Interjú

József Andor

Framing the issues: An interview with George Lakoff[*]

Andor: *Thank you very much for accepting my invitation for an interview at this very important interdisciplinary conference taking place in Brighton, which conference is dedicated to investigating the complex relations between cognition, communication, and linguistic expression.[1] These domains are certainly closely related to the whole of your work primarily as a linguist, who has studied the complex nature of the interrelatedness of the disciplines of linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and also the neural representation of cognition, cognitive structures and language, important domains in current research of cognitive science.*

My first question in this interview concerns your views on the role of syntax in current models of cognitive-based linguistic theory. We have read several detailed pieces of argumentation from you on the rejection of Chomskyan types of generative grammar, which advocated the idea of syntactocentrism. As one of the founding fathers of generative semantics in the late sixties, you expressed your harsh criticism of Chomskyan grammar several times. The reasons, I think, have been put clearly and persuasively. However, I believe, one can experience a sort of neglect of tackling syntactic representation to the required details in favor of interpreting the semantics and pragmatics of linguistic expression in current models of cognitive-based linguistic theory, including Langacker's and others' cognitive, functionally-based grammars, but even Fillmore's and co-workers' frame-based semantics, Goldberg's, Sag's, and others' construction grammars, or the recently published cognitive English grammar by Radden and Dirven.

What's your view about the role of syntax in cognitive linguistics? And what do you think, in particular, of Ray Jackendoff's cognitivism and views on the role of syntax, who advocates himself strictly as a cognitive scientist, but who is still a generativist (Jackendoff 2002)?

Lakoff: Well, those are complicated questions. Syntax is probably the wrong word for this. The role of grammar is more appropriate, where grammar is seen as linking surface forms with conceptual structure directly, and in a neural based grammar, in a neural theory of

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grammar which is being developed now at Berkeley, there is this neural circuitry, which links form with circuitry for semantics, and in order for that to work in terms of neural computation, you need to have what are called control nodes. Control nodes correspond to what might be considered the names of the constructions, and they can be activated or inhibited, and that activates or inhibits links between the forms and the meanings of those forms. The grammar is structured in that way. And there is now a notation called embodied construction grammar. It's a notation that serves several purposes at once. First, it describes grammatical constructions in full formal detail. Second, the same notation can be used for the computational structure that models the cognitive linguistic prescription computationally, and then the same notation is mapped onto constraints on the neural computational models that are being used. So that what we have is this notation that can be simply learnt for linguistic prescription and automatically becomes a way to do a computation with that, that is, to do that, say, parsing, given a sentence, you get a semantic representation for it, and also, to map directly onto constraints on neural computation. So that the same notation can serve three roles at once and can be learnt by just those doing descriptive cognitive linguistics. When you use the notation it allows you to do things that are previously undone. So it turns out, for example, that in the form of cognitive grammar that Fillmore and others have used, where there is just 'agent', 'patient', 'recipient', 'location', and so on (Fillmore 1968), that is much too weak for expressing what is going on in grammar, that you really need to look that the grammatical constructions are driven by the semantics. Which is what we learnt in generative semantics. That is, the semantics is independent, and it drives the grammar. But if you look at really complex examples, sets of examples, it seems that you need to look at the embodiment, the actual embodiment used in the new sentences to characterize the full grammatical complexity. So it turns out that the study of embodiment for causal sentences, and other kinds of sentences, matters a great deal for allowing one to adequately represent grammar. This has been shown in a dissertation by Ellen Dodge, which is now being completed[2], where she takes the kinds of examples that were done by Adele Goldberg (1995), and then shows that the Goldberg system, which is basically using Fillmore's ideas, is inadequate, and that you really need to look at the full embodiment of what is being said, the verbs you use, and so on, in order to get the syntax right.

Andor: *In various stages of developing his generativist model of linguistic description, Chomsky always attributed importance to clearly outlining, describing various criteria of adequacy of his grammar: descriptive adequacy, explanatory adequacy, for instance. What are the critical types of adequacy that can be attributed to the theory of cognitive linguistics and cognitive grammar? Could you characterize their nature and scope?*

Lakoff: Yes, but first, I didn't answer your question about Jackendoff.

Andor: *That's right.*

Lakoff: Jackendoff is basically a generative grammarian. He believes in the autonomy of syntax. He has finally come around, after 40 years, to the autonomy of semantics. I argued that, starting in 1963, 45 years (Lakoff 1965/1970). And he resisted it and resisted it, but after

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[2]   Ellen K. Dodge's PhD dissertation titled *Constructional and Conceptual Composition* was defended in 2010.

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40 years he's given in and that's good, but he still has an autonomous syntax, which is hopeless, and for many many reasons. And, you know, he also believes in symbol manipulation, the symbol manipulation paradigm. He doesn't accept any of the work on metaphor at all. So he is missing all the metaphor from semantics.

Andor: *But he's done some work on idioms ...*

Lakoff: Yes, but not on metaphors. Not on systematic conceptual metaphors. So he's missing all of that work, which is a huge amount of semantics.

