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LING 5347: Pragmatics

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*Birthmother: A Pragmatic Analysis*

**Background: the dispute over naming adoption participants**

In the second half of the twentieth century, public attitudes about adoption, along with laws governing it, changed radically in America. These changes were propelled by all the participants in adoptions: adoption agencies and social workers wished to promote adoption as a legitimate alternative for infertile couples, adoptive families worked to validate the relationship between parent and adopted child as essentially normal, and women who chose adoption for their children desired their choices to be respected. As the public perception of adoption changed, so too did the language used to talk about adoption. But as has been the case in other areas of social progress, the lexical changes came about largely through advocacy and public relations engineering. In particular, advocates of adoption, wishing to avoid terms that marked out members of an adoptive family as different, advised that adoptees and adopters be referred to much as other parents and children are, that is, without making reference to the adoption. At the same time, the mother who had given birth to the child came to be known as the *birthmother* (or *birth mother*—the spacing is a matter of style, not controversy). The older terms had been *biological mother* (formally) and *real mother*, *natural mother* (informally).<sup>1</sup>

Against that backdrop, considerable controversy has arisen over which terms should be used in public discourse to discuss adoption (particularly the relinquishment and placement) and its participants (the biological mother, child, and adoptive parent(s)). A sizable number of organizations have questioned the ethics of how adoptions are typically practiced, and many oppose adoption itself as

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<sup>1</sup> The term *biological mother* is still in wide use, particularly in more formal settings. However, *birthmother* appears to have become the predominant term in popular and adoption-specific contexts. A Google Scholar search of 'biological mother' for 2000-2007 returns more hits than the combined total for 'birthmother' and 'birth mother' in the same range. However, a normal Google search puts 'birth mother'/'birthmother' in first place.

an institution. In general, these opponents of adoption<sup>2</sup> have themselves been affected in one way or another by adoption. They, too, have expressed concern about the words used to talk about adoption, and most of the terms used by adoption advocates are rejected by adoption opponents. Of all the adoption terms in general use, *birthmother* is the one most consistently and ardently challenged by adoption's opponents. Both sides of the issue have written extensively about which words to use and which to shun, offering reasons to justify their choices. However, there has apparently been little or no published linguistic investigation into the disputed terms.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the reasons put forward for using one term or another imply claims about the semantics of the words and the pragmatic implications of their use. Pragmatics, in particular, has much to offer the debate in distinguishing what sorts of meaning can be said to inhere in the words themselves and what the use of one word or another actually accomplishes (or is meant to accomplish) in terms of the S(peaker) and H(earer). The focus of this paper will be the term *birthmother*: its construction, its meaning (in terms of cognitive frames), and its connotations. This analysis, in turn, should highlight the pragmatic interplay between N-compounding, frame semantics, and word connotation. Although no final solution to the debate over word choice will be advocated here, the conclusion will suggest some ways forward so that the debate is properly focused on ideas and not words alone.

### The data

The data for this study comprises lexical items as they are recommended or rejected by those involved in the debate over adoption, in addition to reasons cited for their word choices. The terms and

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<sup>2</sup> I use the expression 'opponents of adoption' generally to include those who oppose adoption as an institution and those who oppose significant aspects of adoption and wish to see the practice of adoption become exceptional rather than common.

<sup>3</sup> Farrar (1999:231-245) does in fact discuss the terms used for a biological mother, and her discussion is accompanied by a survey asking birthmothers to indicate their preferences for words used to refer to them. Farrar gives the survey results in appendices 12 and 13 (n.p.). However, the selection of birthmothers to participate in the survey does not provide an adequately random sampling to guarantee a fair representation of views. The dissertation itself is decidedly sociological, and the analytic method is semiotic rather than linguistic.

reasons are drawn from four organizations, two that generally support adoption and two that generally oppose adoption. These organizations were chosen for three reasons: (1) their specific discussion of particular words, along with advice or admonitions about using or avoiding the words; (2) their articulation of reasons for using one term over another; and (3) their prominence in the adoption scene or the high degree to which they represent the positions of their side.

