. It may be no exaggeration to say that Lakoff's insistence upon an exclusive embodied mind theory – perhaps we might call it a strong embodied mind theory, in that he appears to reject the possibility that the mind may be capable of being trained to function independently of the body – represents the expression of his anger at classism. The impulse behind his discourse tendency appears to be nothing less than the defense of humanity's oppressed, and a passionate cry of *j'accuse* against their oppressors. Descartes' masked

his egoism behind a façade of intellectual objectivity (Lifshitz). This author believes that Descartes wished to communicate an underlying message to the non-intellectual world, or to the somewhat less intellectually oriented or more emotionally or physically oriented (embodied) members of the human race: You do not think [in the superior manner that characterizes my own thinking, i.e. an extreme form of mind-body dualism] therefore you are not, i.e. you are not worthy of existence. One can imagine how messages of this nature might enrage Lakoff, for they were the forebears of the arrogant assumptions upon which Predicate Calculus is based:

Many of the ideas we will be arguing against, on empirical grounds, have been taken as part of what *defines* science...Consider, for example, scientific rigor. There is a narrow view of science that considers as rigorous only hypotheses framed in first-order predicate calculus with a standard model-theoretic interpretation, or some equivalent system, say a computer program using primitives that are taken as corresponding to an external reality...The PC view characterizes explanations only in terms of deductions from hypotheses, or correspondingly, in terms of computations. Such a methodology not only claims to be rigorous in itself, it also claims that no other approach can be sufficiently precise to be called scientific...The PC view is especially inappropriate in the cognitive sciences since it *assumes* an a priori view of categorization, namely, the classical theory that categories are sets defined by common properties of objects....The classical view is *assumed* to be correct, because it is built into classical logic, and hence into the

PC view. Thus, we sometimes find circular arguments about the nature of categorization that are of the following form:

Premise (often hidden): The PC view of scientific rigor is correct.

...

...

...

Conclusion: Categories are classical.

The conclusion, of course, is presupposed by the premise. To avoid vacuity, the empirical study of categorization cannot take the PC view of scientific rigor for granted (Women, Fire, 10).

Lakoff's effort to impeach the credibility of the Predicate Calculus research criterion may be called nothing short of courageous, in that it flies in the face of what was for centuries considered by the scientific community to be a hallowed academic premise upon which all truth was based and against which all assertions must be measured. Predicate Calculus represents the culmination of an increasing and accelerating process of the intellectualization of prestige – conceived perhaps by Plato but institutionalized by Descartes – in which arrogance was the reward for an exclusive focus upon cerebrally derived evidence.

Leaving aside the anecdote of Beethoven's composing his greatest symphonies after he had been deaf for many years, and similar such threats to the strong Lakoffian theory of exclusive embodiment, it does not appear to be disputed that the vast majority of language phenomena

are more adequately explained by Lakoff and Levinson than by Chomsky. Yet Levinson's theory that there is a universal cognition mechanism for generating social interaction, separates him in certain respects from Lakoff, and aligns him more closely with Chomsky. It is not certain that these theorists would reject the argument that their theories are compatible. Despite his rejecting Chomskyan theory about the universal structures that generate grammar, Levinson nonetheless becomes in some ways more Chomskyan than Chomsky with his universal cognitive mechanism for interaction. Levinson is not becoming mystical with his formulation of this theory. He is demonstrating his acceptance, if not on record then at least in principle, and based upon his incomparable research on language in the most varied and multi-dimensional contexts imaginable – of Chomsky's formulation of a universal apparatus that generates a human proficiency. It appears to this author that even Lakoff might take a less adversarial view of Chomsky if he were to consider how Levinson's "interaction engine" resolves the entire conflict: According to Lakoff, there cannot be an universal cognition for interaction, because all of cognition and all of knowledge is embodied, and dependent on each individual's or group's embodied learning in its specific experience of physical input. However,

