

AN ANALYSIS OF THE "RENTAL EVENT" FRAME IN CHINESE LANGUAGE

***Summary.** Every language in the world produces different grammatical systems with the same cognition, and cognition is the foundation of any language. This paper aimed at explaining the Chinese verb "租用(rent)", based on Charles Fillmore's concept of frame, and to analyze its characteristics in the event frame.*

***Key words:** rent, rental event, concept of frame*

Introduction. Cognition refers to the process by which people obtain knowledge or apply knowledge, or information processing, which is the most basic psychological process of human beings and forms the language. In other words, cognition is the foundation of language.

Every language in the world produces different grammatical systems with the same cognition. The concept of frame was first proposed by an expert on artificial intelligence Minsky, afterwards linguist Charles Fillmore introduced it to linguistics in the 1970s. Frame is a very important concept that links up all stages of Fillmore's language theory. Fillmore has given different definitions and meanings to the frame at different stages, beginning from the early case frame, the linguistic frame, till the later cognitive frame, even today's Frame Net. This article takes the concept of frame proposed by Charles Fillmore, and the most typical example of his description of the framework is Fillmore's "commercial

event frame" in order to make a comparative analysis of "rental events" frame in Chinese and Thai languages.

"Rental Event" Frame in Chinese Language

In the initial state, one person A has money, while another person or agency D has goods that A wants to rent. Assuming that two people have negotiated the fee, A will pay a certain amount of money and a deposit to D, while D rents the goods. Because this is a "rental event", so finally A temporarily owns the goods, while D owns the money and temporarily owns the deposit. As can be seen from the above, there are at least five other categories of the act of renting, they are a renter, a lessor, a good, fee and a deposit. The "rental event" frame is briefly summarized in Figure 1.

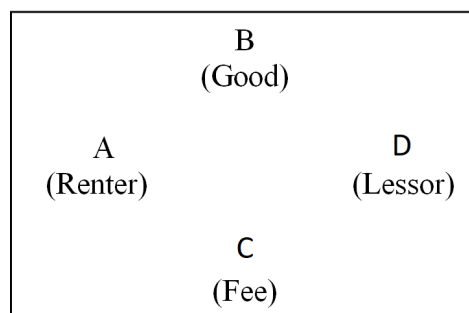


Fig. 1. "Rental event" frame

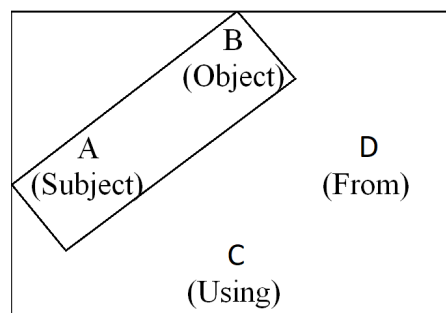


Fig. 2. Frame explanation of example (1)

Setting up an event framework for "rental event" has at least the following advantages: firstly, setting a frame can describe different small sentence patterns, secondly, can be applied in Chinese teaching, in order to effectively improve the efficiency of teaching syntax. A frame can use several different (but related) verbs and syntaxes to express the same meaning, such as rent out, rent,

charge, pay and refund. Here are some examples of "rental events" that might occur:

1. *Xiao Liu rented a house from Lao Liu for 1000 yuan.*

In figure 2 we can see that in the example given above, when the verb is "rent", then the renter (Xiao Liu) is the subject, the good (the house) is the object, the lessor (Lao Liu) is the first adverbial, the fee (1000 Yuan) is the second adverbial. It is not difficult to see that all four components of the event frame appeared in the example above, but in addition, we can create more different sentences.

2. *Lao Liu rented out a house to Xiao Liu for 1000 Yuan.*

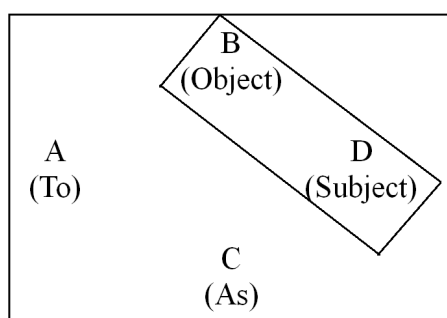


Fig. 3. Frame explanation of example (2)

In figure 3, when the verb is "rent out", it is obvious that the lessor has become the subject of the sentence, but the object still remains the same, is the house, the renter has become the first adverbial, and the fee still remains the second adverbial.

3. *Lao Liu charged Xiao Liu 1000 Yuan for a house.*

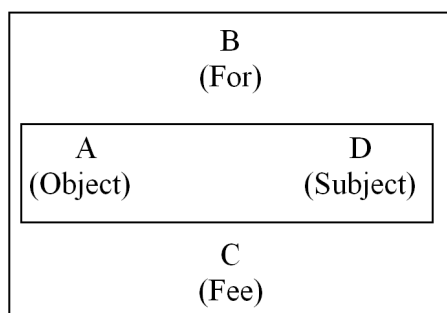


Fig. 4. Frame explanation of example (3)

From the example 3 and figure 4 it's clear that, when the verb is "charge", the lessor is the subject of this sentence, hence the renter has become the object, and the fee is the indirect object, the last one, the house is the adverbial.