The adoption supporters are the National Council for Adoption (NCFA) and Perspective Press Inc. (PP). NCFA typically advocates for the interests of children and adoptive families—as those interests are perceived by adoption agencies and social workers. NCFA's website has an article entitled 'Correct Adoption Terminology' that features a table giving preferred and non-preferred terms used in reference to adoption. This article, along with the article 'Adoption First Principles' justifies the use of what it calls 'accurate adoption language.' Perspective Press Inc. is a publishing house that specializes in books and articles about infertility and adoption. The general stance of PP is that adoption is a legitimate and normal way to add children to a family, particularly in cases of infertility. Patricia Johnston's 'Speaking Positively: Using Respectful Adoption Language' (on PP's website) recommends appropriate terms for adoption participants. Both NCFA and PP recommend the term *birthmother* and reject the expression *real parent*.<sup>4</sup>

The adoption opponents used for this study are the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers (CCNM) and the website *Adoption: Legalized Lies* (ALL). CCNM does not explicitly oppose adoption in all circumstances. Nevertheless, it forbids membership on its listserv to anyone who argues in favor of adoption. Its website provides an article by CCNM director Sandra Falconer Pace entitled 'Adoption-Friendly Language or Honest Adoption Language,' which appears to be the most comprehensive source available on the terms preferred by adoption opponents. ALL, on the other hand, describes itself as a 'grassroots organization,' and it opposes adoption under all circumstances. The organization's 'Statement to the Press on the Use of Appropriate Adoption Language' (on its

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for tables of preferred and non-preferred words discussed by adoption supporters, and Appendix B for tables summarizing the words discussed by adoption opponents.

website) proposes appropriate terms and gives reasons for their use. Both CCNM and ALL reject the term *birthmother*, preferring instead *natural mother*. Other terms are offered by each organization in addition to *natural mother*.

Both sides of the debate present their terms as better descriptors from a denotational standpoint.<sup>5</sup> Adoption supporters claim that their own terms are 'accurate' and 'appropriate,' suggesting (but not explicitly saying) that the rejected terms not. Adoption opponents also claim to use 'accurate' language, further arguing that their terms are 'honest' and 'clear' (in contrast to 'deceptive' and 'sugar-coating' language used by adoption supporters).

In terms of the connotations of the language, both sides try to present their language as both neutral and positive. For example, the adoption supporters say that their own language 'reflect[s] maximum . . . objectivity,' whereas other adoption language is 'emotionally-charged.' They also claim that the preferred language is 'emotionally-"correct"' and 'respectful.' Adoption opponents, for their part, say that their language 'describes what is simply true,' while adoption-friendly language 'give[s] a positive slant to all aspects of adoption' and is 'dismissive,' 'demeaning,' and 'clearly biased in nature.' Although presumably the language of adoption opponents is not biased, it is 'respectful' and 'inclusive,' 'depict[ing] the experience with sensitivity and equality.' So clearly, all those involved in the debate wish to present their own language as positive and yet somehow neutral (unbiased) at the same time. Each group sees its antagonists as biased, using language that is fraught with negative (or illegitimately positive) connotation.

Both sides also recognize that the words they use do more than simply communicate information. Adoption advocates hope to use proper terminology in order to 'help . . . promote understanding among members of the adoption circle.' The non-preferred language promotes 'the spread of misconceptions' and 'lead[s] to a subconscious feeling of competition or conflict.' For those who wish to see adoption severely restricted or ended, the correct language is typically spoken of in

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<sup>5</sup> In-text citations will not be used for claims made by the four organizations that supply most of the data used in this paper. Instead, the reader is directed to the appendices, which provide tables of data along with the data sources.

terms of its descriptive functions, but the language of their pro-adoption antagonists is apparently very powerful: it 'break[s] the bonds of the natural family,' 'keep[s] us [natural mothers] in our place' and has 'prevented us from . . . searching for our children and accepting our full motherhood.'

Although many of the claims about language are made about the whole range of terms proposed or rejected, much focus has centered on the term *birthmother*. Because this is such an important term in the adoption language debate, this paper will restrict most of its analysis to that lexeme (and, at times, the alternatives proposed for it). An analysis of the other referring expressions can be worked out along lines similar to what follows.

