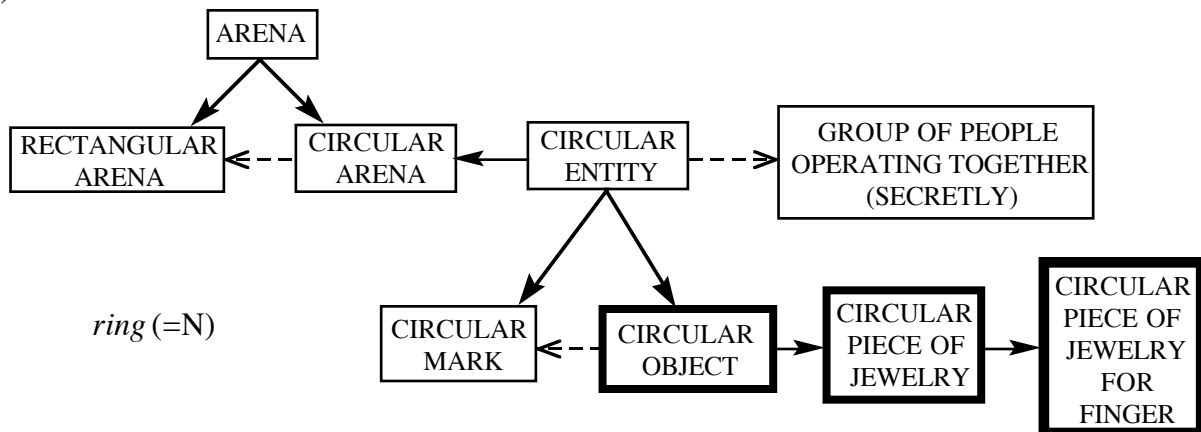


Conceptual Semantics

- A. Basic Notions
- B. Cognitive Domains
- C. Construal
- D. Dynamicity and Fictivity

A. Basic Notions

- (1) The term **conceptualization** is used to refer to any facet of mental experience, including apprehension of the physical, linguistic, social, and cultural context. **Semantic structures** are conceptualizations employed for linguistic purposes (primarily as the *semantic pole* of expressions).
- (2) A complete and definitive description of semantic structures is not a realistic goal, nor do strings of discrete symbols fully represent these conceptualizations in a cognitively realistic manner.
 - Semantic structures involve too many facets or dimensions, of diverse character, for any single formalism to handle them all.
 - Linguistic meanings are not self-contained or well-delimited. Rather, they are open-ended, potentially “encyclopedic” in scope, and shade off into general and contextual knowledge.
 - Meanings are variable and context-dependent. An expression is probably never used twice with *exactly* the same conceptual import.
- (3) **Polysemy:** It is normal for a frequently used lexical item to have multiple, related meanings that have all been conventionalized to some degree. Among these “senses”, some are more central, or *prototypical*, than others. To some extent the senses are linked by *categorizing relationships* to form a network.
- (4)



(5) Types of categorizing relationships

- (a) **Elaboration** ($A \rightarrow B$): A is schematic, B is specific. B *elaborates* A. B is an *instance* of A. B is compatible with A but is specified in more detail.
- (b) **Extension** ($A \dashrightarrow B$): A is more central or prototypical, B is more peripheral. B is an *extension* from A. B is not fully compatible with A, but is related to A on the basis of similarity or association.

(6) Semantic extension often involves either **metaphor** (based on an abstract *similarity*) or **metonymy** (based on *association*).

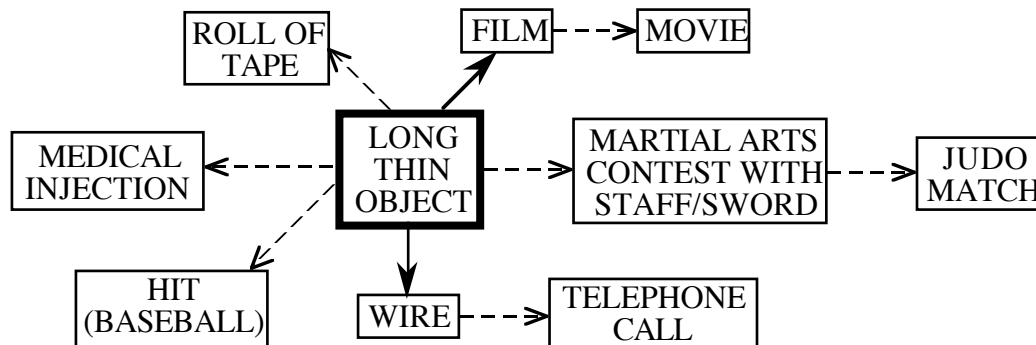
(7)(a) *They are building a new church outside of town.*

