

Application of Frame Semantics to Teaching *Seeing* and *Hearing* Vocabulary to Iranian EFL Learners

Seyed Hamzeh Mousavi¹, Mohammad Amouzadeh², & Vali Rezaei³

¹Corresponding author, University of Isfahan, mousavi.hamzeh@gmail.com

²University of Isfahan, amouzadeh@yahoo.com

³University of Isfahan, vali.rezai@fgn.ui.ac.ir

Received: 27/09/2014

Accepted: 18/03/2015

Abstract

A term in one language rarely has an absolute synonymous meaning in the same language; besides, it rarely has an equivalent meaning in an L2. English synonyms of *seeing* and *hearing* are particularly grammatically and semantically different. Frame semantics is a good tool for discovering differences between synonymous words in L2 and differences between supposed L1 and L2 equivalents. Vocabulary teaching based on synonymous or bilingual equivalents has confused EFL Iranian students. Frame semantics has shown to improve L2 comprehension of EFL learners. Hence, teachers are recommended to either explain the meaning of each word or provide them with synonyms and bilingual equivalents together with complementary explanations concerning the differences between the words.

Keywords: Frame Semantics; Vocabulary; EFL Learners; Frames

1. Introduction

The first written records of an L2 vocabulary learning dates back to the second century BC, describing the Greek rhetoric studies to the Roman children (Schmitt, 2000). Vocabulary learning has remained an important part of learning an L2 until today.

Native speakers of a language know the meaning of each word based on their previous experiences, that is, their encyclopedic knowledge (Evans & Green, 2006), whereas those learning an L2 might actually rely on their L1 knowledge. For example, Cienki (2007) distinguishes between *write* in English and the word *kaku* in Japanese based on frame semantics. He argues that they are considered synonymous in the context of translation, but different in the context of cultural meaning, leading to different frames within frame semantics. He concludes that if the question *What did you write?* is asked, the answer would be limited to linguistic communication in English, whereas a broader meaning may be considered in Japanese.

L2 vocabulary must be considered both in its semantic and cultural contexts. Considerably, all objects, feelings, and events are not only part of the L2,

but they are also part of the L2 culture. There are three levels of compatibility between L1 and L2 vocabulary: (i) translational equivalence exists, (ii) concepts are slightly different, (iii) no equivalent concepts exist in the L1. For example, *go* in English and *gehen* (“go”) in German are somehow equivalent. The word *friend* (“friend,” “acquaintance”) in English and *Freund* (“friend”) are slightly different. Lastly, *Torschlusspanik* (“being fearful of being left alone and having to live alone at an old age”) falls within the third category (Aztler, 2011).

Xu and Li (2011) observed that the lack of cultural linguistic contexts among the Chinese EFL students lead to inappropriate vocabulary utilization. They found that frame semantics contributed to vocabulary expansion, memory retention, and recall.

To our best knowledge, almost no studies have been performed yet to put forward a model for teaching English vocabulary to Iranian EFL learners based on frame semantics. This research introduces a frame semantics model that may be used in teaching English vocabulary to Iranian learners. Follow-up study is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of this teaching technique in the EFL classrooms in Iran. This model is a theoretical model suggested to the Iranian EFL teachers, and it is not based on classroom experiments. So, in a further research, the effects of using such a model in EFL classrooms can be assessed. The results of using a model based on frame semantics in previous research have been encouraging, and show that it can be used for teaching vocabulary more effectively, so that students can use the vocabulary based on a secondarily provided background knowledge.

2. Theoretical Framework

The first half of this section provides a brief overview of frame semantics; the second half refers to *perception* frame in which the verbs related to *sight* and *hearing* senses are being defined.

2.1 Frame Semantics

The frame semantics theory was introduced into linguistics by Charles Fillmore during 1970s, within which to configure encyclopedic knowledge behind words (Ungerer & Schmid, 2006). Fillmore (1982) defined frame semantics as:

A particular way of looking at word meanings, as well as a way of characterizing principles for creating new words and phrases for

adding new meanings to words, and for assembling the meaning of elements in a text into the total meaning of the text. (p. 111)¹

Words are not randomly saved in our memory. They are not only organized based on relations within structural semantics, but they are also connected based on experience. For example, a RESTAURENT is not just a place to eat food; it is related to other concepts such as CUSTOMER, WAITER, ORDERING, EATING, and BILL. These concepts are not only connected to the word RESTAURENT by structural semantic relations such as hyponymy, antonymy, and so on, but also by our daily experiences (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