### Nominal compounds, referring, and presupposition

The first thing to note about the term *birthmother* is that it is composed of two Ns, the first of which (*birth*) modifies the second Ns (*mother*). The sense of a nominal compound is rarely if ever the sum of its component parts. Instead, some function relates the two to produce a new sense. Downing (1977) examines many of the most common relationships that obtain between the first and second N in a nominal compound, but she concludes that there is no limit to these relationships, nor are they necessarily predictable from the semantics of the two words (841). The relationship is projected by what is known about the referents of the two Ns and their conceptual relation to each other. In the present case, *birth* serves to limit the class of *mothers* by restricting the intension<sup>6</sup> of *mother*. We will come back to the nature of this limiting in due course.

Another important question about nominal compounds in general and *birthmother* in particular is the degree to which S and H access the constituent meanings of the compounded parts, as opposed to simply relying upon a whole-word analysis. Libben's (2005) experiments with compound interpretations suggest that even in cases where the components are opaque with reference to the whole-word meaning (for example, the word *hogwash*), H (and presumably S) still access the meanings of the components. In the case of *birthmother*, the meanings of both components are clearly

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<sup>6</sup> Allan's (2001:45-60, 2003) distinctions between *sense*, *reference*, *denotation*, *extension*, and *intension* are followed here.

(synchronically) related to the meaning of the whole. Consequently, any analysis must take into account the 'conceptual representations for [the] constituents' (Libben 2005:276) in addition to the semantic meaning and connotations of the whole word.

The compound *birthmother* apparently did not arise because no other efficient expression was available to refer to the class of referents denoted by the term; indeed, as has been observed already, expressions such as *biological mother* and *natural mother* (Adj + N) already existed and were widely distributed in use. The term *birthmother* was coined (or at least popularized) because of perceived deficiencies in the common expressions. Although it is true that, like other NPs, 'compounds serve to refer rather than to assert' (Downing 1977:822), clearly not just any referring expression will do—even when it is successful (unambiguous) in picking out its referent. At least one reason for a semantically-adequate referring expression to be replaced by another that is perceived to be better is that referring expressions typically trigger presuppositions (Levinson 1983:174). Important to the present discussion is the content of the presupposition. Presupposed information cannot be limited to the existence of the referent denoted; it must also be seen to include assumptions about the nature of the referent, the qualities which allow the entity to be picked out by the particular referring expression. Consequently, any connotations carried by a referring expression are also presupposed to hold for the particular referent. Admittedly, these latter presuppositions are no doubt weaker (less likely to arise and more easily cancelled) than presuppositions about existence. But this is not to say these presuppositions do not exert a powerful effect in the H of an utterance.

### Connotation

Thus far connotation has been mentioned several times, but it has not yet been defined. The topic has received scant mention in discussions of semantics and pragmatics, a surprising fact given that it is among the more commonly discussed aspects of meaning by non-linguistics. Backhouse (2003:9) says that connotation 'is usually applied . . . to various aspects of the communicative value of linguistic units seen as lying outside their core, descriptive meaning'. He goes on to break connotation down into

'expressive components of meaning' (e.g. 'favorable' versus 'unfavorable'), 'social or situational circumstances of use' (e.g. speech deemed appropriate for different settings or different types of speakers), and 'cultural associations of what is denoted by the lexical unit' (e.g. Japanese people's favorable disposition towards octopi versus Americans' typical negative reactions to the animal). This breakdown is helpful in that it delineates (though perhaps too much) between connotations as they inhere in a lexical item—as in the distinction between *obstinate* and *firm*—and connotations as they inhere in concepts themselves—as in cultural associations with the octopus. Allan (2007:1047) writes, "The connotations of a language expression are pragmatic effects that arise from encyclopaedic knowledge about its denotation (or reference) and also from experiences, beliefs, and prejudices about the contexts in which the expression is typically used." Allan's definition highlights the importance of S and H's extra-linguistic knowledge of referents for attaching connotations to referring expressions. Allan also notes the more narrowly linguistic connotational effects that arise because of a word's distribution in particular linguistic contexts. So the question is this: are the connotations that are claimed for *birthmother* primarily lexical or conceptual? Almost certainly they are both.