being that the same human body is universal to all human beings (Levinson stipulates that the cognition for interaction is specific and unique to human beings) it follows that all human beings may possess the identical embodied cognitive apparatus for interaction. Once we have accepted this construct, the road to accepting generative grammar theory – even for the most orthodox Lakoffian – is fairly short: Given that we all possess the same human body, we may conclude that the ability to generate grammatical structures from their underlying universals is an embodied ability. That is to say that the ability to perceive a universal grammar is an embodied ability. By saying knowledge depends upon embodiment, Lakoff is saying that something about the character of the apparatus of language is less absolute than we (with Chomsky's assistance) have been led to believe. However, if Levinson's universal cognition for interaction theory is valid – and his arguments and evidence appear irrefutable ("Cognition at the Heart," 86) and if we must synthesize this with Lakoff's claim that all knowledge is physically and metaphorically embodied, and since Lakoff's arguments appear equally irrefutable, then we must conclude that something about the character of the physical and metaphorical human body is more absolute than we have been led to believe.

Although it is true that individuals' sociolinguistic and culturally embedded norms constitute an inalienable aspect of their identity, and that it is a basic human right to be allowed to express one's cultural autonomy, does not alter, it is still important to avoid granting all ethno-cultural practice the status of sacred cows. While depriving members of specific cultures of the right to live - or speak - in the manner dictated by their cultural norms may under certain circumstances be tantamount to depriving them of their most basic human rights, under other circumstances it must be recognized that sociolinguistic norms have been and are the basis of all racism, classism and sexism and indeed all social prejudices that result in exploitation. (See Freire.) Lakoff's metaphoric mappings underly our embodied perceptions, whether these contribute to or detract from our well-being. It is at this point that universalist theory enters, and becomes indispensable. Typologists might claim that underlying grammar accounts for perhaps one tenth of language use, at a generous estimate. However, this one tenth may be the element that generates the boundary lines of linguistic and cultural norms. Perhaps we could borrow Lakoff's mapping metaphor for this purpose, and metaphorically designate universalist theory as the black (or red) lines that describe the area of the map, both its outer perimeters

and its borders separating one area from another, with cultural relativism constituting the entire area within the boundary lines. Quantitatively, the ink required for the boundary lines is insignificant compared to the ink required for the areas within the boundary lines; however, the boundary lines are indispensable to the shape of the map. If all of language is Performative (Nilsen, following Austin) and if there is a universal human cognitive mechanism for interaction (Levinson) it follows that there may be a universal human cognitive mechanism for performance, which could lend support to the idea of universal behavioral norms that might constrain cultural practice.

Although Levinson appears to be solidly aligned with Lakoff in that he does not subscribe to Chomskyan theory, it should perhaps be mentioned that “the philosophical idea of functionalism” mentioned above (analyzing “mind” as distinct from body and brain) which Lakoff indicates as having been discredited, is actually used by Levinson. Although in his spatial studies (2003, 2004) physical phenomena play a central role, in “Cognition at the Heart of Human Interaction” (2006) there seems to be a focus upon the mind that is quite independent of the brain and the body. In his theory of the “interaction engine” (86) we find that Levinson’s theory does not entirely harmonize with the “embodied” school.

Levinson's "interaction engine" theory is persuasive in the extreme. Perhaps Levinson would say that it is certainly embodied and also "embrained," only we have not yet discovered the specific neural circuitry that operates it. In any case this is a uniquely human cognitive specialization governing interaction. As Levinson lists its features and elaborates its capabilities, the reader realizes that this "interaction engine" theory is broad in scope, seeming to cover most interactive sociolinguistic phenomena. He groups them by categories that account for everything, or so it seems: "Mind reading abilities... 'mirror mind-reading' abilities... the capacity for Gricean intentions... ethologically grounded behavioral proclivities... [such as] access rituals... leave-taking rituals... the multimodal character of human interaction; simultaneous signals in the gestural, gaze, facial and vocal channels... the rapid alternation of speaking and recipient roles; and ... the motivational system that drives humans to seek cooperative interaction" (86). Nevertheless, while its expressions are embodied, the actual source of this capacity is non-specific. It is "conceived of as an ensemble of cognitive capacities and motivational predispositions which underlie human communicative interaction. Language use trades on the antecedent existence of such an 'engine', and the 'engine' can operate

without language, so language capacities themselves are not the source of the phenomena in question” (86). As Levinson has theorized his arguably brilliant and nearly all-encompassing theory of interaction, we see no body and we see no brain – only an abstracted human cognitive capacity (i.e. ‘the mind’). To the uninformed reader it seems to be the epitome of what Lakoff is rejecting.