(b) *The church is gaining new members all the time.*

(8) Some uses of the classifier *hon* in Japanese:

- sticks, canes, pencils, candles, trees, ropes, hair, dead snakes
- medical injections [metonymy]
- martial arts contests with staffs or swords [metonymy]
- judo matches
- hits in baseball [metaphor and metonymy]
- telephone calls [metonymy]
- rolls of tape
- movies

(9)



(10) **Image schemas:** schematic and imagistic concepts which are abstracted from pre-conceptual bodily experience, function as constituents of more complex notions, and provide the structure projected metaphorically to more abstract domains.

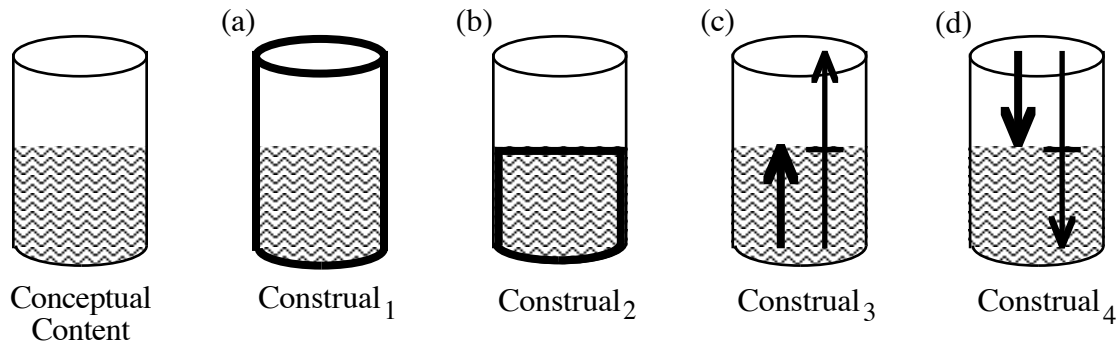
(11) Some **image schemas:** container; blockage; enablement; source-path-goal; cycle; part-whole; full-empty; iteration; surface; balance; counterforce; attraction; link; near-far; merging; matching; contact; object; compulsion; restraint removal; mass-count; center-periphery; scale; splitting; superimposition; process; collection.

- (12) Elements of conceptual structure include **cognitive domains** (providing “content”), various kinds of **cognitive abilities** (notably the various dimensions of *construal*), and different sorts of **concepts** that are “basic” in one way or another (such as *image schemas* and *conceptual archetypes*).
- (13) **Cognitive domain:** Any coherent area or product of conceptualization, relative to which semantic structures can be characterized. A **basic domain** (time, space, color, pitch, smell, etc.) is one that is not reducible to more fundamental notions, a realm of experience providing the *potential* for conceptualization to occur. A **non-basic** (or “abstract”) **domain** can be a concept or conceptual complex of any size representing any level of conceptual organization.
- (14) Suggested types of “basic” conceptual entities
- (a) **Minimal concepts** in basic domains: line, angle, curvature, (focal) colors, temporal precedence, exertion of muscular force ...
 - (b) Experientially grounded **conceptual archetypes**: physical object, spatial motion of an object, the human face, the human body, a physical container and its contents, a whole and its parts, seeing something, holding something, handing something to someone, exerting force to effect a desired change, speaking, a face-to-face social encounter ...
 - (c) **Maximally schematic notions** independent of specific domains: point vs. extension, contrast, boundary, change, continuity, contact, inclusion, separation, proximity, multiplicity, group ...
- (15) Working hypothesis: Certain fundamental and universal grammatical notions are characterized in terms of both a *prototype* and a *schematic* meaning instantiated by all instances. Such notions involve a natural relationship between an experientially grounded *conceptual archetype*, functioning as the prototype, and a basic, presumably inborn *cognitive ability*, providing the schematic characterization. The ability, which makes it possible for structured experience to occur in the first place, is initially manifested in the archetype and then applied to other realms of experience.