From a purely distributional standpoint, *birthmother* may be contaminated by its typical linguistic companions. There is evidence that children learn to attach connotations to particular words based on the words' collocates. Corrigan (2004) demonstrates this with the seemingly neutral word *happen*, which children learn to use in primarily 'unpleasant' contexts based on adult usage. It is likely that any term used to refer to a biological mother would undergo similar collocational pressures. Media reporting about adoption (as with other subjects) tends to highlight unpleasant situations: abuse and neglect, disputes over guardianship, accusations of adoption agency greed or judicial corruption, economic disparities between the relinquishing and adopting parents, and so on. Over time, the typical expression used for the biological parent is likely to take on negative connotations.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, one problem with this approach is that it fails to account for the fact that negative media reports are not

<sup>7</sup> Collocational data is an area that merits further research. The present observations are speculative only. Research might show that the word *birthmother* is usually found in pleasant or positive contexts.

simply shaping word connotations; they are also shaping conceptions about adoption and its participants. Consequently, in the context of public discourse about adoption, negative connotations associated with *birthmother* are more intuitively related to concepts about birthmothers rather than collocates of the referring expression. This observation situates the analysis back in the extra-linguistic realm, the encyclopedic knowledge of the world (shaped by S and H's culture and experiences).

Another source of connotations for the word *birthmother* falls under Backhouse's '*social or situational*' context of use. This too is a matter of distribution, but it makes crucial reference to who uses the referring expression (and who does not), and what the perceived intentions of the user are. This source of connotations is a major part of adoption opponents' dislike for the word. The Canadian Council of Natural Mothers implies that it was adoptive families who were responsible for initially coining the word *birthmother*, and '[s]ocial workers eagerly followed this trend by spreading the terminology broadly' (Pace). This perception is common among adoption opponents. The history of the word is somewhat more complicated. Although the first known use of the term in a published work is attributed to Pearl S. Buck<sup>8</sup> (an adoptive mother and social worker) in 1958, the term was popularized (possibly even re-coined, as it does not seem to show up after 1958 in other sources) at least in part by the Concerned United Birthparents (Herman). However, for a variety of reasons, most actual uses of the term *birthmother* would certainly have been from social workers, adoption agencies, and adoptive parents—all of them adoption supporters.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, *birthmother* has picked up a situational connotation of being used to advocate for adoption, at least among those who have come to dislike the term. Consequently, the motives imputed to the typical users of the word can easily be attached to the word itself.

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<sup>8</sup> Pearl S. Buck is given the first citation for the term ('birth mother', actually) in OED's December 2006 'Draft Additions', and my personal searching has also failed to turn up an earlier usage.

<sup>9</sup> Birthmothers are much less likely to talk about adoption than adoptive parents, in part because of shame and in part because the adopted child is present with the adoptive family and not with the birthmother, so the topic of adoption is more likely to come up in conversation. Moreover, birthmothers are less likely to discuss or write about adoption than social workers and adoption agencies, for obvious reasons.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, the word *birthmother* has connotations that are a function of its component Ns (*birth* and *mother*) and their relationship to each other by virtue of compounding. But a discussion of that requires an exploration of how people conceptualize word meaning.

### Frames and compounding

A pivotal controversy in the theory of meaning concerns what is properly included in a word's definition. A compelling model of word meaning relies upon the concept of *cognitive frames* to explain how referring expressions pick out particular entities by accessing S and H's shared conceptions about the world.<sup>10</sup> In this model, a word is defined by a penumbra (a 'frame') of associated concepts, some more centrally or typically a part of the word's meaning, others less centrally so. If a minimal number of necessary associations that attend a referring expression are accessible for a particular referent, than that referring expression can be used. This model helps account for polysemy without positing multiple senses of a single word in cases where the word can pick out (apparently) vastly different referents. Instead, particular (very different) referents simply access different conceptual associations in the referring expression's frame. Furthermore, no particular concept associated in the frame with the referring expressions can be said to be necessarily present in the particular referent. However, if a referent lacks qualities that are typically centrally associated with the referring expression, that referent may be considered to be on the periphery of the expression's denotata. For example, a penguin is probably a (conceptually) peripheral denotatum of the lexeme *bird*, because the ability to fly and scalar smallness are conceptually more central or typical of *bird*. This is not to say that penguins are peripheral in the actual (biological) class of birds. Instead, they are simply less typical of the sort of thing meant by the word *bird* as judged by the frame of concepts associated with the word.

