

The Representation of Complex Telic Predicates in Wordnets: the Case of Lexical-Conceptual Structure Deficitary Verbs

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Abstract. This paper has a twofold aim: (i) to point out that telicity is both a lexical and a compositional semantic feature; (ii) to propose a straightforward solution to represent lexical telicity in wordnets-like computational lexica. The approach presented here subsumes the basic idea that lexicon is not a repository of idiosyncrasies. It is rather organized following a few general (universal or parametrical) constraints. In this context, despite the fact that the paper is mainly concerned with Portuguese, cross-linguistic generalizations can be captured, on the basis of a contrastive examination of data. The analysis focus on the behavior of complex telic predicates, in particular those which are deficitary with regard to their lexical-conceptual structure. In order to represent appropriately such predicates in wordnets, the specification of information regarding semantic restrictions, within the corresponding synsets, is proposed as well as a telic state relation.

1 Introduction

Telicity is mostly considered a compositional property of meaning. This paper attempts to make evident it is also a lexical feature and, as a consequence, it has to be represented in the lexicon. A concrete proposal to encode telic information of complex predicates in wordnets is provided.

This proposal emerges from the need of representing the predicates referred to in the Portuguese WordNet (WordNet.PT), which is being developed in the EuroWordNet framework.

From an empirical point of view, the work presented here mainly deals with complex telic predicates, in particular with those which involve lexical-conceptual structure (LCS) deficitary verbs, in the sense defined in previous work (cf. [4] and [5]).

The paper is divided in three main sections: the first one briefly describes the EuroWordNet model; the second one discusses the lexical-conceptual structure (in the sense of [7]) of complex predicates on the basis of a semantics of events, arguing for the lexical nature of telicity, and adduces evidences supporting the idea that some verbs define a deficitary lexical-conceptual structure; finally, the third main section presents an integrated proposal to encode LCS deficitary verbs and their troponyms in wordnets.