



**PROCESS: Journal of Professional
Communication and English Studies**
International Conference on Vocational English Language
(ICOVEL) Edition

journal homepage: <https://ejournal1.pnp.ac.id/process/index.php/files/index>



Changing the Frame, Changing the Meaning: Frame Semantics in the Counselling Room

Hasbi^{1*}, Yohannes Telaumbanua², Sabriandi Erdian³

¹²³ English Department, Politeknik Negeri Padang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Email Address: hasbi@pnp.ac.id

article info

Article history:
Received: 09 04 2026
Accepted: 17 04 2026
Available online: 22 06 2026

Keywords:
frame semantics
reframing
counselling discourse
meaning construction
cognitive linguistics

abstract

The language used during counselling sessions is not neutral, or just a tool, but rather the very medium through which experiences are transformed, identities are built, and possibilities for the future are generated. Frame semantics, though a part of well-established theoretical frameworks within cognitive linguistics and therapeutic discourse studies, is still largely not used as a method of analysis for the small-scale elements of professional helping interactions. This article intends to fill in the gap by presenting a frame-semantic explanation of how meaning evolves in counselling discourses. The article, built on a conceptual framework of Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 1982; Matsumoto, 2025), interactional framing theory (Gordon & Tannen, 2023; Vicari, 2023), cognitive psychology of framing (Flusberg et al., 2024; Al-Shboul, 2025), and narrative-therapeutic discourse (Aritzis, 2026; Napitupulu et al., 2024; Rajaei, 2026), maintains that the process of reframing is the main semantic tool by which meaning change is produced in counselling. The paper presents a "conceptual frame-shifting model" that "depicts how the switching on of different interpretive frames leads to the reorganisation of the client's perceptions of responsibility, agency, identity, and emotional capacity. Furthermore, the research places these results within vocational and professional communication settings, such as career counselling, workplace coaching, and mentoring, where framing skills are considered a valuable professional asset. The article makes a significant addition to applied linguistics through its illustration that, essentially, the counselling room is an "interactional semantic workplace".

1. Introduction

Language not only conveys the idea of a therapy session, but it also shapes it. If a client keeps saying "I'm a loser and I won't ever succeed," she isn't just telling about an event; she is evoking a whole network of beliefs, a frame, that tells who is blamed, what has been lost, and what the possibilities are for the future. The therapist who says, "How did that situation impact you?" is not denying the client but changing the way the client understood the story.

Therefore, this article argues that these kinds of interventions are, fundamentally, working in Frame Semantics: the study of how language triggers conceptual structures that influence understanding, self-concept, and reactions.

Nowadays, the scholarly focus on professional communication within helping contexts has progressively increased. Discourse analysts, for instance, have highlighted the pragmatic moves of psychotherapy (Larner, 2022), the identity negotiation of a career advisor (Strømhaug & Halvorsen, 2024), and the health counselling meaning-making (Balán et al., 2021; Herrmann

et al., 2025). Nevertheless, a constant drawback of these studies has been the interactional surface turn-taking, face-work, speech acts being paid most attention to, and the semantic architecture getting hardly any coverage. In other words, how meaning is organised, what conceptual frames guide interpretation and make certain readings possible while excluding others, has been the subject of extended theoretical discussion in cognitive linguistics since Fillmore's (1982) seminal work, but this line of thought has only recently started to be followed in professional helping discourse analysis.

This gap is not only important from a theoretical point of view, but also has real-life consequences. According to frame theory, words alone do not convey meaning: they rekindle memories of experiences, scenes, roles, relations, values, and a set of expectations that guide one towards a certain interpretation and a particular response. The changes in a counselling case note resulting from a counsellor's successful reframing of a client's story are more than face changes; they represent a change in the frame of interpretation itself with a shift in the distribution of agency, a reorganisation of the concept of time, and the semantic opening up of possible alternative paths.

Recognition of this process enables applied linguists, counsellor educators, and vocational communication trainers to explicate in a rigorous manner a very important and widely occurring phenomenon in professional discourse.

