

L114: Coursework II (graded)

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1 The frame semantics of “commit” and “commitment”

The meaning of “commit” concerns a core meaning of agreeing to an arrangement permanently. Consider the following occurrences of “commit”:

- **1a.** *With an auction, you’ve got to be certain that at least two buyers are there who can commit themselves.*
- **1b.** *As always with the Provisional IRA when they commit these acts the information they gave was erroneous.*
- **1c.** *The group will still commit another 200m to the UK unit this year, group chairman Li Ka-Shing said.*
- **1d.** *Following the decision to commit US ground-based forces, estimates as to the numbers which might ultimately be deployed rose quickly.*
- **1e.** *At the Bradford Conference it attempted (unsuccessfully) to commit the ILP to the Organization of revolutionary militancy in the working class.*
- **1f.** *This was impressive, showing considerable commitment on the part of the voluntary members and a high level of financial responsibility among the branches.*
- **1g.** *The resources devoted to this priority have been meagre, despite a strong commitment to training from teachers, LEAs, staff of higher education, HMI and the DES itself.*

Other senses exist (and some may not have been covered here; you can consider these too in this coursework). Different aspects (frames) of the agreement can be identified if we look at which logical participants in events and situations are present in each occurrence of “commit” or “commitment”, generalising across noun and verb. Your task in this exercise is to explore groups of “commit” and “commitment” occurrences (which you are free to gather via BNC search or any other mean) according to these participants, in such a way as to illuminate aspects of the meaning of the two words. Constructing meaning in this way is called “frame semantics”. Compare the article about “risk” by Fillmore and Atkins.

Your tasks in detail:

- Group the sentences involving the verb *commit* and noun *commitment* above (and your own sentences, if you choose to do so) into clusters according to their senses and frames.
- Identify and describe the logical participants in the events and situations in the sentences. Which semantic restrictions on the participants can you identify?
- The novelty of FrameNet is that it can generalise semantic frames across lexical items. Describe the semantic surrounding of the frames you determined above – are there related frames that are connected to your frames in any systematic way? You may consider the sentences below (and/or sentences of your own choosing). The task is to find similar situations

with similar participants, so that they can be fitted into one of your frames above, or into a similar related frame.

- Can you think of other lexicalisations for your frames?
 - **2a.** *They promise solemnly to retire forever if it ever happens.*
 - **2b.** *We undertake to repay the loan from our income over a specified period of time.*
 - **2c.** *We cannot go back on this pledge, Mr Benn said.*
 - **2d.** *They said that unless he backed out of the deal, they'd kill him.*
- Report your results on 3 pages
- Submission: Tuesday Nov 18, 12noon.