It may be possible to reconcile these seemingly adversarial positions by suggesting that the discovery that knowledge is embodied may not necessarily undermine the idea of a universal grammar, if we consider Levinson’s universal nature of interaction, and also, the inarguably universal nature of the human body. Perhaps we must conclude from the obvious legitimacy of both positions that both universal theory and typology theory are indispensable for an understanding of language and cognition, and as to how one is to determine which of these theories accounts for a particular linguistic product – perhaps one indicator might be its level of rhetorical density.

Afterword

The contemporary movement away from universalist theory may have developed in tandem with a growing public awareness of the need to be accepting of diversity in language use, as increasing numbers of speech communities are coming to inhabit increasingly close and common quarters.

[T]he number of Americans of Asian and Pacific Island origin has increased 120% since 1972...from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan in Asia and from the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (Kampuchea), and Thailand...also immigrants from India...as well as Guam and other Micronesian Islands...Groups such as the Thai, Khmer, Lao, Hmong have been grouped together in the 'Other' category. Since the population of many of these countries is multilingual, so are the groups that have immigrated (Adams, 185, 186).

The non-optional nature of this melting pot experience can result in what may arguably be termed a paranoid response on the part of host populations: They respond defensively by attempting to forbid diversity in language use, and to impose artificially homogenous language practices on diverse populations. Adams brings massive evidence of paternalistic pressure brought to bear upon immigrant populations, which would compel them to adapt to English language norms. "[O]ne effect of the early isolationist policy directed towards the Chinese especially was [t]he landmark 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols*, which

directed schools to provide “appropriate relief” for non-English speaking students” (186).

The widespread popular response of fear and xenophobia that greets the diverse populations who are very slightly newer to a particular geographical location than its host population – may conceivably arise out of the popular misunderstanding of universalist theory. Language universals, according to the mass perception, might be formulated as follows: If there is a universal, underlying grammar, then there must be a “right grammar” and a “wrong grammar.” Sounding suspiciously reminiscent of Lakoff’s equation of “the God’s-eye view” with “a single correct way” of perceiving reality, this misunderstanding of universalist theory fails to discern the all-inclusive implications of Universal Grammar theory, which derived from Fillmore’s deep case theory. One may hope for a wider awareness of the logical implications of linguistic universals, for they mean that whenever any particular human group produces any particular grammar, then necessarily and by definition, that grammar immediately becomes — the “right grammar.”

REFERENCES

- Adams, Karen L. "Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities in the Southwest: an Overview." In Adams, Karen L. and Daniel T. Brink (Eds.). Perspectives on Official English: The Campaign for English as the Official Language of the U.S.A. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990.
- Alford, Danny K. H. "The Demise of the Whorf Hypothesis." Phoenix: New Directions in the Study of Man. Palo Alto, California: Phoenix Associates, 1980.
- Attardo, Salvatore. "A Primer for the Linguistics of Humor." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.), A Primer of Humor Research. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Austin, John L. How To Do Things With Words. Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen. "One Functional Approach to Second Language Acquisition: The Concept-Oriented Approach." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). Theories in Second Language Acquisition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.
- Bloomfield, Leonard. Language History. New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965.
- Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble. New York: Routledge Classics, 2006.
- Bridgman, Percy. (1966) "Words, Meanings, and Verbal Analysis." In Bork, Alfred M. (Ed.), Science and Language. (pp.23-43), Boston: D. C. Heath and Company.
- Bryson, Lyman. "Problems of Communication." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
- Carroll, Susanne E. "Autonomous Induction Theory." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). Theories in Second Language Acquisition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.

- Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1965.
- . *Topics in the Theory of Generative Grammar*. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1966.
- Ciario, Delia. "Verbal Expressed Humor and Translation." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.). *A Primer of Humor Research*. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Coates, Robert M. "Morning Exercises." In Pflug, Raymond J. (Ed.). *The Ways of Language: A Reader*. New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1967.
- Conklin, Harold C. "Symbolism and Beyond. Hanunóo Color Categories" *Journal of Anthropological Research* 42.3 (1986): 441-446.
- Crystal, David. "Psycholinguistics." *Folia Phoniatrica* 35 (1983): 1-12.
- Davies, Christie. "Undertaking the Comparative Study of Humor." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.). *A Primer of Humor Research*. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- DeKeyser, Robert. "Skill Acquisition Theory." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). *Theories in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.
- Descartes, Rene`. *Meditationes*. 1641.
- Ervin-Tripp, Susan, et al. "Language and Power in the Family." In Schulz, M. and C. Kramer (Eds.). *Language and Power*. Belmont, California: Sage, 1984.
- Ervin-Tripp, Susan. "Play in Language Development." *Language, Literacy and the Social Worlds of Children*. New York: Teachers' College Press, 1991.
- Fillmore, Charles, J. "Humor in Academic Discourse." In Grimshaw, A. D. (Ed.). *What's Going On Here? Complementary Studies of Professional Talk. Advances in Discourse Processes*, XLIII, 271-310, Academic Press, 1994.

Fillmore, Charles, "Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language." Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin and Development of Language and Speech 280 (1976): 20-32.

---. "FrameNet" Website.

---. "The Case for Case." In Bach, Emmon and Robert T. Harms (Eds.). Universals in Linguistic Theory. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Fishman, Joshua. "Minority Language Maintenance and the Ethnic Mother Tongue School." The Modern Language Journal 64.2 (1980): 167-172.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Funch, Bjarne Sode. The Psychology of Art Appreciation. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1997.

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum, 2009.

Gagne`, Nana Okura. "Reexamining the Notion of Negative Face in the Japanese Socio-linguistic Politeness of Request." Language and Communication 30.2 (2010): 123-138.

Gonzalez, Norma. "Beyond Culture: The Hybridity of Funds of Knowledge." In Gonzalez, Norma et al. (Eds.). Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Knowledge in Households, Communities and Classrooms. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005.

Gumperz, J. J. "The Speech Community." In Sills, D. L. & Merton, R. K. (Eds.), International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York: MacMillan, 1968.

Hall, Edward T. The Silent Language. NY, Anchor Books, 1973.

Harness-Goodwin, Marjorie. "The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status and Exclusion." Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

- Harness-Goodwin, Marjorie. "Shifting Frames." In Slobin, Dan, et al. (Eds.). Social Interaction, Social Context, and Language. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1996.
- Hayakawa, S.I. Language in Thought and Action, Fourth Edition. NY: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Inc. 1978.
- Hymes, D. "On communicative competence." In J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (Eds.), Sociolinguistics 269-93. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
- Jespersen, Otto. Growth and Structure of the English Language. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955.
- Jespersen, Otto. Mankind, Nation and Individual From a Linguistic Point of View. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1946.
- Jespersen, Otto. The Philosophy of Grammar. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1965.
- Johnson, Wendell. "Speech and Personality." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
- Korzybski, Alfred. Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics. Lakewood, Connecticut: The International Non-Aristotelian Publishing Company, 1950.
- Labov, William. Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors. Massachusetts, Wiley-Blackwell, 1994.
- Labov, William, S. Ash and C. Boberg. Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2006.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Turner. More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor. 1989.

