On the potential extension of the frame concept to the text level: a case study based on instructional texts

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[Context and Research Questions]

Recipes, instruction manuals or package inserts have in common that they give instructions to their readers to enable them to achieve a particular goal (Heurley, Granier 2006: 46). So, beyond the mere transfer of knowledge, instructional texts have a practical purpose, which is fulfilled if the tasks are carried out correctly (Nickl 2018: 324). Such texts can be assigned to the text class of instructional texts, which includes various text types (Adam 2001: 12ff). Considering that frames are meant to be "a uniform representation for word meanings, sentence meaning, *text interpretations,* and *world models* [emphasis added]" (Fillmore 1976: 28), the reader needs to activate the frames not only at the word and sentence level but also at the textual level, in order to perform the instructions. Otherwise, by not being able to link the frames evoked by a word to the whole system on the macro-level, the instructive aspect would be reduced to explanation. Therefore, we argue that the frame concept as described various times by Fillmore is also applicable to the textual level. Consequently, the first research question is how to model this textual frame. As frames build a network structure and are connected to each other (Fillmore 2006: 373), the textual frame is not isolated either. The nature of the interaction between frame(s) at the macro-level with those at micro and meso-level is the core of the second research question. Since the argumentative structures connecting propositions can be represented by frames (Varga 2019: 94), we assume that transphrastic relations in general can be modeled as frames. So the meso-level comprises these relations and the associated logical frames.

[Data]

The analysis is based on a comparable corpus of instructional texts in standard French and German. The corpus contains different text types that can be subsumed under the tag "instructional text". The sub-corpora are equally balanced to each other with approximately 100,000 words in total.

[Methodology]

The analysis follows a bottom-up approach, so the corpora are annotated on three different textual levels. Firstly, at the micro-level the verbs and their respective frame elements are annotated. Since frames are interrelated through relational structures, e.g. temporal, causal, (Barsalou 1992: 35f) the second step of the analysis regards the meso-level. These relations can be implicit, thus, existing as frame elements, but not instantiated. The third step of the analysis regards the macro-level, integrating the frame-semantic elements on the lower levels into the overall textual frame whose existence is the core of our demonstration.

Fillmore states that "the frame conception is a useful tool in […] text semantics" (1985: 223), but this approach rests unfinished. Although, different words can "belong to a single (high-level) frame" and the interrelations are described beyond the sentence level as they establish coherence, there is no link to the textual level (Fillmore/Baker 2001: 4). Extending the concept - as Czulo, Ziem & Torrent (2020) propose, for instance at pragmatic level - offers new perspectives on the modeling of textual complexity, text types and their patterns.

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