B. Cognitive Domains

- (16) A meaning consists of both conceptual **content** and a particular way of **construing** (or “viewing”) that content.
- (17)(a) *the glass with water in it*
 (b) *the water in the glass*
 (c) *the glass is half-full*
 (d) *the glass is half-empty*

(18)



(19) An expression's *content* is provided by a set of cognitive **domains**, representing any degree of complexity or level of conceptual organization.

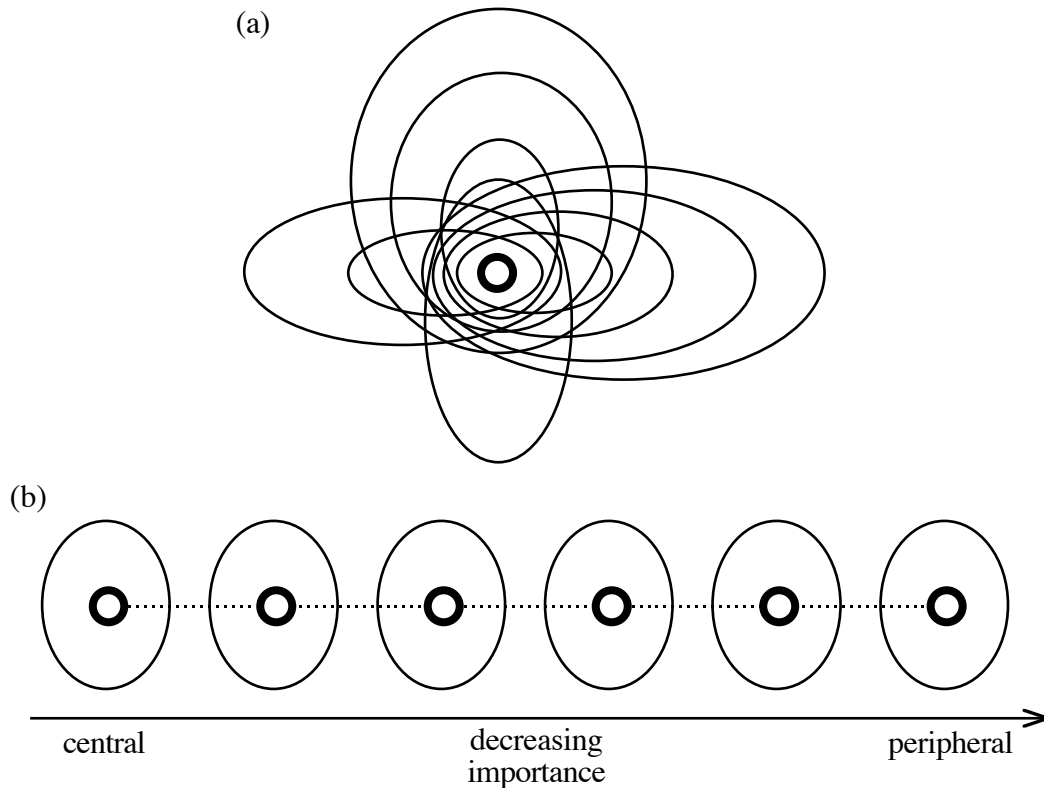
(20) For its semantic characterization, an expression typically invokes multiple domains (a **complex matrix**), in each of which the designated entity has some role. The domains of a matrix need not be disjoint or clearly delimited. They have varying degrees of *centrality* (likelihood of activation).