- Lakoff, George. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Lakoff, George and Rafael Nunez. Where Mathematics Comes From: How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being. New York, Basic Books, 2001.
- Lakoff, Robin Tolmach and Sachiko Ide. Broadening the Horizon of Linguistic Politeness. Amsterdam; Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Pub., 2005.
- Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. Talking Power: The Politics of Language. New York: Basic Books, 1990.
- Laird, Charlton. "English: His Sisters, His Cousins, His Aunts." In Pflug, Raymond J. (Ed.). The Ways of Language: A Reader. New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1967.
- Lantolf, James P. and Steven L. Thorne. "Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). Theories in Second Language Acquisition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc. Publishers, 2007.
- Lasswell, Harold D. "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
- Lee, Irving. Language Habits in Human Affairs: An Introduction to General Semantics. London: Harper and Brothers, 1941.
- Lee, Irving. "They Talk Past Each Other." In Pflug, Raymond J. (Ed.). The Ways of Language: A Reader. New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1967.
- Legate, Julie. "Split Ergativity in Walpiri."
- Levinson, Stephen C. "Cognition at the Heart of human interaction." Discourse Studies 8.1 (2006): 85-93.

- . "Cognitive Anthropology." Culture and Language Use (2009): 50-57.
- , and Michael Dunn, Simon G. Greenhill and Russell D. Gray. "Evolved Structure of Language Shows Lineage-Specific Trends in Word-Order Universals." Nature 473 (2011): 79-82.
- and Nicholas Evans. "With Diversity in Mind: Freeing the Language Sciences from Universal Grammar." Behavioral and Brain Sciences 32.5 (2009): 472-484.
- . Grammars of Space: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity. U.K. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- and Melissa Bowerman, Daniel Haun, Sotaro Kita and Asifa Majid. "Can Language Restructure Cognition? The Case for Space." Trends in Cognitive Sciences 8.3 (2004): 108-114.
- and Nicholas Evans. "The Myth of Language Universals: Language Diversity and its Importance for Cognitive Science" Behavioral and Brain Sciences 32 (2009): 429-492.
- and Penelope Brown. Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978. (Reissued with corrections in 1987.)
- . "Pragmatics: Linguistic." International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (2001): 11948-11954.
- . "Questions and Responses in Yeli Dnye, the Papuan Language of Rossel Island." Journal of Pragmatics 42.10 (2010): 2741-2755.
- . Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity. U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- and Nicholas Evans. "Time for a Sea-Change in Linguistics: Response to Comments on 'The Myth of Language Universals'." Journal of Pragmatics 42 (2010): 2741-2755.

Lifshitz, Ze'ev Haim. "Western Philosophy." Jerusalem Seminar Series, 2009.

Lilles, Bruce L. Linguistics and the English Language: A Transformational Approach. Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing, Inc., 1972.

Lorge, Irving. "The Psychologist's Contribution to the Communication of Ideas." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages." Supplement I in Ogden, C.K., and I. A. Richards. The Meaning of Meaning. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. Harvest Books, 1946.

Mead, Margaret. "Some Cultural Approaches to Communication Problems." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.

Menzer, Melinda. The Great Vowel Shift Website.. <http://eweb.furman.edu/~mmenzer/gvs/> Furman University English Department. Accessed November 2010.

Morreal, John. "Philosophy and Religion." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.). A Primer of Humor Research. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.

Nilsen, Alleen Pace. "Changing Words in a Changing World." Living Language. (427-473) MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

--- and Don L. F. Nilsen Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2007.

---. Pronunciation Contrasts in English. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. 2010.

Nilsen, Don L. F. "Discourse Tendency: A Study in Extended Tropes." Rhetoric Society Quarterly 19:3 (1989): 263-272.

---. "The Humor of Human Behavior: Toward a Unified Theory." Journal of Evolutionary Psychology 15:1-2 (1996): 230-246.

---. "The Importance of Tendency: An Extension of Freud's Concept of Tendentious Humor." International Journal of Humor Research 1.4 (1988): 335-348.

