

What can a story do? –A frame semantic approach to constructing meanings on phrasal verbs

Hui-Ching Lin

Northumbria University

hui-ching.lin@northumbria.ac.uk

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Phrasal verbs, such as *come across*, often involve multiple meanings. Understanding polysemous meanings of phrasal verbs is one of the difficulties faced by EFL learners. Recent studies in cognitive linguistics highlight the importance of metaphorical concepts embraced by prepositions in phrasal verbs via Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lu & Sun, 2017; Yasuda, 2010). However, far too little attention has been paid to the application of frame semantics (Fillmore, 1976; Fillmore & Atkins, 1992) to understanding phrasal verbs. This paper attempts to identify the similar and unique patterns of meanings of phrasal verbs constructed between native English speakers and Mandarin Chinese EFL learners. In the service of contributing to such understanding, this study then seeks to assess the usefulness of frame semantics in terms of the acquisition of phrasal verbs.

The research data in this study is drawn from four main sources: a pre-test, a series of video-recorded training sessions, a set of recorded linguistic output, and a post-test. 30 target phrasal verbs, a combination of 5 root verbs ('come', 'go', 'get', 'put', and 'take') with 6 prepositions ('in', 'out', 'on', 'off', 'up', and 'down') were selected from *Collins Free Online Dictionary* (retrieved from: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>) and *The Free Dictionary's* idiom dictionary (retrieved from: <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>), along with some sample sentences. Firstly, participants were asked to complete a pre-test in a written form of a gap-filling task with a Chinese translation concerning their pre-existing linguistic knowledge of target phrasal verbs. Next, participants attended three one-hour training sessions, using a set of worksheets as teaching and learning materials. A worksheet was designed on the basis of the theory of frame semantics and it consisted of four sections: (1) a list of 10 target phrasal verbs, (2) two frame semantic tables, (3) a table of sample sentences; (4) two in-class tasks. All three training sessions were video recorded and linguistic output produced for in-class tasks was also collected. All the data collected from the training sessions were used to identify the similar and unique constructions on phrasal verbs shared between English and Mandarin Chinese users. Finally, participants were asked to fill in a post-test that had the same test content as in the pre-test but with the re-arranged order. The results emerging from the pre-test and post-test were used to analyse the effect of a frame semantic approach that could exert on helping Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of phrasal verbs. The data collected from the above sources were analysed and the findings would be presented in the conference.

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