(21) Some domains for *glass*:

- space [basic domain]
- shape [cylinder, closed at one end] (Presupposes space. Space is the domain in which a shape conception is manifested.)
- typical orientation in space [long dimension aligned along vertical axis, closed end at bottom] (Incorporates space, verticality, and shape conception.)
- function₁ [container for liquid] (Presupposes orientation, liquid, spatial inclusion, potential motion, force, constancy through time.)
- function₂ [role in the process of drinking] (Incorporates function₁, the conception of the human body, of grasping, of motion with the arm, of ingestion, etc.)
- material [usually the substance glass]
- size [easily held in one hand]
- others (e.g. cost, washing, storage, possibility of breaking, position on table at meal, matching sets, method of manufacture, ...)

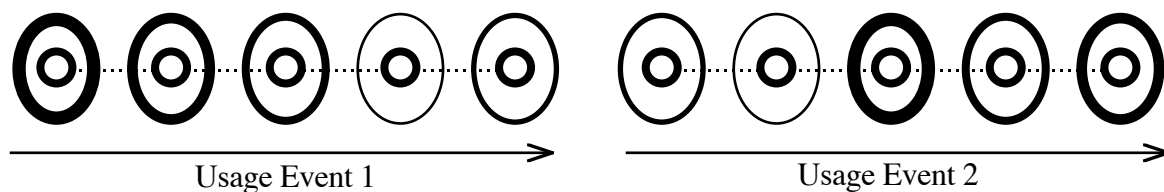
(22) Two conceptions occupy different **levels of conceptual organization** when, asymmetrically, one presupposes the other as part of its characterization.

(23)

(24) **Encyclopedic** view of semantics:

- (a) There is **no specific boundary** between linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Language *draws on* general knowledge, and *evokes* it in particular ways, but it is not separate and distinct from such knowledge, nor are there any strict limitations on what portions of it can be evoked for linguistic purposes.
- (b) A lexical item represents a conventional way of *accessing* a set of domains. Some domains are **central** to its value (with a high likelihood of being accessed), others more **peripheral** (less likely to be accessed). Still, domains are flexibly and variably evoked, as determined by the context.

(25)



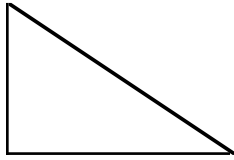
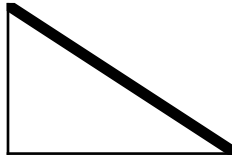
- (26)(a) *When she picked up the cat it started purring.*
 (b) *He was saved by his cat-like reflexes.*
 (c) *A cat is a mammal.*
 (d) *It was a real cat-fight.*
 (e) *Watch out for ladders, black cats, and broken mirrors!*
 (f) *Is this birdcage cat-proof?*
 (g) *Is this sofa cat-proof?*
 (h) *Is this rug cat-proof?*
- (27) Theoretical consequences: semantic structure cannot be exhaustively described; language (including semantics) is not a distinct and self-contained module; semantics is not fully compositional.

C. Construal

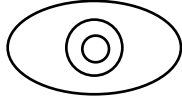
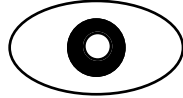
- (28) **Construal** is our ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways. Some dimensions of construal are *level of specificity*, *prominence*, and *perspective*.
- (29)(a) *thing → creature → animal → mammal → dog → poodle*
 (b) *do → act → move → run → sprint*
- (30)(a) *Something happened. → An animal moved. → A dog ran into the room. →*
 A dirty poodle sprinted recklessly into the kitchen of our cottage.
 (b) *An animal sprinted recklessly into the room.*
 (c) *A dirty poodle entered the kitchen of our cottage.*
- (31) Certain elements in a conceived situation are made **prominent** in various ways and to different degrees. Two kinds of prominence that are especially important for grammar are *profiling* and the *prominence of participants in a relationship*.
- (32) An expression evokes a certain body of conceptual content, called its **base**. Within this base, it gives special prominence to some substructure, called its **profile**. An expression's profile is what it *refers to* or *designates* within its conceptual base. It is therefore a kind of *focus of attention*.
- (33)(a) In diagrams, the profile is indicated with heavy lines.
 (b) Expressions can have the same conceptual content but differ in meaning because they have different profiles.
 (c) An expression can profile either a *thing* or a *relationship*.