Andor: *And I wonder why on earth that's the case.*

Lakoff: It's because he still believes in a version of the correspondence theory of truth. He believes that meaning is literal meaning, and so it is still, sort of, limited by the old correspondence theory of truth. He also is limited by the idea of symbol manipulation. You know, the brain has no symbols. We write down symbols in understanding what's going on, but that's different from what happens in the brain. So, when we write a notation like embodied construction grammar, we use symbols, but the symbols have to be cashed out in terms of neural computation. And if your theory just has symbols in it, it's gonna be hopeless, because brains don't do symbolic computation.

Now, with respect to your second question, one of the places I agree strongly with Chomsky is in the need for explanatory adequacy, although we mean very different things by that idea. Explanation is crucial. And here, in cognitive linguistics, explanation is coming from things like embodiment, things like the way neural systems function, so the learning of metaphor, and the existence of primary metaphors, and best fit phenomena, and so on, are all coming out of the neural system. And they require neural explanations. The way that image schemas work is coming out of the neural system and requires neural explanations. So there are many sorts of cases where explanation has to do with the way brains function. And that is completely outside of Chomsky's explanatory system. He is still using the mathematics of recursive function theory and formal language theory, which is symbol manipulation. So he is still a symbol manipulation theorist, and that does not allow real explanation for many of the phenomena that we find in language.

Andor: *In your work of the past few decades, perhaps since the publication of your paper on 'linguistic gestalts', which appeared in the 1977 CLS proceedings volume (Lakoff 1977), but especially since the appearance of Fillmore's theory of frame semantics in the late 70s and early 80s, the notion of 'frames' has gained vital importance. However, one can see a critical difference between your characterization, interpretation of frames and Fillmore's. Whereas his 'frame' notion is more closely linguistically, primarily lexically based, yours is definitely more cognitively, philosophically and psychologically, not to say, experientially based. Linguistically it is definitely more textually based, deeply rooted in the representation of discourse. It is not by chance, therefore, that you have applied your views on frames, framing in analyzing political discourse, to which topic I'll get in one of my later questions. One who is knowledgeable about the development of frame theory in its early stages: Erving Goffman's Frame Analysis (1974), Gordon Bower and coworkers' experiments on the cognitive representation of frames (1979), Schank's and Abelson's frames and scripts model of the late*

70s and the early 80s (1977), can for sure recognize that your views on frames stem from, can be directly related in some way to these classical models of frame theory, or even to Bartlett's early views (1932), rather than to Fillmore's lexicalist theory. What do you think of this perspective? How do you think your interpretation of the role of frames can be related to Fillmore's more purely linguistically imbued view?

Lakoff: Well, first, Bartlett. He had a very weak view of frames. Frames were simply structures that exist in the inner culture, and he said nothing about the internal structure of those structures that they were there. Goffman did. He argued that human institutions were structured by frames and that they had roles. His metaphor was *life is a play*, expressing that people played roles. And so, in a hospital you have doctors, nurses, and patients, and so on, and then there are scenarios carried out by these people. So, for example, in a hospital there are things that people with these roles do: surgeons perform operations on patients in operating rooms, with scalpels, and so on. And Goffman recognized that there were these structures, and that you could tell the boundaries of them by when they were broken. So, you know, if you walked into a hospital, and went to the reception desk, and there was a doctor lying there and they gave you a scalpel and said, *You are operating on the doctor*, that would break the frame. That's not in the frame. And, you know, this is very much like Fillmore's frames. Fillmore argued that in order to characterize groups of related lexical items like *buy*, *sell*, *price*, etc., that you needed frames that were independent of the lexical items. And that the lexical items were defined relative to the frames. So he actually has a conceptual basis for this. But he starts at the lexical items, and asks how they are related, methodologically. But there's a difference between the methodology and a theory. In his theory, he has conceptual frames, which are used by a whole series of lexical items. It's not frame-by-frame for one lexical item. So that frames aren't conceptual elements. His methodology is linguistic in two respects. One, he is looking at the way verbs work in sentences or the way relational nouns do and trying to account for those relations and the grammar of simple sentences, and two, he is looking at semantic fields, that is groups of related words, and trying to understand what their relations are through frames. That's a linguistics-based methodology. It's a perfectly good linguistics-based methodology. It's just limited, and what I do is go beyond that. He also understands that frames come in systems, that there are inheritances among frames, and so on. And he is coming around to the view that it's not simply a matter of inheritance that is also what we call evocation of other frames that is needed. Evocation, that is that frames may not just inherit structure, but they may evoke and be linked to, that is, activate other frames. He resisted this for many many years, but he is coming around to it. We've been pressing it now for 20 years.

So in that regard, there is a great similarity between his frames and ours. In addition, he is slowly coming around to the idea that we noticed many many years ago, that frames have image schemas structuring them. And that in metaphors, when metaphors apply to frames, the image schemas are preserved. So, people working on this project are now beginning to include the image schemas in the frames. And, you know, I've been arguing this since the late 1970s. But, you know, there is a development of Fillmore's thought, and that's good. Fillmore still resists doing any work on metaphor.[3] That's, you know, a choice he's made, and therefore

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[3]   Sadly, Charles J. Fillmore, founding father of linguistically-based frame semantics, died in 2012.

