

The semiotics of frame control

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It's time to get all sociological. Few principles in Game are as powerful or efficient as frame control yet it's a nebulous concept that is difficult to operationalise. So let's start from first principles. What is "frame"?

Frame is the implicit set of assumptions and expectations used to interpret a social situation.

Consider a man and a woman sitting at a dining table in a dark room, eating dinner as a candle burns between them. How do we interpret such a situation? If we have further knowledge we might infer it's a romantic date at the man's house while he seeks to close the girl. But perhaps it's a brother and sister and there's been a power failure knocking out the electric lights. There is a wealth of information "in the ether" around your direct perception of the social situation that affects the meaning the participants place upon it. The ability to impose your preferred assumptions and expectations onto the situation is your frame control.



A tangentially-related photo, yesterday

To understand frame control you need to understand perception. It is commonly assumed that the real world exists in an objective state and our senses perceive it. Readers with even a cursory knowledge of psychology (or an inquisitive mind) know perception is actually a constructive active process in which the brain takes limited incomplete information and fills in the gaps with pre-existing knowledge and expectations. Have you ever woken from a bad dream and thought that shadow over your bed was a homicidal intruder, only to rub your eyes and realise it's your dressign gown hanging from a peg in a vaguely humanoid shape? The fact perception is active explains much of the disagreements men have when watching their favourite sports – you see the punches [Manny Pacquiao](#) lands and are blind to the onces from [Juan Manuel Marquez](#) and thus render a bad decision after 12 rounds. It's when you probably haven't been thinking of how the material of your shoes feels against your toes until I just brought your attention to it now.

Frame control involves directing the participants in a social situation towards those fragments of information you wish them to attend to and then filling in the gaps with your preferred interpretation. It is best done subtly. I'll use language semantics as an example.

Most of the meaning required to interpret a sentence is not actually present in the words. The words are merely signals to meaning. This is not to say words are arbitrary – If I say "dog" there's only a limited number of images that spring to mind, and probably none of them look like "caterpillar" or "milkshake". When people have a shared biology, shared education, shared television channels, share cuisine etc we soon develop a shared understanding of the world that can be referred to.



Not milkshake

Direct / Indirect speech

Have you noticed that legal documents are extremely tedious whereas movie dialogue is often compelling? Lawyers cannot rely upon a shared understanding because it leaves too much wiggle room in court and this all terms must be precisely defined and all assumptions stated. This is incredibly boring, like your mind is shackled and not allowed to fill in the blanks to get to the point quickly. Conversely, movie dialogue "turns exposition into ammunition" and talks around a subject in short sentences, relying upon the actor's faces, body language, gestures, and the surrounding plot and set design to give all the

cues needed to follow the story without spelling it out to you.

Here's a quick game tip: *always use indirect language*. It's far more engaging.Â Imagine a TV show where John has been "missing" all weekend and comes back to the house he rents with Bill, sporting a wedding ring, sun-reddened face, and dishevelled clothes.

Direct:

Bill: Hey John. Where have you been this weekend? You were missing and we didn't know what happened to you. You are awfully sun-burned.

John: I have been to Las Vegas with my girlfriend Valerie. We got married in a casino chapel then drove back in my open-topped Cadillac.

Indirect:

Bill: I never took you for a road-tripping adventuring romantic

John: A regular Vegas wedding!

In order to interpret the latter exchange you must be more sensitive to the surrounding details, choose the important ones more judiciously, and work harder as your brain fills in the gaps. This is far more interesting and carries an even better upside of frame control which I'll now go into. Consider verbal communication as following this simple model:

Writer's members resources + situation + written words = intended meaning

Reader's members resources + situation + written words = received meaning

(members resources = the sum of all knowledge, experience and assumptions that the brain can use to fill in the gaps left unspoken in the utterance / text)

This explains why it's often difficult to understand historical texts without understanding why they were written, some biographical details of the author, and the scholarly debates of the day. The texts were written for a different situation and different members resources to what you currently have. Consider jargon. Can you understand a technical physics paper without understanding physics? I can't. Consider:

"I was able to bounce my target home but she got LMR when I went for the close"

To interpret that sentence your members resources must include the jargon of Game (bounce, target, LMR, close) and also the situation of me being on a date with a girl I intend to fuck. For me to write a sentence that you dear readers can understand I must second-guess your members resources (hereafter "MR"). To encourage you to interpret these words as I intend them to be interpreted I am setting up an "ideal reader" which has a certain set of MR(e.g. Game knowledge) and situation (a man wishing to get better with women). It is only by occupying that role of ideal reader that you can really understand me.

Now let's bring it back to frame control. If you remain in your "non-ideal" reader position you encounter resistance to understanding my words, and presumably you are reading me because you wish to understand whatever it is I'm saying. So long as you stick stubbornly to your own individual MR and situation you encounter resistance to clear understanding. Your brain dislikes inefficiency as much as it dislikes legalese. So you temporarily place yourself within the ideal reader position (hereafter "IRP") until you reach understanding. It's empathy and it's investment.

So now you see the frame control possibilities of the model.

When entering a social situation you must first entice people to want to understand you. Whence motivated thus, you can use indirect language fashioned so that it can only be understood by adopting your chosen IRP for them. Repeatedly placing them in the IRP builds investment and rapport while framing them as you please. Over time this becomes the default mode of communication between you and they are now in your frame permanently. It underpins much of the classic Game cocky funny

routines:

Her: That's a nice t-shirt (touches you)

You: Hey, hands off the merchandise. That's \$5 you owe me

To understand your comment she must adopt an IRP that includes MR of: I am chasing him, he has high value, he can tell me off, I must pay money for the privilege of touching him, I fancy him. It's done playfully, but as you keep chipping away at her frame it will eventually crumble.

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