(34)

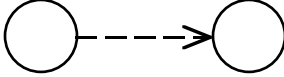
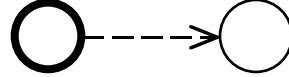
(a) Conceptual Base

*hypotenuse*

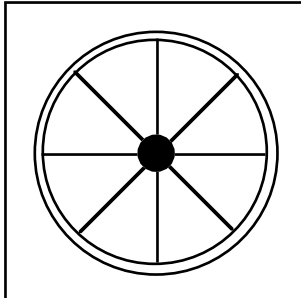
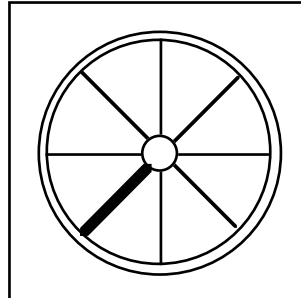
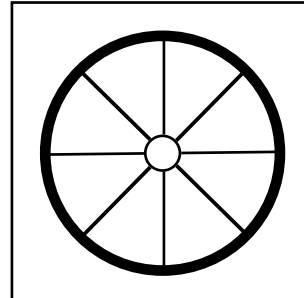
(b) Conceptual Base

*iris**pupil*

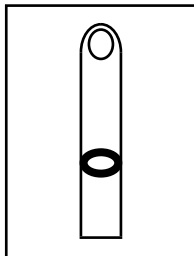
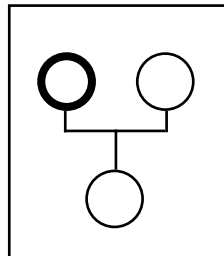
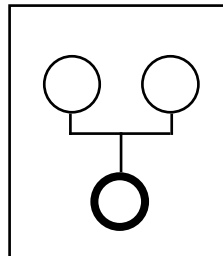
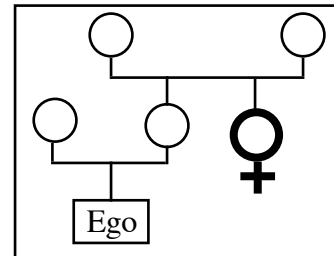
(c) Conceptual Base

*admire**admirer*

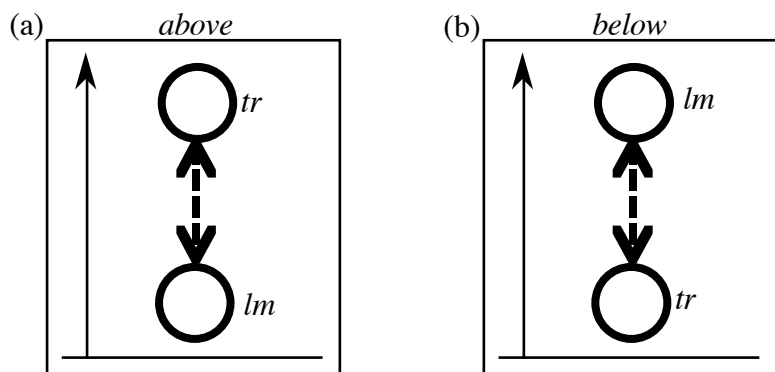
(35)

(a) *hub*(b) *spoke*(c) *rim*

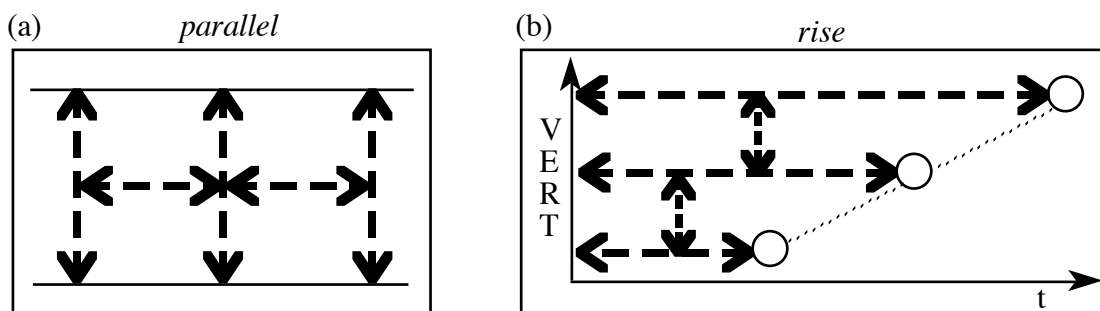
(36)