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<sup>10</sup> Fillmore and Atkins (1992:76-77) explain the basic theory this way: 'a word's meaning can be understood only with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs, or practices, constituting a conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning. . . . [W]ords or word senses are not related to each other directly, word to word[footnote omitted], but only by way of their links to common background frames and indications of the manner in which their meanings highlight particular elements of such frames.'

It also important to observe that not only are 'objective' or truth-conditional concepts associated to a referring expression in its frame, but the frame may also include connotations. It is also likely that the connotations attached to concepts associated with a referring expression will have some bearing on the connotation of the referring expression itself. Naturally, many pragmatic and semantic factors can keep componential connotations from rising to the level of whole-word connotation, but it is likely that in many cases, a referring expression can exploit the connotations of associated concepts in its frame.

Thinking of the lexeme *birthmother* in terms of frames can shed light on the controversy surrounding its use. As was noted previously, the interpretation of compound nominals makes cognitive access to the concepts underlying both Ns, even when their meanings are opaque to the meaning of the compound. It was also noted that no delimited set of functions or relations holds between the Ns of all nominal compounds. However, if compounding (at least in cases of transparent components) makes reference to frames, then the relationship between components becomes clearer, and other pragmatic effects may come to light, as well.

Barsalou's (1992) graphical depictions of frames provide a nice model, which is followed below. Unlike Barsalou's, these frames do not label the association lines or make reference to the (important) distinction between *attributes* and *values*. Like Barsalou's, these frames are provisional and sketchy, at best.

Figure 1.1 is a partial frame for the word (N) *mother*. In general, *mother* has very good connotations, probably because of the associations of *nurturing*, *rearing*, *responsibility*, and *child*. It is also significant that the V *mother* can be used without making reference to *birth*, as in 'My sister mothers me when I'm sad', probably accessing the *nurturing* concept.<sup>11</sup> However, a normal use of the N *mother* does access the *birth* (and hence biological relationship) concept. A referent picked out by the N *mother* that does not access the *birth* aspect would non-typical.

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<sup>11</sup> The V *father* acts quite differently from *mother*, accessing the *conception* concept only. The difference is worth exploring using frames.

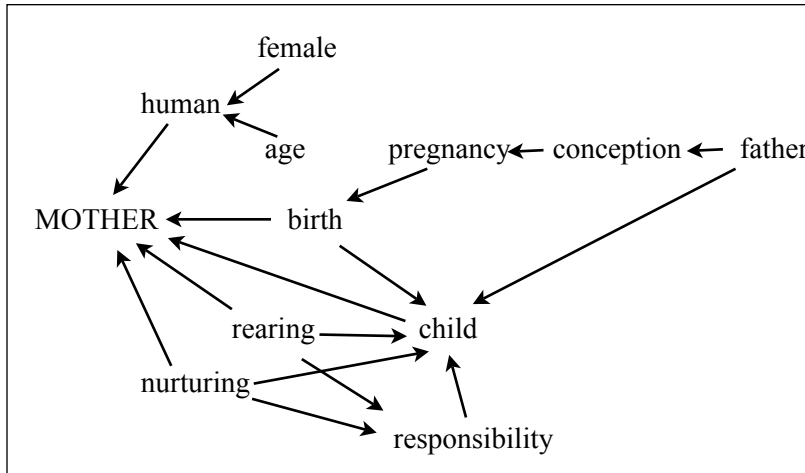


FIG.1.1: A provisional frame for N mother<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1.2 shows a hypothesis of how the term *birthmother* is formed (and consequently highlights the relationship between the components of the term, *birth* and *mother*). Because the *birth* concept is the one that associates the *mother* with the *child* in a biological sense, the lexeme *birth* can be prefixed to *mother*, effectively eliminating the other associations. All of the non-necessary concepts in the *mother* frame are disassociated from the word, leaving only *female human of (some particular) age* and *birth* (along with its necessary associations). *Birthmother* would then have a frame similar to the one pictured in figure 1.2.