This essay is theoretically based on four main points of debate, which are coming together. Firstly, Frame Semantics, as developed by Fillmore (1982), maintains that words trigger knowledge representations which are interconnected and that organise whole scenes or experiences. Matsumoto (2025) locates Frame Semantics at the heart of cognitive-linguistic theory, supporting its effectiveness in explanation over the years. Secondly, cognitive framing studies, especially the comprehensive examination by Flusberg et al. (2024) and the narrative-discursive inquiry by Al-Shboul (2025), disclose that framing impacts happen not only at the cognitive level but also at the affective and behavioural dimensions simultaneously. Sullivan (2023) integrates lexical, conceptual, and epistemic levels of framing to give a complete picture of framing. Third, interactional sociolinguistics (Gordon & Tannen, 2023; Vicari, 2023) redefine framing as an unfolding and continuously negotiated co-constructive process of discourse rather than a static cognitive characteristic. Fourthly, research into narrative therapy (Aritzis, 2026; Napitupulu et al., 2024; Rajaei, 2026) reveal that changing frames is the principal method of changing meaning in therapy sessions and that it is narrative coherence which comes out as the most important mark of effectively reframing. All in all, these frameworks connect on one main point: the counselling room is the place where the semantic structure or content of human experience is actually actively being challenged or changed.

This article targets three deeply linked objectives. At first, it identifies counselling interaction as a framing practice, relying on the four theoretical traditions cited above. Next, it introduces a Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting in Counselling Discourse, which implements this modelling idea by a staged semantic negotiation approach. In the third place, it details the consequences of framing competence for vocational communication settings, such as career counselling, workplace coaching, mentoring, and English for Professional Purposes instruction, and for counsellor education. This paper is organised according to the journal's usual style: after this opening part, Section 2 gives the conceptual methodology; Section 3 presents results and discussion; and Section 4 wraps up with conclusions and implications.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This research paper uses a qualitative conceptual research design, which is a recognised methodology in applied linguistics and discourse studies to develop theoretical understanding, synthesise existing knowledge, and propose new analytical frameworks. Instead of producing primary empirical data, a conceptual investigation develops an original theoretical argument by a critical synthesis of the existing scholarship.

The study is placed in the nexus of applied linguistics, cognitive linguistics, discourse studies, counselling psychology, and professional communication; these are the main parts of the problem which are necessary to be uncovered together but have rarely been united in the literature.

2.2 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates Frame Semantics, making it not only the subject of a wide-ranging theoretical integration but also the main tool for analysis. In line with Fillmore (1982), the frame is a type of knowledge that is organised and structured- it is a schematic representation of a scene of experience that consists of participant roles, event structures, relational expectations, and evaluative norms, which is triggered by the lexical and grammatical choices in language.

In the counselling situation, the framework is a lens through which the analyst can precisely specify, at the level of theory, which semantic structure a certain speech act brings to mind, how that structure allocates the roles of agent and responsible person, and what other semantic structures within the same semantic domain can be invoked. The theoretical lens is used side by side with interactional framing theory (Gordon & Tannen, 2023) to describe the jointly-created, sequential character of frame negotiation in the therapeutic discourse.

2.3 Data Collection

This study's dataset comprises published theoretical and empirical articles mainly sourced from Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed journals, along with major recognised theoretical monographs. The search approach was based on four main thematic clusters: (1) Frame Semantics and cognitive framing, keywords: "frame semantics, " "Fillmore, " "framing theory, " "cognitive framing"; (2) counselling discourse and therapeutic interaction, keywords: "counselling discourse, " "therapeutic reframing, " "narrative therapy, " "meaning-making counselling"; (3) professional and vocational communication, keywords: "professional communication, " "vocational English, " "workplace discourse, " "institutional interaction"; and (4) identity construction and agency in discourse, keywords: "narrative identity, " "agency language, " "discourse identity, " "self-construction." Searches were mainly conducted in Scopus, ERIC, and PsycINFO, and citation-chaining from seminal works was done. The inclusion criteria listed the following conditions for the articles: (a) at least two of the thematic clusters must be covered either theoretically or empirically, (b) English as the medium of publication, (c) for the recent research, publication years 2020-2026 were considered, and no

date limitation was imposed on the foundational theoretical works, (d) peer-reviewed or equivalent scholarly vetting.

2.4 Data Analysis

We analysed the data in four iterative steps. Initially (thematic synthesis), we scrutinised each source for its main theoretical claims about framing, meaning, agency, and identity and later grouped the main statements into thematic areas. Secondly and thirdly, in two stages of theory synthesis, we pinpointed the agreements and disagreements among the four theoretical traditions and, at the same time, drew conceptual connections.

The third step (interpretive conceptual analysis) involved first producing analytical counselling discourse vignettes (based on real interactional patterns documented in the secondary literature, Lerner, 2022; Strømhaug & Halvorsen, 2024; Balán et al., 2021) and then frame-semantic analysing them by means of Fillmore's role-structural apparatus.

The last step (model construction) was the realisation of the Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting, which was regularly adjusted in accordance with the features of theoretical coherence, parsimony, and explanatory adequacy. Essentially, the analysis method transitions from a descriptive synthesis to an interpretive analysis and finally to a theoretical construction.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Results

The conceptual investigation brings us three main findings. They are a part of a theoretically integrated explanation of meaning change in counselling discourse that begins with the structural features of frames, continues through the dynamic process of frameshift, and finally ends with the character and agency consequences of the good reframing.