(a) *knuckle*(b) *parent*(c) *child*(d) *aunt*

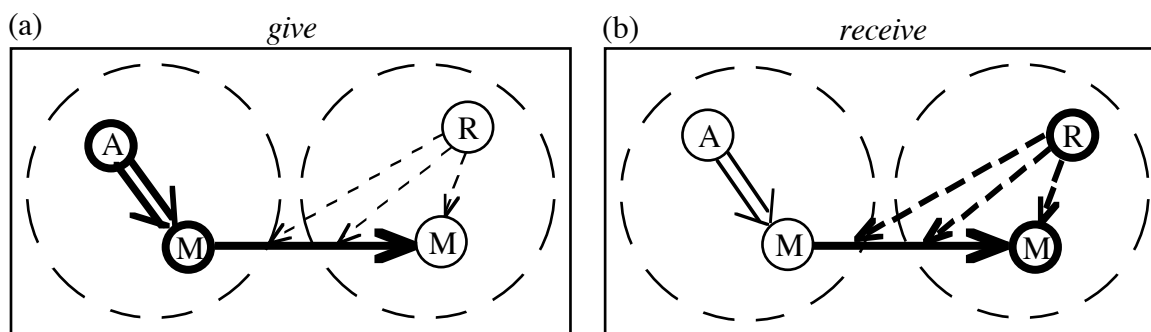
(37)



(38)



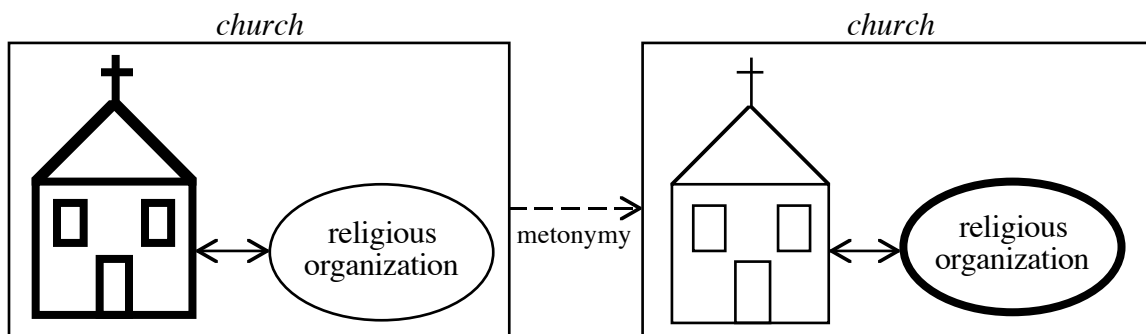
(39)



A = agent M = mover R = recipient \Rightarrow = energy transfer
 \longrightarrow = motion \dashrightarrow = perception/possession (\quad) = sphere of control

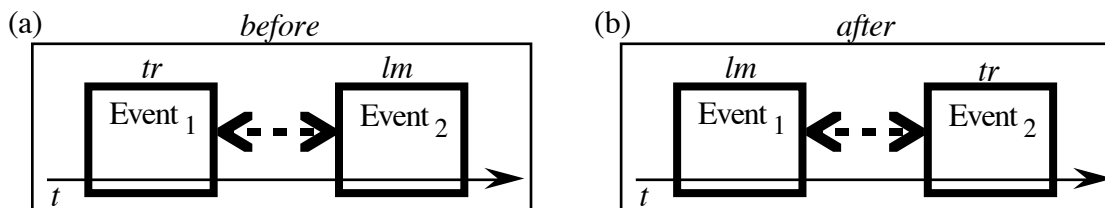
(40) **Metonymy** is a shift in profile. An expression that normally profiles one entity is used instead to profile some other entity within the same conceptual base.

(41)



- (42)(a) When a relationship is profiled, its participants are made prominent to varying degrees.
 (b) The most prominent participant, called the **trajector** (*tr*), is construed as the entity being located, evaluated, or described. It is the *primary focus* (“figure”) within the profiled relationship.
 (c) Often another participant is made prominent as a *secondary focus*. This is called a **landmark** (*lm*).
 (d) Expressions can have the same content, and profile the same relationship, but differ in meaning because they make different choices of trajector and landmark.

