

Methods for finding proper types of constructional generalizations

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Levin (1993) claims that, for the most part, syntactic subcategorization can be predicted from the meaning of verbs. Following this line of research, a number of other analyses use class membership to explain a verb's range of argument realization, most notably projectionist approaches (e.g., Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005) and constructional approaches (e.g., Goldberg 1995, 2002).

This paper argues that the ways in which verb classes and grammatical constructions have traditionally been defined should be reconsidered, because they do not always yield the types of predictions about argument realization in a range of grammatical constructions. The argument will move along these lines: First, I give an overview of how verb classes are used in different frameworks to determine a verb's ability to occur in argument alternations. Second, I discuss some general problems with the concept of semantic verb classes in these approaches. Third, I argue that an alternative way of defining verb classes more precisely necessitates the incorporation of frame semantic descriptions (Fillmore 1982, Boas 2006/2008). Adopting Snell-Hornby's (1983) notion of verb descriptivity I propose that more fine-grained verb classes allow us to identify those aspects of verb meaning that are grammatically relevant. Next, I offer a number of steps for incorporating such information in FrameNet annotations (Fillmore et al. 2003), thereby extending FrameNet coverage to also include descriptions of grammatical constructions. Finally, I present an outline of how to account for parallels between verbal meanings and constructional meanings in an extended version of FrameNet, also known as the "Constructicon" (Fillmore 2008).

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