Finding 1: Counselling Interaction Is Constitutively a Framing Practice.

The very first and fundamental discovery is that every word in the counselling parlour is doing two things at once: it talks about or describes something, and it also sets the scene for how this something should be interpreted. This is not only a figure of speech that describes therapy, but it is also a concrete statement of theory, which is based on Frame Semantics. As Fillmore (1982) has shown, words by themselves do not have meaning; they call up frames, and the frames decide who did it, what is gone and what is still possible.

What makes this interesting is that it is supported by four separate bodies of theories that we have covered in our paper. Matsumoto (2025) argues that frames act as "a network of empirical information motivating the concept" (p. 23) and are still the core of the cognitive-linguistic theory. Gordon and Tannen (2023) prove that interactive frames "relate to situational definitions of what is going on in an interaction" (p. 237), thus making the case that frames are negotiated in real-time discourse instead of being pre-given.

Flusberg et al. (2024) point out that "framing effects mirror a reasonable response to messages that communicate different information" (p. 110) and may be functioning at the same time on the cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels.

Al-Shboul (2025) shows that through the cognitive-discursive framing of emotional narratives, a typical metaphorical pattern is employed for the construction of the evaluative stance, which is the vehicle for the counselling discourse in a direct way. Vicari (2023), acknowledging the interactional aspect, states that "frames do not function in isolation from interaction but rather are constantly reshaped by communicative practice" (p. 311).

Empirical evidence is provided by Lerner (2022), who analysed online counsellor-client interactions and revealed that counsellors not only "play a crucial role in identifying that a disclosure is being made, " but also they "elicit and reframe the disclosure" (p. 276). This discovery presents a direct example of frame-semantic actions in institutional helping situations. Avissar (2026) also, at the level of post-trauma therapeutic discourse, illustrates that it is the counsellor's linguistic decisions that determine which interpretive avenues the clients will be able to explore. The agreement of these different materials strongly supports the Finding 1 with the help of the theory: counselling is, fundamentally, a framing practice.

Finding 2: Reframing Is a Surprisingly Powerful Semantic Mechanism for Transforming Meaning in Counselling.

Not surprisingly, the second finding is a perfect logical follow-up of the first. It shows that reframing (i.e., purposefully bringing into play another meaning frame) is actually the major way by which changes in meaning that are therapeutic happen. This finding is a synthesis of cognitive framing research, interactional sociolinguistics, and narrative-therapeutic discourse, all of which, from their respective disciplinary perspectives, arrive at the same final theoretical implication.

According to cognitive linguistics, reframing means changing or adding to a frame of reference that a person is using, such as [PERMANENT INADEQUACY], with another frame, such as [SKILL DEVELOPMENT], which represents the same situation in terms of different semantic roles, orientations in time, and evaluative standards.

Sullivan (2023) elaborates that this happens at the same time on three different levels: at the lexical level, individual words are chosen to prime specific semantic fields; at the conceptual level, frames organise whole scenarios and their participant structures.

And at the epistemic level, frames decide what kind of evidence is considered relevant. In fact, all three levels are involved in counselling reframing: when a counsellor changes a question like "How did you fail?" to "What did you learn?" this is a change of the lexical item, a shift of the conceptual frame, and a reorientation of the epistemic perspective all in one.

Within the frame of narrative-therapeutic discourse, Aritzis (2026) suggests that a story serves as a therapeutic tool mainly because it has the potential to open up new narrative frame possibilities, which is a point which first and last is in agreement with Frame Semantics.

Through a detailed clinical study, Napitupulu et al. (2024) reveal how language plays the role of a medium for the transformation of experience in narrative therapy, particularly by reinventing the temporal and evaluative structures of life narrative. Rajaei (2026), through the analysis of frame-change in AI-assisted therapeutic interaction, describes the mode in which

flourishing is redefined as living with complexity rather than resolution, the key factor of frame-shifting generalising across therapeutic modalities and contexts.

The process of reframing, as shown by this compilation, is a far cry from the concept of persuasion, manipulation, or denial. More in the line of semantic extension: the client's original experiential reality is not only kept but also enhanced by way of another frame that highlights other aspects and therefore allows for different responses. Chakrapani et al. (2026), through analysing initiatives to disclosure of HIV-positive individuals, vividly depict exactly this chain of cause and effect: the participants' attribution of stigma to HIV/AIDS is, at once, partially reduced through their using "spiritual meaning-making" and "moral reframing". However, it is a frame-semantic operation which is very complex in nature, whereby the [STIGMA] frame is supplemented by frames of caregiving, sacrifice, and moral integrity, which parallelly expands the semantic structure through which the experience can be understood.