(43)

(44)(a) *Where is the lamp?*

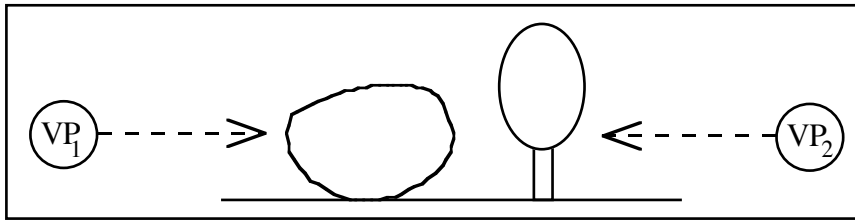
- (i) *The lamp (**tr**) is above the table (**lm**).*
- (ii) **The table (**tr**) is below the lamp (**lm**).*

(b) *Where is the table?*

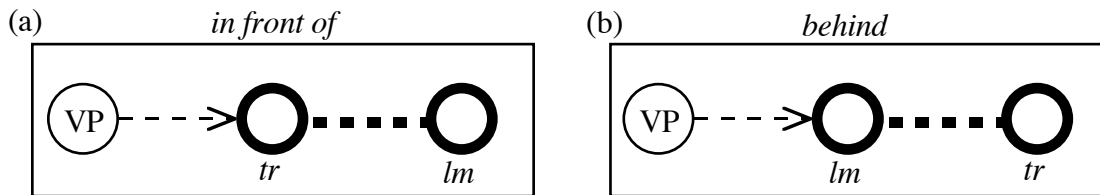
- (i) *The table (**tr**) is below the lamp (**lm**).*
- (ii) **The lamp (**tr**) is above the table (**lm**).*

(45) **Perspective** includes a presumed *vantage point* and a variety of other factors pertaining to the viewing circumstances.

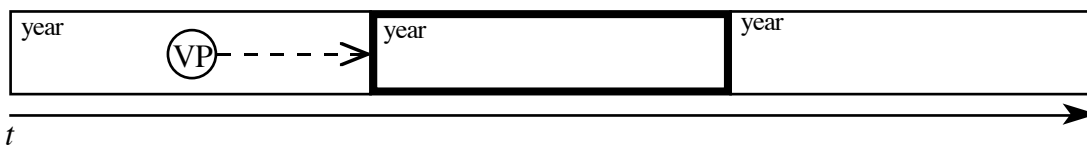
(46)

(47)(a) VP_1 : *The rock is in front of the tree. The tree is behind the rock.*(b) VP_2 : *The tree is in front of the rock. The rock is behind the tree.*

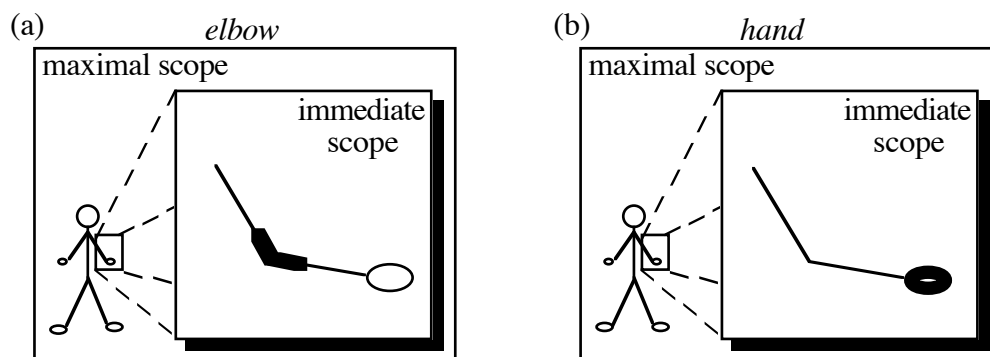
(48)

(49) *If you were standing over there [at VP_2], the tree would be in front of the rock.*(50)(a) *Next year will be full of surprises.*(b) *Joe believed that next year would be full of surprises.*

