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For obvious reasons, the discrepancy between the saentifically founded models of experts and the naive models of laypersons is particularly notice-able in scientific and technical domains. Consider for example the case of the naive model of the physical phenomenon of motion. McCloskey (1983) carried out experiments and interviews to elicit the cultural model of motion prevalent in America. He asked his informants to imagine an airplane flying at constant speed and altitude. In addition, the informants should assume that at one point during the journey a large metal ball is dropped from the plane, which continues flying at the same speed and altitude and in the same direction. The task was to draw the path the ball will follow until it hits the ground, ignoring wind and air resistance. Its final position in relation to the plane should also be indicated. Before you read on, you should perhaps try to solve the task yourself, i.e. make your own'drawing of the paths followed by the plane and the metal ball. Now compare your drawing with the scientifically correct answer to the problem. As physicists tell us, the ball will fall in a kind of parabolic arc and hit the ground directly below the point the plane has reached in the meantime. The ball will take this kind of path because it will continue to travel horizontally at the same speed as the plane while acquiring constantly increasing vertical velocity. If your drawing does not agree with the scientific explanation, you are in good company, with 60 per cent of the informants, because no more than 40 per cent of McCloskey's informants gave the scientifically correct response. The majority of the subjects thought that the ball would take a different course, for instance that it would drop in a straight line or would fall in a diagonal, revealing a 'naive' cultural model of motion that differs from the expert model current in physics.

What this experiment shows is that the cultural models held by the majority of the people need not be, and often are not, in line with the objectively verifiable, scientific knowledge available to experts. If we consider that cul- tural models are based on the collective experience of a society or social group this does not come as a surprise. To get through everyday life, laypersons do not need scientifically correct models, but functionally effective ones. This means that as long as a model is in line with what we perceive and enables us to make functionally correct predictions, it can have widespread currency although it may be technically inaccurate. Another illuminating example is provided by Kempton (1987). When she studied the American cultural model of home heat controls or thermostats by means of interviews and behavioural records, she found two competing theories.

One, the feedback theory, holds that the thermostat senses temperature and turns the furnace on and off to maintain an even temperature. The other, which I call the valve theory, holds that the thermostat controls the amount of heat. That is, like a gas burner or a water valve, a higher setting causes a higher rate of flow.

(Kempton 1987: 224) The feedback theory is technically correct, while the valve theory is wrong. What is of special interest about the two theories is that even though the valve theory is wrong, it also enables us to make the right predictions for the control of temperature in a house and therefore there is no reason why laypersons should not espouse it. It seems, then, that many naive cultural models, espeaally in the sclen- tific and technological domain, are inaccurate from a scientific point of view, but usually correct as far as their functional predictions are concerned. In other domains of everyday life the question of the accuracy of a model does not seem to be as relevant. For example, for the cultural models of SANDCASTLE, BEACH, DESKS arid BREAKFAST which have been singled out in this section for illustrative purposes, it would not be appropriate to speak of correct or inaccurate models, although experts with particularly refined cognitive models could certainly be found for all spheres. What counts is that 'ordinary' everyday experiences do not follow the doctrines laid down for scientific research and the rules of formallogic, but have other, more genuinely cognitive principles behind them, some of which will be discussed below in Chapters 3 and 4. To conclude this section here is a summary of the main issues that have been addressed · Cognitive categories interact with and influence each other and this can cause a shift of category prototypes, of boundaries and of the whole category structure. · Over and above the actual context in which the use of categories is embedded, the internal structure of categories depends on cognitive and cultural models which are always present when language is processed. · A number of terminological distinctions seem necessary for a differen-tiated view of the

context-dependence of categories. Thus we have defined situation as the interaction of objects in the real world;

-context as the cognitive representation of the interaction between cognitive categories or concepts;

-cognitive model as the sum of the experienced and stored con-texts for a certain field by an individual;

-cultural model as a view of cognitive models highlighting the fact that they are intersubjectively shared by the members of a society or social group. · 'Naive' cultural models especially those for technical domains need not be in line with the saentifically accurate knowledge of experts but may be based on what is communal experience and strictly speaking even 'wrong' assumptions. Nevertheless these naive cultural models can be shared by most laypersons in a society as long as the functional pre-dictions they make are correct. Exercises

1.In pragmatics and sociolinguistics the participants of a speech event are often seen as part of the wider 'situational context'. Discuss this notion of 'context' in relation to the one put forward in this chapter. 2.Object categories like CAR are characterized by attributes relating to their form size material parts functions and the associations and emotions they call up. Discuss which of these attributes are more likely to change their 'weight' when the context changes let us say from ordinary traffic to a car race context. 3.Repeat the two-stage test in exercise 5 0f Section l.1 with special contexts like The estate agent climbed out of his . . . Jaguar Rolls-Royce BM W Mercedes etc. or The children loved to climb the . . . apple tree pear tree cherry tree etc. in the orchard given before the association and the good-ness-of-example rating task.

4.Eskimos have many words for different types of snow Aborigines for different types of sand and in Arabic one must choose from a whole range of words which are subsumed under the Western category CAMEL cf. Lyons 1981 67 . Can you explain these phenomena with the help of the notion of 'cultural model'?

5.Compare the cultural model BACHELOR with that of its apparent counter-part SPINSTER. Discuss the parallel examples GENTLEMAN-LADY MASTER-MISTRESS and BOY-GIRL. ……

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