Finding 3: Frame-Shifting Has Systematic Consequences for Agency, Identity, and Professional Communication.

The third finding concerns the downstream consequences of frame-shifting for the client's sense of agency, self-identity, and communicative possibilities. In Frame Semantics, every frame assigns semantic roles: agents, patients, instruments, goals, and beneficiaries. When the frame changes, these assignments change with it. A client who moves from a [VICTIM] frame to a [SURVIVOR] frame does not merely adopt a more positive attitude; she occupies a different semantic role with different normative expectations and different available actions. This is the theoretical basis for the well-documented therapeutic power of reframing.

Samios and his team (2020) provide evidence to support this statement: through their research on meaning-making after intimate partner psychological aggression, they discovered that among various ways of meaning-in-life recovery, positive reframing was one of the best predictors. Their result exactly matches the frame-semantic theory: positive reframing basically means the activation of other semantic structures, [GROWTH], [RESILIENCE], [LEARNING], which change the agentive and temporal configuration of the experience, thus making it possible for the survivor to take on the agent role instead of the patient role in her own story. Resicato (2026) further develops this topic by showing how the figurative frameworks within a cultural context determine the roles, relationships, and normative expectations, as well as how different frames serve as tools for identity renegotiation.

Vocational and professional communication implications of the finding are clearly expressed in the literature. Strømhaug and Halvorsen (2024) provide an example of how advice-giving in welfare-to-work counselling can be equated with a framing activity where counsellors' formulations of clients' situations are instrumental in triggering certain frames of agency and institutional possibility, with word choices not only carrying significant semantic weight but also playing a role in the discourse. Reuben et al. (2026) describe case instances whereby effective academic mentors, through their reframing of mentees' experiences of failure and institutional constraint, lead mentees to see such negative experiences through the frames of professional learning and resilience, the frame-shifting model being an empirical illustration of this study.

Dyshkant et al. (2021) found that by explicitly focusing on the pedagogical aspect of message framing in professional communication training, not only do you help students understand better, but you also help them become capable of using framing to formulate their messages in a more effective manner. Isaeva et al. (2022), through frame-semantic analysis of computer security professional discourse, conclude that frame awareness allows professionals to recognise and strategically use the role structures contained in specialised discourse, a discovery that has direct implications for counsellor and communication training.

3.2 Discussion

The three studies we have mentioned here back up and take further a fundamental theoretical point: changing the meaning in a counselling session is mainly a semantic success, not simply a pragmatic or a relational one. Frames regulate what is considered a problem, who is seen as responsible, and what actions are reasonable as responses. By helping clients to reframe their thinking, counsellors are giving them the opportunity to use different sets of interpretation and, along with those, different selves, emotional stances, and actions. The Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting (Figure 1) and two brief examples that show how it works in real life are used to develop this point further in the text below.

The Conceptual Model: Four Stages of Frame-Shifting

The Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting in Figure 1 indicates four phases in reshaping the meaning of counselling talk. The model possesses a number of theoretical features that will be discussed in detail here.

Firstly, the model thinks of reframing as the addition of new meaning instead of the substitution of the old one. So, the second-stage new frame does not cancel the first-stage frame; on the contrary, it adds to it and therefore creates the third-stage competing semantic space. This is in line with Flusberg et al.'s (2024) findings that framing effects stem from real differences in information, not just from rhetorical exchanges. The client who finds her way to Stage 4 is not rejecting her failure; on the contrary, by getting the additional frame, [LEARNING], [RESILIENCE], she can highlight the different aspects of the same incident. This feature of the theory sets reframing apart from rationalisation or minimisation, which are ways of repressing the original frame, and from argument or persuasion, which are ways of opposing it.

