Frame-Evoking Verbs in Mandarin Chinese:
A Case Study of *WAN*, *NONG*, and *GAO* in the [V+NP] Construction

Student: Mingxian Yu   Advisor: Prof. Mei-Chun Liu

Graduate Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics
National Chiao Tung University

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate the frame semantics of three frame-evoking Mandarin verbs, including *WAN*, *NONG*, and *GAO*, in the [V+NP] construction. The thesis tries to avoid following the old fashion on the lexical semantic study, so it retrieves data from the Sinica Corpus and discusses some cases in which traditional lexical semantic studies took on the V-O pattern. Moreover, it follows the most popular Construction Grammar to demonstrate the constructional interpretation of the [V+NP] construction that these three verbs embedded. Consequently, comparing with the traditional approach applied in this field, immense progress made by Construction Grammar is beyond our expectation.

First of all, this thesis gathers some background knowledge about the frame semantics, and then adapts Construction Grammar on the frame semantic study of [V+NP]. Since, as far as these three verbal predicates are concerned, the object-NPs bear quite a few semantic types in the semantic domain, it is impossible for human beings to remember all meanings of each V-O pattern. That is, there are not enough neurons in our brain to deal with all of the linguistic noise. Therefore, when we use the frame-oriented verbal predicate to set a frame, we can easily acquire the semantic denotation hidden in the opaque episode undertaken. Namely, the form-meaning composition provides a proper sense for the construction *per se*. Hence, the semantic features are easily to be acquired.

Second, this thesis also compares the traditional lexical semantic studies with the approach of Construction Grammar. We can find that the semantic description of the V-O pattern in the old fashion is not convincing, because object-NPs are with diverse semantic types, such as airplanes, women, Taiwan Independence, unification and so on. They are not just combined with *GAO* 'do/make' and then render a proper reading for the V-O pattern. Besides, the sense of the opaque event would not be the combination of the derivational parts of the V-O pattern. In consequence, we suggest that only Construction Grammar can demonstrate the most elaborate constructional interpretation inferred from the compositionality of the syntactic form and the semantic frame.

Third, on the base of Construction Grammar, this thesis not only uses metalanguage to interpret the vague event, but also retrieves the semantic components from the whole construction. In other words, this thesis postulates: although these three verbs are not full

fledged pro-verbs in some cases, they behave like pro-verbs that they are 'super-lexical' morphemes and act differently from other predicates which just render a situation type for the event. For example, the frame-evoking verbs may change the situation type of an activity into a resultative state, or imply that the speaker takes business as an informal event in a rather pejorative tone. Accordingly, these verbs are probably to take over some verbs with the identical semantic features in a certain context.

Lastly, even though there are bunches of merits in Construction Grammar, we may not read an ambiguous pattern in a context. However, Qualia Structure has a killer-usage to distinguish the ambiguity undertaken in the [V+NP] construction. Since there are four idiosyncratic qualia roles that can be used to determine the main idea of the object-NP, then we can easily decipher the encoded reading of the construction.