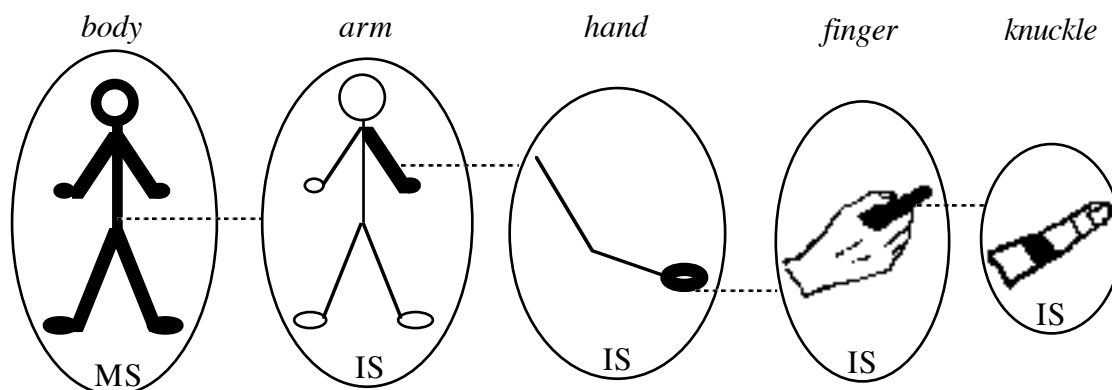
(51)

(52)(a) *I sat in the car and watched the scenery rush past me.*(b) *There is a house every now and then through the valley.*(53)(a) An expression's **maximal scope** is the full array of conceptual content it evokes as the basis for its meaning.(b) Within the maximal scope, there is often a limited **immediate scope**, the portion directly relevant for a particular purpose. Metaphorically, the immediate scope is the "onstage region", the general region of viewing attention.(c) An expression's profile is the specific *focus* of attention within the immediate scope.

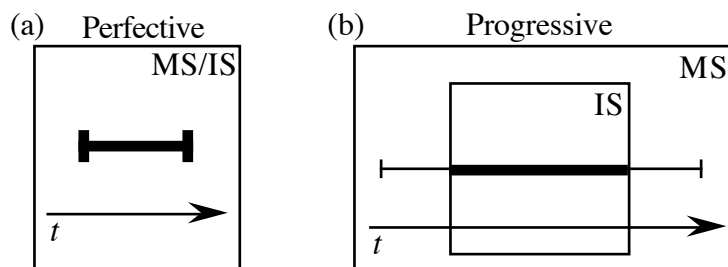
(54)



(55)

(56)(a) *fingertip; fingernail; toenail; eyelash; eyelid; eyeball*(b) **bodytip; *armnail; *legnail; *facelash; *bodylid; *headball*(57)(a) *He painted his house.*(b) *He was painting his house.*

(58)



D. Dynamicity and Fictivity

(59) **Dynamicity:** Conceptualization requires time. It takes place through **processing** time (T).
How it develops through processing time is often crucial to an expression's meaning.

(60)(a) *A scar runs from his elbow to his wrist.*
(b) *A scar runs from his wrist to his elbow.*

(61)(a) *Your camera is upstairs, in the bedroom, in the closet, on the top shelf.*
(b) *Your camera is on the top shelf, in the closet, in the bedroom, upstairs.*

(62) *Sono heya wa marui.* 'The room is round.' [Japanese]
the room T round

(63) *Sono heya wa maruku na-tte iru.* 'The room is [in the state of having
the room T round become-STAT be become] round.'

(64) *broken line* (cf. *broken pencil*); *scattered villages* (cf. *scattered marbles*); *sunken bathtub*
(cf. *sunken ship*)

(65)(a) *The company's president keeps getting younger.*
(b) *The trees get shorter at higher altitudes.*
(c) *The water got deeper as he swam away from the shore.*

(66)(a) *He doesn't have **a** sister.*
(b) *If she writes **a** novel, she will try to publish it.*
(c) ***A** kitten likes to chase **its** tail.*
(d) ***Each** boy was holding **a** frog.*

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