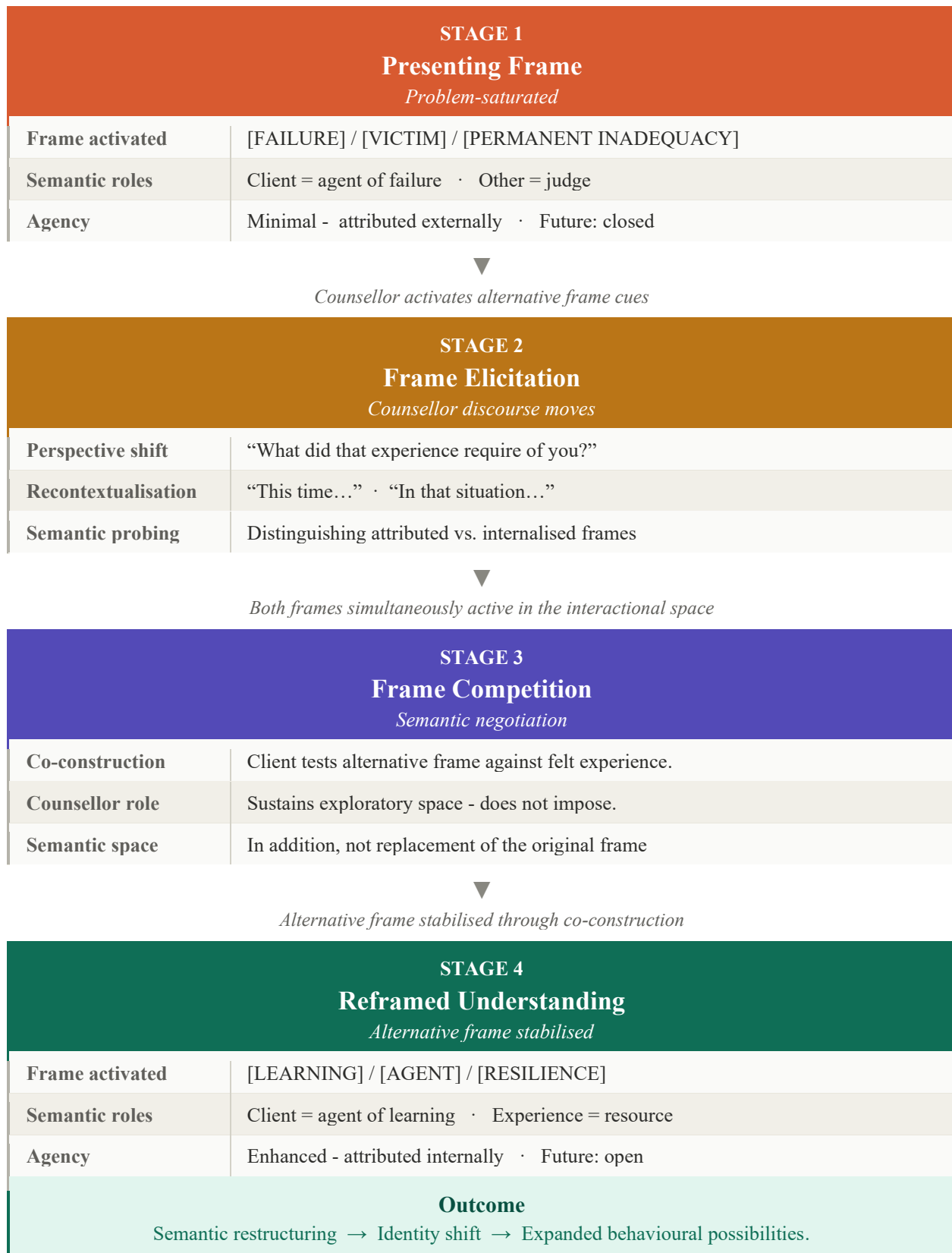


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting in Counselling Discourse

Secondly, the model highlights co-construction as the core element of the process at all stages. Transition from Stage 1 to Stage 4 is not a one-sided counsellor action, but a jointly negotiated semantic trip. This is the major point of interactional sociolinguistics to the model: Gordon and Tannen (2023) articulate that frames are negotiated in the sequential unfolding of interaction, and Vicari (2023) agrees that they are "dynamically shaped through communicative practice" (p. 311). The counsellor's task is to facilitate interpretive space through perspective-shifting questions, recontextualising reformulations, and semantic probing, not to dictate a preferred frame. A counsellor who rushes to Stage 4 without holding the exploratory space of Stage 3 may engage in semantic imposition rather than therapeutic co-construction.

Thirdly, the model explicitly links semantic change (at the level of frame activation) with identity change (who the client is in the new frame) and behavioural change (what is possible and understandable as action), all three are levels of a cascade and the theoretical mechanism by which frame-shifting brings about its therapeutic effects. It also accounts for the empirical results of Samios et al. (2020) on positive reframing and meaning-in-life recovery and Rajaei (2026) on narrative coherence as a therapeutic outcome: showing a stable, resource-oriented frame that is maintained across contexts and time points to genuine semantic reorganisation rather than just temporary perspectival shift.

Analytical Vignettes: Frame Semantics in Action

The vignettes below give a hands-on application of the model to constructed counselling discourse, which is based on genuine conversational patterns found in the literature (Larner, 2022; Strømhaug & Halvorsen, 2024; Balán et al., 2021). They show how effective the model is for analysis among two different counselling contexts.

