

A Frame Semantic Approach to Lexicographic Evaluation

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This study aims to propose an evaluative framework for the lexicographic descriptions in learner's dictionary from the perspective of frame semantics (Fillmore 1982, 1985). The focus will be placed on the descriptions of event nouns, and the following two aspects with regard to event nouns will be discussed: (a) collocational information of supporting verbs and (b) their argument realizations. Event nouns are words such as *argument* and *decision* that are mostly derived from verbs and represent the same propositional contents as their verb counterparts. Consider:

- (1) The mayor *criticized* the government in the interview.
- (2) The mayor *made a criticism* against the government in the interview.

Examples (1) and (2) describe the same proposition, i.e. evoke the same *frame* (cf. Fillmore et al. 2003, Ruppenhofer et al. 2010). According to FrameNet (<http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/>), a dictionary of frames, both *criticize* and *criticism* evoke the Judgment_communication frame. There are, however, two differences regarding the linguistic realization of each element. One is that the noun forms are syntactically "supported" by so-called support verbs such as *made* in (2). Such verbs are semantically nearly transparent, which suggests that the *frame* is evoked by the event nouns and hence these are the argument bearing elements in the sentence. The selection of support verbs is determined by the kind of frame evoked. For instance, the noun *argument* is accompanied by *make* in the sense of "assertion" (Reasoning frame), and it is supported by *have* when it means "quarrel" (Quarreling frame). The other difference is how the *valuee* (*the government* in above examples) is realized in the sentence. Such elements are called frame elements in frame semantics with the distinction between core and peripheral depending on their centrality in the frame (Ruppenhofer et al. 2010: 26-27). In (1), *valuee*, which is one of the core frame elements, is the direct object of the verb *criticize* whereas it is realized as the prepositional phrase (*against the government*) in (2). This study argues that, from the perspective of frame semantics, these two aspects are essential for the descriptions of learner's dictionaries, and are significant criteria in evaluating dictionaries. COB5, LDOCE5 and OALD8 were examined to see if they listed proper candidates of support verbs and how core frame elements of the noun frame evokers were presented in their entries. The results clearly indicate that the coverage of these aspects in EFL dictionaries is significantly limited, which implies a need for improvement of learner's dictionaries overall. This in turn indicates the merit of frame semantic analysis for finer lexicographic descriptions of event nouns, which enables us to particularize necessary information for learners.

References

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Dictionaries

- COB5: *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, Fifth Edition. (2006) London: Collins.
- LDOCE5: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Fifth edition. (2009) Harlow: Pearson Education.
- OALD8: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Eighth Edition. (2010) Oxford: Oxford University Press.