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misses a huge amount. So there's a difference in the way we think about frames, but I'd say, the similarities are very great.

Andor: *Another parallel that I would like to tackle here is your notion of ICMs and the notion of frames. To what extent and how are they exactly related, or perhaps, on what grounds and how can they be separated? How can they be defined? I know this issue has been brought up by several authors in their work, but to my knowledge the scope of these important, experientially, cognitively based, gradable notions have not been outlined with precision yet. This is why I'm asking the chief advocator's opinion about this issue here.*

Lakoff: Well, the term ICM was something I used in the mid 1980s (Lakoff 1987), and I haven't used it since. I used it to distinguish my use of frames from what Fillmore was doing, which was more linguistic, and I was talking about this as fundamentally cognitive, and cognitive models. And I wanted to include not just frames, but also prototypes in metaphors and metonymies, sort of, all of the cognitive mechanisms, you know, under one name. That was the reason for it. It was mainly a terminological decision that had no theoretical importance, but was a matter of, sort of, signalling to people that this was different.

Andor: *Let me, at this point, ask you about prototype theory. You know, prototype theory has been, and still is, a very influential theory for cognitive science. However, I have not yet seen any sort of utilization of it with precision, basically, for empirically based linguistic analysis. Why is that the case, and what do you think about this?*

Lakoff: Well, first of all, you are right, it's been under-studied. It needs to be studied a great deal more. One of the reasons is that linguists have not been studying category structure in great detail in recent years. It just hasn't been in fashion. But in addition to that, the places where prototype theory is most important is not just in the structure of sentences allowed to play its roles there, it's in narrative, discourse, it's in reasoning, it's in decision making. So, for example in the psychology of decision making, prototypes are extremely important as in the work of Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman & Tversky 2000). In studying political discourse, stereotypes and prototypes are used all the time. Understanding the difference between an ideal prototype, a typical case prototype, and a nightmare prototype is crucial, if you are doing a study of political discourse. Understanding how a salient exemplar works is absolutely crucial in political discourse. When I do work on politics, I use these ideas all the time. But the people doing linguistic description haven't been doing that, because they haven't been working on political discourse.

Andor: *How about a possible utilization of it for lexical semantic analyses? More particularly, we may be studying a now highly neglected area of research: synonymy.*

Lakoff: Well, I think that's right. I think, if you are studying synonymy, you have to study categorization. And it's highly important to do that. Also, I think that the advent of embodied construction grammar, which gives us a notation for precisely characterizing all of these things, may help people do this. But right now noone happens to do it.

Andor: *Since quite early on, you have followed empirically based research on linguistic representation with great attention. You have done extensive research with such bases yourself with a number of co-workers. Perhaps most well-known is your multidisciplinary (but primarily linguistically-based) research on metaphors, the cognitive bases of metaphorization (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999, Lakoff & Turner 1989). Before asking you about that research, however, let me still ask you about frames. To what extent do you think they are empirically based? You already tackled this issue in an early paper, outlining the invariance hypothesis in 1990. But perhaps now, with knowledge about your and your colleagues' interest in the neural representation of linguistic and cognitive structures and categorization, I can ask you about research results on the neural representation of frames and framing. And perhaps also about such representation of scriptal knowledge.*

Lakoff: Well, the study of frames is empirically based in many ways. Fillmore, as I pointed out, looked at the ways sentence structure works, showing that that's one kind of evidence for frames. Another one is accounting for the relationships between words in semantic fields. But in addition to that, if you look at metaphors, they map frames onto other frames. And you can see by the structure of the metaphor what the structure of the frame is. There are a lot of cases like that. That's a third kind of evidence for frames. In politics, it's framing all over the place. I mean, you can't do anything without the concept of frames. The properties of frames show up wherever you go. From a neural point of view, the neural computational structure for frames is very simple, as Jerome A. Feldman pointed out in his book *From Molecule to Metaphor* (2008). So that they are structures that are likely to arise. In my paper *The Brain's Concepts*, with Vittorio Gallese (Gallese & Lakoff 2005), which is based on the data coming out of mirror neurons, what we showed was that the neuron by neuron study even for monkeys, for macaques, showed frame structure, actually, at the single neuron level. That discussion shows how that works there. And, of course, the same kinds of structures are there in the human brain. So as low down as you are going to get, you are going to find evidence of frame structure. You know, I have no doubt that frames are very common, that they are simple, that they are the most usual thing that we use in thinking, and in characterizing the meanings of words. And here, I think, Fillmore is absolutely right, that words are defined in terms of frames.