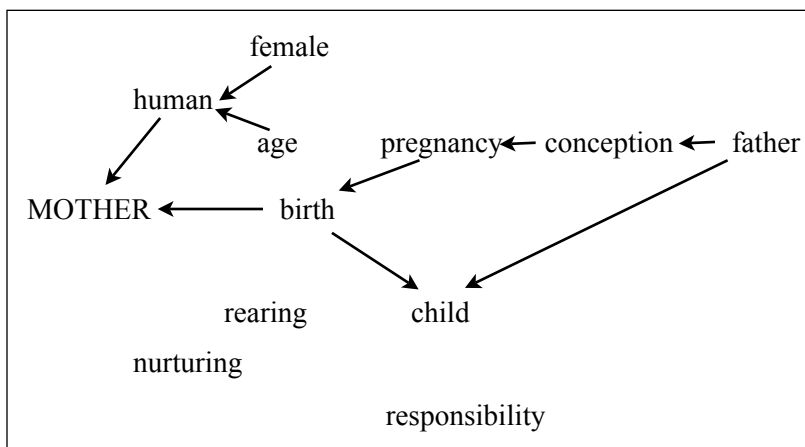


FIG. 1.2: A provisional frame for forming the term *birthmother*

<sup>12</sup> Kittay and Lehrer (1992:12-13) highlight the degree to which cognitive frames are culture-bound by discussing the word *orphan*, which 'includes an understanding of biological parenthood, the upbringing of a child within an essentially nuclear family consisting of the biological family', and so on. Culture's impact on S and H's cognitive frames puts the theory at least partially in the realm of pragmatics.

This analysis has very important implications for the connotations of the word *birthmother*. Even though nothing associated with *mother* in figure 1.2 has a particularly negative connotation (in fact, American society generally thinks well of *females*, *birth*, and *children*), an additional connotation is created by severing the association between *mother* and *rearing*, *nurturing*, and *responsibility* (as they relate to the *child*). Instead of simply taking positive connotations out of the sum, the alteration in the frame actually generates (or has the potential of generating) a new negative connotation. Apparently, this sort of severing has a greater negative effect than occurs in an expression like *natural mother*. This is probably the case because *birth* is a central component in *mother's* field, but the concept of naturalness is at best peripheral. By delimiting *mother* with one of its central components, the other associated components are more noticeably disassociated.<sup>13</sup>

Naturally, the preceding analysis has emphasized the negative connotations associated with the referring expression *birthmother*. It has not accounted for the generally neutral or positive connotations that the term has for many others. Even those who advocate for the term *birthmother* may in fact perceive some dysphemism in the word, but they do not acknowledge so. Alternatively, *birthmother* is genuinely positive (or close to neutral) to many, as indicated by the fact that the term has often been used by birthmothers themselves. In that case, the generally positive connotations in *birth* and *mother* (even absent *nurturing*, etc.) are stronger in many minds than the negative effect of disassociating the other positive concepts. This observation is completely consistent with the premise of conceptual frames: the theory does not claim that frames are universal and rigid but instead generally (though imperfectly) shared. Different responses to particular words simply demonstrates differences in aspects of the individual's cognitive frames.

## Conclusion

Connotation and frames (and their interrelationship) could usefully be applied to all the terms that are preferred by some and rejected by others in adoption. An analysis of the illocutionary forces

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<sup>13</sup> It would be useful to explore nominal compounds, and NPs generally, in terms of whether the modifying word is a central part of the head N's frame.

attributed to uses of these referring expressions would also be beneficial, especially in terms of the way using a particular referring expression can evoke or shape the H's cognitive frame. Lakoff (2006:25-48), for one, encourages his fellow political progressive to exploit the power of cognitive frames for purposes of persuasion (and he claims that conservatives have effectively used frames for many years). Similarly, those involved in the adoption debate might adopt a strategy (or refine their existing strategy) of using conceptual frames as an indirect way to gain support for their position.

Nevertheless, recognition of the power of cognitive frames for connotation and illocutionary force can lead to an application somewhat different from Lakoff's. Careful consideration of the way connotations differ based on S and H's conceptual frames, a S can try to use referring expressions that are least likely to evoke negative or unpleasant connotations for any Hs. Although no language is neutral, interlocutors can work hard to shift the focus of debate to the ideas themselves by being as deferential as possible in the words they choose. This advice is not dependent on any particular analysis of connotation; but it is hoped that a careful analysis of connotation might convince some that the offense claimed by their opponents is not mere bluffing, but instead a legitimate, even pragmatically calculable, reaction to particular words.