4. *Xiao Liu paid Lao Liu 1000 Yuan for a house.*

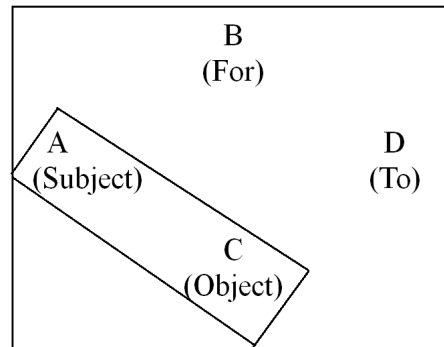


Fig. 5. Frame explanation of example (4)

Figure 5 shows the frame of the example (4), where the verb is "pay", we can see that the renter is the subject and the fee is the object of the given sentence, and the lessor is the indirect object, the house is the adverbial.

5. *Xiao Liu checked out of Lao Liu's house.*

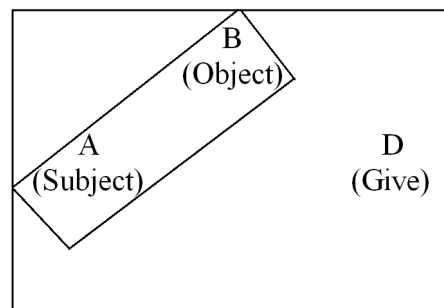


Fig. 6. Frame explanation of example (5)

In sentence (5) the verb is "check out". From figure 6 we can see that the renter is the subject, the house is the object, and there is only one more adverbial, which is the lessor.

6. *Lao Liu refunded Xiao Liu his deposit.*

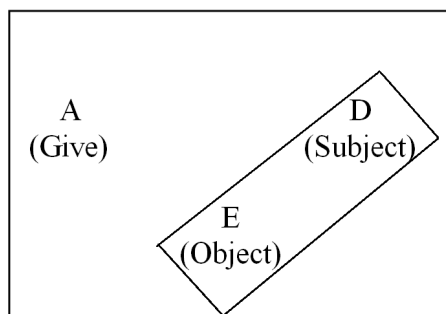


Fig. 7. Frame explanation of example (6)

From figure 7 we can clearly see that, when the verb is “refund”, there are only three main factors, the first one is the subject, which is the lessor here, the object is the fee, and the renter has become the adverbial of this sentence.

It is well known that the syntactic perspective generally depends on the characteristics of the verb. It is generally believed that verbs are the core of a sentence, and the concept of the verb itself determines its own semantic frame and verbs mean events. But more often the activated semantic frame is more realistic because of conceptual metaphors. So the syntactic perspective of example sentence (1) is the renter Xiao Liu and the house. And so on, we can find that the choice of different verbs, such as rent out, rent, charge, pay and refund, will in due course affect the changes of perspective of the subject and the object of the sentence. In example (2) by choosing the verb “rent out” in the sentence will shift the syntactic perspective from the renter and the house to the lessor and the house, but the renter will become an indirect language. When using the verb “charge”, the lessor and the renter are placed in the syntactic perspective of the subject and the object respectively, and the fee is introduced as indirect object (example 3). Example (4) the verb is “pay”, which made the renter and the fee perspective to be assigned as the subject and the object, and the lessor as the indirect object. In example (5) and example (6) although the structural syntaxes are similar to example (1) and example (2), but the verbs “check out” and “refund” made the syntactic perspective become blurred, since we should take into account not only verbs, but also other factors, such as when Xiao Liu as the subject, then the perspective of the renter and the house should

be assigned as the subject and the object respectively.

The six pictures above also show that the syntactic perspective of the verbs rent and pay is the renter, the syntactic perspective of the verbs rent out and charge is the lessor, however, although in Chinese the verbs of check out and refund are the same (退房, 退押金), but because of its relationship with the subject and the object makes their usages differ from each other, therefore we can say that the syntactic perspective of the verb check out is the renter, and the syntactic perspective of the verb refund is the lessor. It is worth mentioning that some pictures not only mark the subject and the object, but also mark some of the prepositions used as adverbials, which exactly is the difference between the frame theory and the subject and background theory, which highlights the original, seeming not so important characteristics and elements of the adverbial.

Conclusion. Different verbs activate different cognitive frames, Fillmore thinks that understanding a language means "understanding and recognizing a large number of frames and understanding which language choices are associated with them." In other words, words in a language and even specific grammatical structures are associated with various frames in the memory of the language user and even the learner. Thus, mastering the concept of frame has considerable benefits in foreign language teaching and in learning a second foreign language.

References

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