Andor: *I have a last question, basically of terminological nature, on frames. In your recent – non-linguistic – book, Thinking Points, studying the usage of framing in understanding political discourse, you make a difference between 'surface', 'deep', and 'intermediate framing'(2006:12 and 28-29), which to me suggests some sort of layering (conceptual and linguistic) in frames. What exactly are these types? How are they related to one another? What is the practical importance and relevance of this type of differentiation? Is there any empirical evidence available to justify such a differentiation?*

Lakoff: Well, those are not technical terms. Let me explain. What the right wing in America has done through its various institutions is to market their deep ideas to the American public through language, getting them into people's brains. That is, their idea of what a free market is, their idea of what security is, their idea of government, their idea of taxation, and so on. These are very deep ideas. And then, there are special cases of them for various areas. Cases about deregulation, for example. And then, particular cases of deregulation which apply. Now,

in the actual discourse, there are low level policies, particular policies, for example, banking deregulation, or the deregulation of the food and drug administration, and so on. There are different kinds of deregulation. There are different kinds of arguments about taxes. The inheritance tax, which they call the *death tax*, and so on. Now, those ideas are rooted in deeper ideas. And it's the deepest frames, you know, that have to do with what I call *strict father morality* (Lakoff 1996/2002, 2004), that is behind all of these other ones. So the frame is characterizing the strict father family which is metaphorically mapped onto the government, the market, religion, and so on. Those are the deepest frames in the conservative conceptual system. And then there are very deep frames for the understanding of taxation. But there are particular kinds of taxation. And when they talk about a particular issue, that's when you get a surface frame. That is, when there is some linguistic expression, like *death tax*, or *war on terror*, that is a case where there is a surface frame, because there's surface language for it. But all of the surface frames only make sense when there's a system of deeper frames there. Now, in progressive discourse, the system of deeper frames is generally not named. That is, there are frames that people intuitively have, that are unconscious, that they think in terms of unconsciously, but which are not available in public discourse, because there's no language for them. And they are not repeated, so that they haven't been marketed to the public. As a result, they don't have a mechanism for talking about what they believe in particular cases, that would then use a whole superstructure of deep frames. So one of the big tasks needed for progressive thought is the explicit formulation of the now unconscious deep frames. Making them conscious and giving them language. That's a major job, not easy to do. And not only not easy to do, but right now impossible, because in America, the members of the Democratic Party don't really understand how frames work, and they don't understand what's being done to them. They believe in enlightenment reason. And if you believe in enlightenment reason, you believe that your reason can fit the world directly and that the use of frames is just a manipulation or spin, which is incorrect. That's why I wrote *The Political Mind* (Lakoff 2008), which tried to dispel those ideas. That's what the difference between surface frames and deep frames is about.

Andor: *Let us now get to the topic of metaphors and metaphorization. As you stress in several of your writings, metaphorization originates in cognition, not in the language, in the words. You place considerable emphasis on pointing to its gradability, the way it is cognitively brought about and as it is linguistically represented. But how, via applying scientific methods of analysis, can this gradability be measured?*

Lakoff: For grading you mean two things. There are graded concepts, like *rich*, which is on a scale. And there are metaphors about graded concepts. But that doesn't mean metaphor in general is graded. You know, any given metaphor is a neural circuit, and these synapses can be strong or weak. And so you can think of it as graded in that sense, but that's about it. I generally don't talk about it in terms of gradation.

Andor: *As you have pointed to the interrelatedness of metaphorization and the framing process, and we know that various frames can be interrelated both horizontally (via blending with other frames) and vertically (via inheritance or layering in macrostructures, for instance), I would be interested to know what you think of the conceptual relatedness or different sorts of metaphors.*

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What do you think of, for instance, the different ways of interpreting the conceptual bases of the metaphor behind the phrase.

> *(4)* Look how far we've come.

in terms of various conceptual domains, blends, frames?

Lakoff: Well, that phrase has different meanings, depending upon which metaphor is being used in a context. So, the basic, the most primary metaphor has to do with purposes or destinations. And, you know, when you have a long term purpose to be carried out, and *you've gone a long way* toward that purpose, you can say *Look how far you've come*, if you have achieved a lot toward achieving that purpose. Now, since that metaphor is used in the *love is a journey* metaphor, it can be used in terms of an understanding of *love is a journey*, where you can talk about that in terms of your love relationship.

Andor: *You can also talk about it from the point of view of an achievement, even some professional achievement.*

Lakoff: Well, any kind of achievement. You know, in that metaphor, love is an achievement. It could be a professional achievement, it could be a scientific achievement, anything that has to do with *purposes or destinations*. That, I think, is where that expression fits. But any, all sorts of words that have to do with motion, toward destinations, will fit there. And that expression also can be literal. I mean, it can fit an actual journey. So that's pretty straight-forward and not a complicated case. The point here is that the lexical items are defined literally, and metaphors are conceptual and there can be simple ones, and there can be elaborations of them. That's how metaphor tends to work. It's not a very complicated case.