Vignette A: Career Counselling — Reframing Failure as Agency

Client: "I didn't get the promotion. I'm just not good enough for that role. I never will be."

Counsellor: "So the promotion didn't come through this time. What specific skills would someone in that role need that you feel you don't yet have?"

Client: "Well... I suppose I need more project management experience."

Counsellor: "That's a precise identification. If you were advising someone who wanted that role in two years, what steps would you suggest they take?"

Client: "Get involved in cross-team projects. Do a short course, maybe. I suppose... I could actually do those things myself."

Using Frame Semantics, the client's first speech is geared toward triggering a [PERMANENT INADEQUACY] template. Semantic roles depict the client being an agent whose inherent nature is something lacking; 'never will be' conveys temporal permanence, indicating that the future possibilities are closed. The frame excludes other interpretations by presenting inadequacy as being a part of one's very nature rather than circumstances. This is Phase 1 in the model.

At first, the counsellor's move is to change the topic and move onto Stage 2, "this time" acts as a temporal marker which changes the non-promotion being discussed to a non-essential that is outside of environmental factors; The question that follows does not question the presenting frame but rather it introduces different ways of interpreting the situation by activating a [SKILL DEVELOPMENT] frame where competences are not fixed essences but learnable resources where the client changes from a patient role to an agent role capable of acquisition. During the last interaction, the client is using a [PERSONAL AGENCY] frame, Stage 4, in which the very same future that the original frame made seem impossible is semantically reconstructed as accessible. The shift from Stage 1 to Stage 4 was co-constructed: the counsellor made moves that drew out the frame, but the client did the semantic journey.

Vignette B: Therapeutic Counselling — Reframing Responsibility and Identity

Client: " Everything that goes wrong in my family falls on me. I'm always the one to blame."

Counsellor: " It sounds like you carry a great deal for your family. When you say 'blame,' do you mean others tell you that, or is it how you've come to see yourself?"

Client: " Both, I think. But mostly I just... feel responsible for everything."

Counsellor: " Being someone your family turns to - what does that tell us about the role you hold in your family? Is that a role you chose, or one that developed over time?"

Client: " I suppose... it developed. I never really thought of it as a role before."

This example depicts a complicated frame-shifting process which materializes both identity and structural responsibility. The initial frame is [SCAPEGOATING/PERSONAL BURDEN]: the client is a semantically passive entity in that her negative events are blamed on her inner character. The counsellor's first step is to make a diagnosis to differentiate between blame being placed (an external frame, other people imposing) and internalised responsibility (a self-frame the client has taken). Through this act, the frame-level structure of the client's situation becomes apparent, which in turn is a kind of metalinguistic reframing.

The second counsellor move is a more direct frame-shift: "the role you hold in your family" activates a [STRUCTURAL ROLE] frame in which the client's position is not a personal failing but a socially constituted function — something that can be examined, questioned, and potentially renegotiated. The client's final utterance — "I never really thought of it as a role before" — evidences the transition to Stage 3 (frame competition): the new frame is now simultaneously active alongside the original, creating interpretive space for renegotiation. Resicato (2026) theorises precisely this kind of identity reframing: the shift from identity-as-deficit to identity-as-position represents a fundamental semantic reorganisation of the self-frame, with consequential implications for what the client perceives as changeable.

Taken together, the two vignettes illustrate that the model's four stages are empirically traceable in counselling discourse through the use of specific lexical and syntactic resources: temporal delimiters ("this time"), role-shifting questions ("what role do you hold?"), recontextualising reformulations ("someone your family turns to"), and metalinguistic moves

(distinguishing attributed from internalised frames). These resources make up the discourse toolkit of frame-shifting, and finding them is a contribution of the frame-semantic approach that pragmatic analysis on its own could not provide.

Frame Semantics and Vocational Communication: Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

The ramifications of this model are not just confined to therapy or counselling sessions but extend to the larger field of vocational and professional communication. Career counselling, workplace coaching, mentoring in academics, employee assistance programs, and English for Academic Purposes instruction not only revolve around negotiating interpretive frames but also making new ones, which serves as a major professional activity. The frame-semantic viewpoint points out that these encounters are not simple exchanges of information or mere discussions to set goals: they are the times when professional identities, self-efficacy narratives, and possibility frames are constructed and deconstructed, with language being the main tool.