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Appendix A

The Language and Justifications of Adoption Supporters

All material in the following tables is directly quoted from the referenced sources except as indicated by italics (Tables 1-3) and brackets (Table 3).

**Table 1**  
**National Council for Adoption: terms**  
 ('Correct Adoption')

	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Non-preferred</i>
<i>Legal Parent</i>	Parent	Adoptive parent
<i>Biological Parent</i>	Birthparent	Real parent Natural parent
<i>Child who has been adopted</i>	My child Person/Individual who was adopted	Adopted child (vs. Own child) Adoptee

**Table 2**  
**Perspective Press, Inc.: terms**  
 (Johnston 2004)

	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Non-preferred</i>
<i>Legal Parent</i>	Parent	
<i>Biological Parent</i>	Birthparent Expectant parent	Real parent
<i>Child who has been adopted</i>	Child/Person ( <i>depending on age</i> )	Adopted child (vs. Own child)

**Table 3**  
**Justifications for terms (by adoption supporters)**  
 †('Correct Adoption'), ‡(Johnston 2004)

<i>Characterization of preferred language</i>	<i>Characterization of non-preferred language</i>
accurate <sup>†</sup>	emotionally-laden <sup>†</sup>
appropriate <sup>†</sup>	emotion-laden <sup>‡</sup>
respectful <sup>‡</sup>	emotionally-charged <sup>‡</sup>
emotionally 'correct' <sup>†</sup>	[promotes] the spread of misconceptions <sup>†</sup>
reflect[s] maximum respect, dignity, responsibility and objectivity <sup>‡</sup>	perpetuate[s] a . . . myth that adoption is a second-best and lesser-than alternative <sup>‡</sup>
educate[s] others about adoption <sup>†</sup>	lead[s] to a subconscious feeling of competition or conflict <sup>‡</sup>
[goal of] influencing others so that this language will someday be the norm <sup>‡</sup>	impl[ies] that adoptive relationships are artificial and tentative <sup>‡</sup>
helps to promote understanding among members of the adoption circle <sup>‡</sup>	

Appendix B

The Language and Justifications of Adoption Opponents

All material in the following tables is directly quoted from the referenced sources except as indicated by italics (Tables 1-3) and brackets (Table 3).

**Table 1**  
**Canadian Council of Natural Mothers: terms**  
 (Pace)

	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Non-preferred</i>
<i>Legal Parent</i>	Adoptive Parent	
<i>Biological Parent</i>	Natural mother First mother Original mother Mother who has lost her child to adoption	Birthmother
<i>Child who has been adopted</i>	Adopted child	

**Table 2**  
**Adoption: Legalized Lies: terms**  
 ('Statement')

	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Non-preferred</i>
<i>Legal Parent</i>	Adoptive caregiver Adopter	Parent
<i>Biological Parent</i>	Natural parent Exiled parent True parent Parent	Birth mother Biological parent
<i>Child who has been adopted</i>	Adopted person/adult/child (depending on age)	

**Table 3**  
**Justifications for terms (by adoption opponents)**  
 †(Pace), †(Lynn), \*('Statement')

<i>Characterization of preferred language</i>	<i>Characterization of non-preferred language</i>
honest†	deceptive*
politically correct†	dismissive*
respectful†*	demeaning*
clear*	misleading*
accurate*	clearly biased in nature*
inclusive*	give[s] a positive slant to all aspects of adoption†
describes what is simply true†	attempts to limit their [natural mothers'] role to the birth of their children†
depict[s] the experience with sensitivity and equality*	denigrate[s] and break[s] the bonds of the natural family†
	convey[s] impressions of her [natural mother]
	help[s] to separate mother and child†
	denigrate[s] the child's natural mother†
	keep[s] us [natural mothers] in our place†
	[has] harmed natural mothers†
	[has] reinforced our . . . damaged self-esteem†
	[has] prevented us from . . . searching for our children and accepting our full motherhood†
	denies the adopted person's heritage and natural relationships*
	designed to distance parents from their children*
	impl[ies] that they [natural mothers] are vessels of conception rather than human beings*