Andor: *You with your co-workers have pointed to the overwhelming dominance of metaphorization in linguistic communication, which the classics, Aristotle, for instance, failed to recognize. I wonder if the rate of metaphorization can be pointed out, possibly, in given text types and registers, in various languages via calculating a quantitative index, similar to the index of the lexical density of texts described and calculated by Hoey (2005) applying a method first suggested by Michael Halliday. To calculate the lexical density of texts the following formula, test can be used:*
    lexical density = (no. of content words/total number of words) x 100
Applying such methods of calculation would certainly significantly increase the empirical validity of research on metaphorization. Of course, I am ready to acknowledge that the applications of such quantitative methods in researching metaphorization is far more difficult than it is in the case of measuring the rate of lexical density, as metaphorization is a highly graded phenomenon, therefore, its recognition and interpretation may not so easily obey simplistic quantitative calculations.

Lakoff: I don't think that any of that makes any sense. Let me try to explain why. We have probably hundreds of primary metaphors, that then combine in various ways, and they combine in new ways, which can be made up on the spot. We are constantly doing neural binding, creating new cases. Cases of blends are metaphorical, cases where metaphorical

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mapping is combined with binding. There's no way, it's sort of like counting the number of sentences. It's silly.

Andor: *Yes, I see what you mean, with regard to the neurological background to approach these issues.*

As pointed out, among others, by Alice Deignan (2005:216), it frequently occurs that lexical items related within a particular lexical field (blossom and flower, for instance) undergo metaphorization in differring conceptual frames: blossom related to the frame of human (typically romantic) relationships, flower in the frames of business, careers. (See also Steen (2007:6 and 16) on the same issue.) Is there a viable explanation to such phenomena?

Lakoff: I haven't looked at those particular cases, but if you think about *flowering*, it has to do with a long-term understanding of plants. And, in a career, that's also long term. Even greater, you have *the careers coming to fruition*, which is later. That is, you understand the lifetime of various things, romantic relationships, careers, etc., in terms of the lifetime of plants. Now, *blossoming* is a different sort of thing, because, first of all, blossoms are more delicate, and they occur at a particular stage of a plant. And there is a reason why that's a romance, which can be very quick and delicate. So there are reasons for these uses, but I don't find those examples very interesting. Theoretically, they are not terribly interesting. They are real enough. They don't tell us very much.

Andor: *A systematic contrastive analysis of the frame-based lexical domains (for instance, the thematic distribution) of metaphorization in typologically similar and also different languages might perhaps also be useful. Not much has so far been done in this regard, though. Preliminary studies with this scope of interest by Zoltán Kövecses (2000, 2006) have revealed interesting and promising results. But I guess you will agree that such studies will have to be carried out by using large corpora. This is an area where corpus linguistics could certainly be fruitfully used. Perhaps Alice Deignan made the first important steps in this direction in her dissertation published in 2005, but then you would certainly disagree with the main point of her approach emphasizing (counter to your opinion) that metaphors are primarily linguistically based.*

Lakoff: Well, the problem is not the use of corpora. The use of corpora is fine. But it's the first step in understanding metaphor. Metaphor is conceptual in nature, and if you are just looking at words, you are not going to see most of the metaphors. Especially in political discourse, where the metaphors might have to do with *strict father* versus *nurturing parent* metaphors, the metaphor of *governing institution is a family*, metaphors for morality. Which are very deep, and which structure the discourse and reasoning more than the actual language. So these would show up in reasoning, and they'll show up in understanding, but very often they very rarely show up in language, although they structure almost every discourse. So, if you are in the middle of a political discourse which is being structured by these metaphors, they are actually behind every sentence, with no words in them. And what that shows is that the use of corpora in a sort of surfacy boring way is not going to tell you very much about metaphor, that you really have to go beyond it to look at the understanding of the discourse.

Andor: *Can we say that metaphors have keywords in their lexical representation? For instance, can we say that in the expression kick the bucket the item bucket is a keyword, whereas the item kick does not have that potential? And that in the Hungarian expression feldobja a talpát [throw up one's sole], which carries the same meaning potential, the item sole has such a status due to its higher frame-instigating potential? I know that this is a tricky question to answer due to the rejection of compositionality in analyzing the structure, the lexical makeup of idioms and formulaic expressions. Of course, the question would be easy to answer in cases of meta-phorization with lexically more neutral elements in the structure, such as in take a walk (vs. walk), in Hungarian, sétát tesz [do a walk] (vs. sétál).*

Lakoff: I reject the question, and let me tell you why. The question presupposes that metaphors are in language.