Strømhaug and Halvorsen (2024), in a discourse analysis of digital welfare-to-work counselling, reveal that individual word choices in advice-giving are of crucial semantic importance as they activate frames of agency or constraint which influence what clients think of as possible. Reuben et al. (2026) find that successful mentors in academic professional development regularly use frame-shifting techniques, turning a challenge into a learning experience, a failure into an opportunity for information, and a constraint into a professional development opportunity. Herrmann et al. (2025) use a randomised survey experiment to prove that health-framing has a drastic impact on counselling acceptability and behavioural intention, thereby verifying that the choice of frame in professional communication leads to measurable changes in the real world. Dyshkant et al. (2021) show that framing competence can be taught by means of explicit pedagogical intervention in professional communication training. Isaeva et al. (2022) suggest that frame-semantic consciousness helps professionals to use and question the role structures illustrated in the specialised discourse with strategic intentionality.

In sum, these discoveries build a solid educational rationale for the integration of frame-semantic consciousness in the teaching of English for Professional Communication, vocational English, and counsellor education. Students who grasp how selecting certain words can evoke different frames, how frames can be used to assign agency and responsibility, and how different frames can be strategically employed will be more capable of handling the intense semantic negotiations present in professional helping contexts. Such a development goes beyond the enhancement of communicative competence curricula with only pragmatic and interactional skills.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, it has been maintained that Frame Semantics is a very important theoretical support for understanding how meaning is created and changed in professional counselling interaction, but it is a relatively neglected one. The theoretical exploration has shown that reframing is the key semantic process by which counselling is able to bring about change, and not just a peripheral rhetorical device, by combining Fillmore's original frame theory with cognitive framing research, interactional sociolinguistics, and narrative-therapeutic discourse studies. The Conceptual Model of Frame-Shifting in Counselling Discourse (Figure 1) offers a conceptually based, four-stage explanation of this process, outlining how it leads first to

problem-saturated frames and then through semantic negotiation to a reconstructed understanding, redistributed agency, and a renegotiated identity.

The theoretical contributions of this paper are threefold. First, it establishes a principled and productive connection between cognitive linguistics and therapeutic discourse analysis, addressing a gap that has persisted despite the theoretical complementarity of these fields. Second, it operationalises the widely-used but theoretically underdetermined concept of "reframing" through the precise apparatus of Frame Semantics, making it available for rigorous discourse analysis, counsellor training, and empirical research. Third, it situates these theoretical contributions within vocational and professional communication, demonstrating that framing competence is a high-value professional resource applicable across counselling, mentoring, coaching, and language education contexts.

The first set of data gathered from 'English for Professional Communication and Vocational English' programmes has something to say about the way English teachers teach. Thorough, detailed teaching of different framing techniques, ways in which certain word choices 'unlock' or 'bring to life' semantic role structures, how different framing can change the organisation of time and agentivity in a sentence, and how jointly constructed frame negotiation is totally different from persuasion, would be very significantly enhance professional communicative competence curricula. When it comes to practising skills of counselling and training the counsellors, the data leads to the conclusion that reframing, in fact, is a skill based in language, and, therefore, can be taught quite directly, can be analysed reflectively using discourse vignettes and can be developed systematically, whereas relying on its intuitive acquisition only would be a mistake.

Several areas of empirical research in the future can be derived from this conceptual framework. For example, conducting a corpus-based discourse analysis of genuine counselling transcripts could assess the model's capability to describe reality by comparing it with naturally occurring data and identifying the exact lexical and syntactic tools through which frame-shifting is performed in different counselling modalities. Another research method could be classroom action research, which evaluates the professional communication effectiveness of counsellors and social work trainees as a result of frame-semantic awareness training. Moreover, multimodal discourse analysis can complement the framework by including non-verbal and paralinguistic framing cues, which play a major role in face-to-face interaction. Also, cross-cultural studies can examine how culturally varied frames influence both presenting frames and the reframing resources that are available in different sociolinguistic contexts. Lastly, the emerging field of AI-mediated therapeutic interaction, as demonstrated by Rajaei's (2026) study, presents an entirely new empirical context for frame-semantic analysis that poses important questions about the nature and limits of machine-facilitated frame-shifting. After all, meaning creation in the counselling room is basically a linguistic accomplishment. A counsellor who is knowledgeable about the semantic structure of such an accomplishment will be in a better position to assist clients who are reliant on it.