- . Lectures in Linguistics, Arizona State University, Fall, 2009.
- . "The Semantic Specification of Deep Case." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971.
- . "The Social Functions of Political Humor." Journal of Popular Culture 24.3 (1991): p. 35.
- Oates, Whitney J. "Classic Theories of Communication." In Bryson, Lyman. (Ed.). The Communication of Ideas. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
- O'Dell, Scott. Island of the Blue Dolphins. New York: Random House, Inc. 1960.
- O'Driscoll, Jim. "Brown and Levinson's Face: How it Can – and Can't – Help Us to Understand Interaction Across Cultures." Intercultural Pragmatics 4.4 (2007): 463-492.
- Ogden, C.K., and I. A. Richards. The Meaning of Meaning. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. Harvest Books, 1946.
- Ochs, Elinor. "Socialization Through Language and Interaction: A Theoretical Introduction." Issues in Applied Linguistics. 2:2. (1991): 143-147.
- Pierce, Bonnie Norton. "Social Identity, Investment and Language Learning." TESOL Quarterly 29:1 (1995): 9-24.
- Pienemann, Manfred. "Processability Theory." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). Theories in Second Language Acquisition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.
- Plato. Dialogues. See "The Allegory of the Cave and the Divided Line."
- Raskin, Victor. Introduction – "Theory of Humor and Practice of Humor Research: Editor's Notes." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.), A Primer of Humor Research. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.

- Raskin, Victor and Sergei Nirenburg.. Ontological Semantics. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004.
- Raskin, Victor and Sergei Nirenburg. "Ontological Semantics, Formal Ontology and Ambiguity." Proceedings of the International Conference on Formal Ontology in Information Systems. (2001): 151-161.
- Roazen, Paul. "Biography at its Best." Virginia Quarterly Review Autumn (1977): 763-766.
- Rogoff, Barbara. The Cultural Nature of Human Development. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Rogoff, Barbara et al. "Firsthand Learning Through Intent Participation." Annual Review of Psychology 54 (2003): 175-203.
- Ruch, Willibald. "Psychology of Humor. In Raskin, Victor (Ed.). A Primer of Humor Research. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Salomon, Louis B. Semantics and Common Sense. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966.
- Sapir, Edward. Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., Harvest Books, 1949.
- Schiffrin, Deborah. Approaches to Discourse. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Schefflen, Albert E. How Behavior Means. NY: Jason Aronson, 1974.
- Segal, Evalyn F. "Psycholinguistics Discovers the Operant: A Review of Roger Brown's A First Language: The Early Stages." Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior 23 (1975): 149-158.
- Sisk, John P. "Sound and Sense of Words." In Pflug, Raymond J. (Ed.). The Ways of Language: A Reader. New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1967.

- Slobin, Dan I. "Cognitive Prerequisites for the Development of Grammar." In Ferguson, C. A. and Dan I. Slobin (Eds.). Studies of Child Language Development. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.
- Strauss, Claudia. "The Imaginary." Anthropological Theory 6:3 (2006): 322-344.
- Su, Hsi-Yao, "Code-switching in Managing a Face-threatening Communicative Task: Footing and Ambiguity in Conversational Interaction in Taiwan." Journal of Pragmatics 41.2 (2009): 372-392.
- Tarez, Samra Graban. "Beyond "Wit and Persuasion": Rhetoric, Composition and Humor Studies." In Raskin, Victor (Ed.), A Primer of Humor Research. Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Tolchin, Martin. "About: New Words." In Pflug, Raymond J. (Ed.). The Ways of Language: A Reader. New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1967.
- Tyler, Stephen A., Ed. Cognitive Anthropology: Readings. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.
- Weisner, Thomas S. "Ecocultural Niches of Middle Childhood: A Cross-Cultural Perspective." In Collins, W. Andrew (Ed.). Development During Middle Childhood. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1984.
- White, Lydia. "Linguistic Theory, Universal Grammar, and Second Language Acquisition." In Van Patten, Bill and Jessica Williams (Eds.). Theories in Second Language Acquisition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. "Science and Linguistics." In Bork, Alfred M. (Ed.), Science and Language. (13-22), Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1966.