Andor: *That's exactly what I expected.*

Lakoff: Now, *kick the bucket* is a case I've written about a lot. There is a discussion in Case Study 2 in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Lakoff 1987) on metaphorical idioms. Now, the way they tend to work is this. There are idioms that are quite productive, and most idioms are metaphorical and quite productive, but they are based on imagery, and knowledge about the imagery, and a metaphor is applying to the knowledge about the imagery. So, let me give you an example. If you have something like *We are spinning our wheels*, which can be again from *love is a journey*, or any kind of enterprise that has purposes or destinations, and you have a vehicle, and the image is that of a car or some other car-like vehicle, where the wheels are spinning and the car is not moving, because it's stuck on mud, or ice, or sand, or something like that. In that image people want the car to be moving, they're trying to get it moving, and they are very frustrated. Now, that knowledge about the image is mapped onto its meaning by whatever metaphor you have. So, if it's simply *purposes or destinations*, then the actors trying to achieve the purpose are the people who are frustrated and who are not making progress toward achieving the purpose. If it's *love is a journey*, then the lovers are frustrated, because they are working hard to make progress toward their common life goals, and are not making that progress. But the metaphor is not applying directly to the image, but to the knowledge about the image, and it requires there to be images and knowledge about the image. Now, *kick the bucket* is an interesting case and varies in its imagery from person to person. For example, there are some people for whom *kick the bucket* has to do with the bucket that is partially full. Not very full. When the bucket is kicked over, the liquid goes out. And it has to do with the metaphor of *life as a fluid inside the body*, and there the person who has life in him is affected in some way, and the life goes out. And that's why it's death, and it's a quick death. It's not a long, profound death, and so on. Not only that, it has to be somebody who does not have much life left in him, so it would apply to someone old, for example, but not, let's say, a ten-year old boy who is run over. You wouldn't say *He kicked the bucket*. So there, the meaning is given again by knowledge about the image. But not everybody has the same image. And some people just have it meaning *die*, and some people have it meaning *die under these circumstances*, and some have a more general meaning, and it varies. So you can't just ask what is the meaning of *kick the bucket*. Moreover, *the bucket* itself doesn't enter into the metaphor at all. The metaphor has to do with a container containing a fluid, and you understand the life of the person in those terms. So, the fact that

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it's a bucket and that there is kicking is irrelevant to the metaphor for mapping. So, this is a very nice example, where just looking at the words isn't going to tell you what the metaphor is.

Andor: *Let me finally ask you a banal question. Banal, but difficult to answer, I guess. Why is it the case that although, as we can see, a large amount of the content-based lexis can metaphorize in a large number of languages, still, it is not the case that the whole of the content-based items and expressions in their totality can undergo this process of lexicalization.*

Lakoff: Well, I have nothing to say about how much of your conceptual system can be lexicalized. You know, English has over eighty thousand words, and a lot of them have to do with technical specialties. In principle, any of them can be lexicalized. But that has to do with how many you can learn, which has to do with the neural capacities of your brain, how many of them can be remembered, the limits on long-term memory, and so on. I mean, there are all kinds of constraints that are placed on the lexicalization of concepts. And I don't have anything particularly informative to say about that.

Andor: *You know, what interests me, first, getting back to this case of the expression kick the bucket. Take another word, say, talking about bottles and glasses, and so on. In Hungarian (I do not know whether or not it works in English) you would say Most betelt a pohár. (Now you have filled my/the glass). That means that I am very angry, absolutely mad at you, because you have done more, you know, you have gone beyond the acceptable limit of something.*

Lakoff: That's *anger is fluid inside a container.*

Andor: *Yes, that's it. But how come that it only works in the case of Now you have filled the glass, but it doesn't with items like mug, cup, or bottle?*

Lakoff: Well, there are lots of particular cases that you learn. You know, learning idioms is learning particular examples and images, where the details of the image don't matter. That it's a glass, not a mug.

Andor: *So, the lexical field relatedness has no role here?*

Lakoff: I have no idea whether it does or not. There might be something to do with lexical fields that I don't see right now, but right now it seems irrelevant. It has to do with the fact that it's a container and we understand metaphorically that anger has to do with the heat of the fluid in the container. And then you choose some container.

Andor: *Getting close to the end of this interview, let me ask you what you think the future is for doing cognitive linguistics. Do you think that major results will be expectable from its integration with neurolinguistics? Will such an integration perhaps result in an emerging shift of paradigm sooner or later?*

Lakoff: Well, I think, the paradigm has already shifted. First of all, the neural theory of language as it's been laid out by those in our group, completely changes. All the argument-tation about language, I mean, is beginning to end. It eliminates notions like a linguistic level.

Notions like close class versus open class elements disappear. Because what are close class elements are image schemas, image schemas are computed in certain parts of the brain, they have a certain structure, and that structure is something that fits lots and lots of cases. It's not structurally elaborated. And then any word that fits a structure like that will happen to be closed class because there aren't that many structures like that. So it's not like closed class is a property, is an inherent property of words in the language, rather, there is a class of conceptual structures, and the words for them, because they are so small, the words for them will be limited and they won't be open class. It's that simple. So that the idea that you have to have a theory of closed versus open class structures is not right.

