

An Investigation of Motivations behind Collocations based on Frame Semantics: The Case Study of ‘dast’

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Collocation is defined as the combination of two or more words, which generally go together in a specific context (Lyons, 1995). As an illustration, only one of the synonymous lexemes such as big and large fill the blank space in Example (1).

- a. You are making a ___big___ mistake.
- b. * You are making a ___large___ mistake.

Example 1 indicates that mistake only collocates with big on a syntagmatic axis, and not large.

The study aimed at investigating certain semantic and pragmatic motivations behind lexical collocations based on frame semantics demonstrating what words collocate with certain words such as ‘dast’ (hand) and what motivates their constructions. In other words, the question is whether it is the frame correspondence that brings two or more words together. This research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates specific words to go together?
2. How does frame semantics provide us with information about collocations?
3. What cultural, metaphorical and metonymic factors play roles in lexical collocations?

The argument is that what motivates collocations reside in the speakers’ background knowledge and their ability to use syntactic and semantic phenomena properly.

2. Theoretical Framework

Frame semantics was introduced by Charles Fillmore in 1970s. It aimed to explain the configuration processes of encyclopedical knowledge of words (Ungerer & Schmid, 2006). This framework was primarily used for designing dictionaries which include our background knowledge, whether structural or semantic (Fillmore, 2007). Fillmore (1982, p. 111) defines ‘frame semantics’ as “a particular way of looking at word meanings, as well as a way of characterizing principles for creating new words and phrases for adding new meanings to words, and for assembling the meaning of elements in a text into the total meaning of the text”. By the word ‘frame’ he means

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all other previously known terms such as ‘schema’, ‘script’, ‘scenario’, ‘ideational scaffolding’, ‘cognitive model’, or ‘folk theory’.

Croft and Cruse (2004) believe that words are not randomly saved in our memory. But they are not only organized based on relations within structural semantics, but also they are connected based on experience. For example, a “restaurent” is not just a place to eat food, it is related to other concepts such as *customer*, *waiter*, *ordering*, *eating*, and *bill*. They mention that these concepts are not connected to RESTAURENT by structural semantic relations such as hyponymy, antonymy and etc., but they are connected to *restaurent* by our daily experiences.

Furthermore, Fillmore (1982) elaborates how frame semantics can help us explain the subtle differences between various synonymous words. For instance, the words “shore” and “coast” are considered to be synonymous; however, within frame semantics they are different because a person that is at the deck of a ship may say ‘We are close to the shore’, and a person that is on land may say ‘This is the coast of France’.

3. Method

For conducting the present research, a corpus consisting of 2000 sentences was used. Most of the data were collected from the website *The Persian Database*¹ and *Sokhan Persian Dictionary*. All data included the word *dast* (hand) as a subpart of the Body-Part Frame. For the investigation of collocations with *dast*, two types of data were found: nominal collocations and verbal collocations.

A kind of analytical-descriptive method based on frame semantics was used to carry out the current study. In this method, series of collocates with *dast* were collected to be compared with their near synonyms to discover the compatibility of bases, collocates and the whole construction. In nominal collocations, Body-Part Frame should be compatible with the frame in which the collocation is defined. In verbal collocations, the Body-Part Frame may literally or metonymically affect the verbal element. Moreover, cultural concepts might influence the quality of the collocation.

4. Results and Discussion

Mel’čuk (1998), and Gelbukh and Kolesnikova (2013) used the lexical-functional approach to study collocations. They do not, however, look at the semantic motivations behind their combination. Since lexical-functional approach is not based on our experiences and background knowledge, it appears to be difficult to find a way to the nature of lexical concatenations.

Fillmore (1975, 1977a, 1982, 1985) aimed to use frame semantics for describing lexemes and preparing FrameNet. However, Ruppenhofer, Baker and Fillmore (2003) believe that it is possible to use FrameNet for collecting information about the collocations and multi-word phrases. In fact, such information is hidden and this paper aims at discovering motivations behind collocations based on such a theory.

Explaining motivations behind collocations without defining the terms collocations, metaphor and metonymy based on frame semantics becomes very difficult.

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Collocation is defined as combination of a word from one frame with another word from the same or a different frame, which creates a construction which can be defined within either of each elements' frames or a completely new frame. Metaphor is defined as mapping from a frame into another frame. Metonymy is a frame-to-frame mapping, in which one frame is the subpart of the other frame.

5. Conclusion

In verbal collocations the verbal element is dominated by the frame in which the nominal element is defined, whereas in nominal collocations the nominal elements should be defined in compatible frames. If they are not literally compatible, then they must be fixed metaphorically, metonymically or culturally.

Keywords: Frame Semantics, Lexical Collocations, Metaphor, Metonymy, Cultural Concepts

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