References

- Al-Shboul, O. K. (2025). Metaphorical framing of sad and happy narratives in Jordanian Arabic: A cognitive-discursive perspective. *Training, Language and Culture*, 9(2), 31–42. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2025-9-2-31-42>
- Aritzis, T. (2026). Healing through story: A conceptual framework for narrative therapy in artistic podcast narratives. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2026.2659675>
- Avissar, N. (2026). From shared trauma to divergent narratives: Therapeutic discourse and the reframing of social identities in post-October 7 Israel. *Israel Affairs*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2025.2599273>
- Balán, I. C., Giguere, R., Lentz, C., Kutner, B. A., Kajura-Manyindo, C., Byogero, R., Asimwe, F. B., Makala, Y., Jambaya, J., Khanyile, N., Chetty, D., Soto-Torres, L., Mayo, A., Mgodhi, N. M., Palanee-Phillips, T., & Baeten, J. M. (2021). Client-centered adherence counseling with adherence measurement feedback to support use of the dapivirine ring in MTN-025 (The HOPE Study). *AIDS and Behavior*, 25(S1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-020-03011-z>
- Chakrapani, V., Kanougiya, S., Marimuthu, J., K, P., & Nelson, R. (2026). The moral-behavioural logic of silence: Gender, stigma, and disclosure among long-term HIV survivors. *AIDS Care – Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2026.2614347>
- Dyshkant, O. V., Dichek, N. P., Beschastnyy, V. M., Savishchenko, V. M., & Hurskyi, V. Y. (2021). Pedagogical and psychological settings for training of student lawyers in framed professional communication. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 11(5), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2021-0107>
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). Frame semantics. In Linguistic Society of Korea (Ed.), *Linguistics in the morning calm* (pp. 111–137). Hanshin Publishing.
- Flusberg, S. J., Holmes, K. J., Thibodeau, P. H., Nabi, R. L., & Matlock, T. (2024). The psychology of framing: How everyday language shapes the way we think, feel, and act. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 25(3), 105–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15291006241246966>
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Gordon, C., & Tannen, D. (2023). Framing and related concepts in interactional sociolinguistics. *Discourse Studies*, 25(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614456231155073>
- Gyoerkoe, C. D. (2026). Teaching children to ignore themselves: CBT's unintended lesson. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678261430959>

- Herrmann, A., Krippel, N., Fischer, H., Nieder, J., Griesel, S., Bärnighausen, T., Schildmann, J., Mikolajczyk, R., Danquah, I., Mezger, N. C. S., & Kantelhardt, E. J. (2025). Acceptability of health-only versus climate-and-health framings in lifestyle-related climate-sensitive health counselling: Results of a randomised survey experiment in Germany. *The Lancet Planetary Health*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(25\)00110-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(25)00110-X)
- Isaeva, E., Baiburova, O., & Manzhula, O. (2022). Form–meaning–usage synergy in LSP & professional communication: Computer security in terms of Frame Semantics. *Fachsprache*, 44(3–4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.24989/fs.v44i3-4.1973>
- Lakoff, G. (2004). *Don't think of an elephant! Know your values and frame the debate*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Larner, S. (2022). Facilitating children's informal disclosures of sexual abuse: The role of online counsellors at a national children's helpline. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 31(3), 276–296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2022.2047854>
- Matsumoto, Y. (2025). Frame semantics. In M. Fried & K. Nikiforidou (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of construction grammar* (pp. 23–43). Cambridge University Press.
- Napitupulu, L., Hidayat, A., & Sari, W. D. (2024). Language as a medium of transformation in narrative therapy: A clinical psychology practice point of view. *Jurnal Gramatika*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.22202/jg.2024.v10i2.8759>
- Rajaei, A. (2026). Human flourishing in dialogue with an AI conversational agent using Psyhelp: A qualitative study of narrative, agency, and meaning making. *Family Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807261440841>
- Resicato, G. (2026). Narcissus beyond the mirror: A relational reading of constrained identity. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2026.2626398>
- Reuben, S., Bobat, S., & Makhaba, V. L. (2026). Academic professional development: A reflexive account of informal mentorship in a transformative context. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 11, Article 708. <https://doi.org/10.4102/THE.V11I0.708>
- Samios, C., Raatjes, B., Ash, J., Lade, S. L., & Langdon, T. (2020). Meaning in life following intimate partner psychological aggression: The roles of self-kindness, positive reframing, and growth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(5–6), NP2754–NP2780. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519898437>
- Strømhaug, L. B. S., & Halvorsen, K. (2024). Ambivalence in digital social work: Giving advice about welfare-to-work programmes to unemployed clients. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 14(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2023.2218391>
- Sullivan, K. (2023). Three levels of framing. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, 14(4), e1651. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1651>
- Tannen, D. (1993). *Framing in discourse*. Oxford University Press.
- Vicari, S. (2023). Frame semantic grammars: Where frame analysis meets linguistics to study collective action frames. *Discourse Studies*, 25(2), 309–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614456231154737>
- White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. Norton.