Now, you do have to have a theory of how image schemas work and the way they function in grammars. And they do function in grammars very different from more elaborate frames. And that is not unnatural. But you have so many kinds of changes in argumentation. So, as soon as you differentiate neural binding from neural mapping, the theory of blending dissolves. Blending always involves neural binding, but blending cannot distinguish neural binding from neural mapping. You know, it's too weak a theory, and it's got to go, and not only that. Any theory that doesn't explain what's going on has got a problem. Any theory that's based on abstract representations is just not going to be true. You know, everything is physical. The idea of best fit is very important now. Best fit is something that comes out of physics. It shows up in the brain, it has very very great effects on the structure of language. You know, we now know how to model it. It changes all kinds of things. There are best fit constructions, you know, constructions that have to do with fitting two constructions together under an optimal fit. That happens, it's real, and we have a way to model it, we understand it, but it doesn't fit other kinds of cases. The whole idea that we think in terms of symbols has to be changed. And sure, there are changes everywhere. The old model of arguing in cognitive linguistics as well as generative linguistics is going to change, once you take the neural theory of language seriously.

Andor: *I believe that this will result in bringing about administrative measures, for instance, that quite a number of linguistics departments will have to be closed, because research will have to be done in other sorts of departments.*

Lakoff: I don't think so. No, I think, quite the opposite. I think that once we do the embodied construction grammar notation, we need new people and we have new tools. And the embodied construction grammar notation allows you to do your linguistics, knowing the bare minimum about neural theory. And if you do your linguistics right, it will fit. This, I think, is extremely important. It's not like you have to become a brain scientist to do linguistics. You can do it as before, because other people, brain scientists, computer scientists, cognitive scientists, and so on, doing neural computation, have done the work for you.

Andor: *Now, my last question in this interview concerns your approach to the application of frame theory for political purposes. We have read a lot from you on this since the publication in 1996 of your important book titled Moral Politics. You have become a big name as an expert advisor, consultant to the liberals in the US, and you are one of the leading figures of the now famous Rockridge Institute.*

Lakoff: Which is now closed.

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Andor: *Is it? I didn't know. How come?*

Lakoff: Well, there are a couple of reasons. We had finished all that we set out to do. We had set out a program of research, and we completed it. But, in addition to that, to do the next program of research would have taken ten times as much money. There was no way to raise that money. And in fact, at the time in April the nomination campaign was going on, and 400 million dollars were being put into that, and the money we needed didn't come to us. So, we didn't get enough money to continue, but it was, actually, in a way, a good thing, because now we can go on and do other things, and our website is still up, and all the materials are there, and people are using them. So, basically, we declare success and move on.

Andor: *Your books titled Don't Think of an Elephant (Lakoff 2004) and Thinking Points (Lakoff 2006) have now become bestsellers. What would the liberal, linguist, frame theorist guru advise the Democratic Party during the 2008 presidential election to be able to overcome and win against the paternalistic, strict-father-type ideology of their adversary in their campaign, in framing their most important issues?*

Lakoff: Well, there are two books since then. One of them is called *Whose Freedom?*, which is the largest study ever done of a contested concept. It's a 250-page study of the concept of freedom, and how it differs from Conservatives to Liberals, and how it's systematic, how you can predict it. In addition to that, there's a new book, called *The Political Mind* (Lakoff, 2008), why you can't understand 21st century politics with an 18th century brain. And that's also been a bestseller so far. And, you know, there's a lot more than just those two books.

   First, the candidate we now have, Barack Obama, is very sophisticated about framing issues. His speech writers have read the books and to a large extent have incorporated them. They are very talented young people and they impress me a great deal. They do make occasional mistakes, but nothing like the mistakes the Democrats used to make, although the Democrats in Congress still make big mistakes. And there's a reason for that. A lot of the Democrats still believe in enlightenment reason. They believe that reason is conscious, that it's dispassionate, that it can fit the world directly, and that it's logical and based on self-interest. And as a result, they engage in interest group politics using policies based on enlightenment reason, without trying to change the way the public sees the world. And that's the big problem. The Conservatives have changed the way the public sees the world, and the Democrats have not, and they haven't, because if you believe in enlightenment reason, then taking framing seriously must be only manipulation and spin. Which it is not, it is a way to express your ideas, and get them out in public seriously. To do that would take the development of many institutions. The Democrats do not have those institutions right now. It would take a fair amount of scholarship beyond what Rockridge did. There is no attempt to form think-tanks to do this scholarship. In short, the fact that the Democratic Party, and the major funders of the Democratic Party don't understand their need. The fact that they don't understand the need means that they are not building those institutions. The result is that the Democrats in Congress are scared of Conservatives. They are scared of being labelled defeatists of not supporting the troops, you know, and so on. They are scared of being called the people who want to raise taxes, and so on. So the reason that they are scared is for a good reason. Namely, there's no institution that puts their view of the world out there. You know, this a serious problem. So, I think that's the No.1. problem to be tackled.

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Now, in terms of short term things, like getting elected, there's all the things you need to know about framing. Framing your own issues, not accepting other people's frames, not negating them or questioning them, and so on. Some people are learning that, and some people are not. So, we'll see. But it actually also affects policy. That is, if you address the issues of framing, then you can see that there are frames that go across issues. But there are in the policy think-tanks what are called 'issue silos'. That is, cases where each issue is separated from the next issue, when in fact, there's a generalization across them. And the way people are thinking right now doesn't allow them to see those generalizations. And so, they are building think-tanks with just the wrong structure.

