

The semantics of Compound verbs and its representation using FrameNet: The case of Assamese

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The current paper makes an effort to analyze the semantics of compound verbs in Assamese and the conceptual links that exist between them within the framework of Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 1977, 2006, 2007). The use of complex predicates has been identified as a significant areal feature of South Asian languages (Abbi, 1991). The combinations and the semantics of compound verbs in Assamese, an IndoAryan language spoken in the North-eastern part of India, has, however, hardly been addressed. A compound verb, also known as a CV, is a combination of two verbs that, when used separately, denote different actions but, when used together, denote a single occurrence, each of which contributes a certain amount of information to the whole. These verbs are combined in such a way as to produce a "coherent semantic frame," which will be represented for Assamese with the assistance of the FrameNet project (Baker et al. 1998) (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu>). Each verb evokes a frame, while a CV evokes two frames corresponding to the two verbs. The argument realization is determined either by the V1 or the V2. In the examples below, the head that selects the argument is in bold.

1. moi [donor] tai-k [Recipient] kam-tu [Theme] [kor-i **di-l-u**]_v (S-IO-DO-V)
 I she-ACC work-CLF do-CP give-PERF-3
 'I did the work (for her)'
2. moi [Ingestor] aam-tu [Ingestibles] [**kha-i** di-l-u]_v (S-O-V)
 I mango-CLF eat-CP give-PERF-3
 'I have eaten up the mango'

However, in certain combinations the Vs are not compatible with each other. The paper claims that the reason behind such an ungrammatical structure is due to "incoherent semantic frames". For example,

3. *ram-e ghor-tu [dekh-i di-l-e]
 Ram-ERG house-CLF [see-CP give-PERF-3]
 'Ram has seen a house'

The sentence in (3) is ungrammatical because the '*dekh*_v' refers to an involuntary action, and '*de*_v' refers to a voluntary action. Thus, the paper will focus on the possible combinations of V1 and V2.

In order for the evoked frames to be compatible with one another, the 'frame elements' must coincide with each other, semantically, creating a CV in the process (the connection that exists between the frames will be represented through the use of FrameGrapher). In this paper, four commonly used light verbs, i.e. '*de*' (give), '*ah*' (come), '*pa*' (get), and '*ut*' (raise) will be investigated, as well as some polar verbs that can be combined with them. Thus, the paper will argue for the 'universality' of frames and hopefully contribute to the addition of new categories to the existing FrameNet database.

References

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