In short, there is a very real problem within the Democratic Party. And they may happen to win, and I think they should, but I think that even if they win the presidency and take over Congress, that won't be enough, because they haven't changed the way the public thinks.

Andor: *Why do you think Clinton lost against Obama?*

Lakoff: Oh, God! There are many many reasons. Well, you know, when I first met Hillary Clinton, she invited me to her office and we had a long two-hour talk. We talked, in fact, about the strategy for her running for the presidency. And I could tell then that they had major mistakes, and I discussed them with her. The first mistake was the assumption that she had to look strong and therefore be militaristic. And that strength required being militaristic, and that she therefore had to vote for the Iraq war. That was just a huge mistake, an enormous mistake. But also, she believes that there is a center, and that you have to move to the right, adopt conservative positions, in order to attract voters. Now, it's true that there are voters who have some conservative positions and some progressive positions, but Obama has the opposite view. He finds voters who share, have some progressive positions where they agree with him, and talk to them about those positions, rather than moving to the right. So that's a major difference, and one of the results was that in the nomination campaign Hillary completely offended progressives who were the base of the party. In addition to that, she had the false view that people vote on the basis of their interests. People, actually, vote on the basis of their identities. And that was in *Thinking Points* (Lakoff 2006). Now, Obama received the first copy of *Thinking Points*, I put it in his hands. He may or may not have read it. But he certainly ran his campaign as if he did. That is, he was not running his campaign on the basis of a long list of issues, he ran a nomination campaign on the basis of character, showing that he was trustworthy, that he was articulate, that he communicated well, that he had the right values, and so on. And Hillary tried to just show that she mastered policy. And that's not how people vote. She also offended a lot of people in the party by going negative in a really nasty way toward Obama. Basically lying about many things in a way that was very transparent. She shouldn't have done that. She would have been much better off, if she had been honorable throughout the campaign, and she lost a lot of respect because of it. In addition, the people running her campaign had the wrong strategy. They still thought they were running the Bill Clinton campaign, so what they were doing was, they asked what are the, what they call, battleground states. You know, there are 17 states that traditionally go back and forth. So she had a 17-states strategy for the election, and then she used that for the nomination campaign, whereas Obama used a 50-states strategy from Howard Dean. Now, this was not accidental, because Howard Dean is running the Democratic National Committee, and Hillary tried to get rid of him, before this, to get somebody who wanted to do the 17-states strategy and raise

money for that. So, it turned out that the nomination campaign turned crucially on having a 50-states strategy, because it was the cumulation of delegates. You know, it wasn't like an election at all. So, that was stupidity on the part of Hillary's campaign.

Then, there was the raising of money. Hillary thought that she raised a huge amount of money, but she spent it very badly. The people in the campaign, who were running the campaign, used that money to enrich themselves. People like Mark Penn, and so on, essentially, used that money to pay themselves. As a result, she ran out of money.

Now, Obama, did something much smarter. He raised more money by getting small contributions, using the Howard Dean method of the Internet, asking from millions of people to give small contributions. The person who ran that was somebody in the Dean campaign. That is, there was a person in the Dean campaign who figured out the strategy and carried it out in detail, who ran the computer operation for Dean. When Dean went to the Democratic National Committee, he brought that person along to help run communications, and The Senate got him fired. And the rumour is that Hillary was behind that. Meanwhile, Obama hired that person to run the campaign to raise money from small contributions. So, in virtually every way, Hillary did things that were really backwards, and she ran a terrible campaign. And although she is very smart in many ways, and, by the way, I like her a lot, personally, I saw her making these mistakes, and it was painful. Not only that, she didn't know how to present herself in public. Personally, she is a very warm person. But in her self- presentations, she had to look strong. And so she came off very stiff.

Andor: *Because she was advised to do so.*

Lakoff: She was advised to do that. Yes, but she really accepted that advice, and it was a major mistake. She looked artificial. She always looked like she was staged or rehearsed. When actually, she is perfectly a nice, warm person. So, I would say, she made just about every mistake one can make. And, you know, she started out way ahead.

Andor: *Is there any way that you could see that people might say that she could make a good vice president, or something like that?*

Lakoff: I can't imagine. It would be a disaster. It would be a terrible thing. First of all, they have totally different policies. Now, people don't understand that, because they only ask about their policies about Iraq, and health care, and there they're fairly similar. But if you look at the way they think about policy, the way they understand what economic policy is, what foreign policy is, and so on, they are totally different. They think totally differently, and in addition to that, if they ran together, Hillary would dominate, She would simply take over the campaign, because the press would be interviewing her all the time, and her ideas don't fit Obama's. It would be embarrassing to him. And if she got into The White House, you know, Bill Clinton would be there, and she would have a lot of people who would be loyal to her and not Obama, and that would make a lot of conflict in the administration. So, I can't imagine Obama being willing to have her as vice president.

Andor: *Thank you George very much for giving me this stimulatingly interesting and exciting interview.*

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