Fillmore and Atkins (1992) illustrate frame semantics using the commercial transaction frame, explaining that this frame requires a person to control or possess something from a second person. This should be based on an agreement together with exchanging a sum of money. The commercial transaction frame includes other concepts such as *buyer*, *seller*, *goods*, and *money*. To indicate how verbs within the *commercial transaction frame* connect to each other, they put forward Table 1:

Table 1. *Semantic and Syntactic Valence (Active Voice) of Verbs From Commercial Transaction Frame*

	Buyer	Seller	Goods	Money
BUY	subj	(from)	D-obj	(for)
SEE	(to)	subj	D-obj	(for)
CHARGE	(I-obj)	subj	(for)	D-obj
SPEND	subj	null	for/on	D-obj
PAY	subj	[I-obj]	[for]	D-obj
PAY	subj	(to)	for	D-obj
COST	(I-obj)	null	subj	D-obj

Note. Adapted from “Toward a frame-based lexicon: The semantics of RISK and its neighbors” by C. J. Fillmore & B. T. Atkins (1992). In A. Lehrer & K. Eva (Eds.), *Frames, fields and contrast: New essays in semantics and lexical organization* (p. 79).

Table 1 shows how words such as *buy*, *sell*, and *spend* are defined only via intricate differences between frame elements such as *buyer*, *seller*, and *goods*. So, for the verb *buy*, *buyer* is the subject, and for the verb *sell*, *seller* is the subject. In *buy*, *buyer* gains the *goods* and loses *money*, whereas for *sell*, *seller* gains *money* and loses *goods*.

Lastly, Fillmore (1982) demonstrates how frame semantics can aid us in differentiating contrasts between synonymous words. For instance, the words *shore* and *coast* are considered to be synonymous; however, within frame semantics, they

¹By the word *frame*, he means all other previously known terms such as *schema*, *script*, *scenario*, *ideational scaffolding*, *cognitive model*, or *folk theory*.

are different because a person that is at the deck of a ship may say *We are close to the shore*, and a person that is on land may say *This is the coast of France*.

2.2 Perception Frame

The *FrameNet* Website (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/>) describes *perception* frame as follows:

A perceiver perceives a phenomenon. The general perception frame is an inherited background to all frames that have to do with some sentient being responding to changes in the environment, independently of the sensory modalities. The inheriting frames may specify the modalities (*see, hear, taste, smell*), or may emphasize the experiences or acts of the perceiver (*peek, eavesdrop*), or the properties of the perceived phenomenon (*clank, rattle, thump*). (2001)

Meaning differences between synonymous words come about, when English speakers focus on one of frame elements. For instance, *see* is different from *watch* because in expressing the latter, we more focus on the phenomenon being perceived.

Additionally, *FrameNet* introduces two kinds of *perception* frames: perception-experience and perception-active. The former explains that perceivers do not intent to perceive the phenomenon, that is, perceiver is passive, whereas the latter explains that perceivers are intentionally perceiving something. As an illustration, *see* is perception-experience, and *look at* represents perceiver-agentive.

This paper analyzes the English vocabulary relating to *hearing* and *sight* senses. Baker (1999) researched words that are connected to *sight*. His study concerns the English word *see* and is a good source for research about the *sight* within frame semantics. He viewed this verb cross-linguistically and showed that culture does cause appearance of various frames within different languages.

For every frame, additional frame elements are defined. For perception-experience frame, frame elements such as perceiver-passive, phenomenon, and body-part are recognized. So, in *I heard the sound of radio*, the verb *hear* relates to a perceiver who passively perceives the sound of the radio. However, in *I listen to the radio*, the perceiver actively perceives the sound of the radio. This is an example of how lexica within frame semantics are differentiated from each other based on our previous experiences.

Each word can be classified in connections with synonymy or polysemy, leading to different definition frames. For instance, *see* may either be compared to

behold, *look*, and *observe* or be defined within not only perception-experience frame, but also *recognize*, *visit*, and *accompany* frames.

Synonyms and L2 equivalents have only a few frame elements in common. For instance, the words *see* and *watch* are partially synonymous with regard to the body-part, whereas they are different concerning the phenomena being perceived. In the next section, this paper expands on the absolute use of synonyms, and the confusion it creates for the Iranian EFL students. The modification of the English language teaching methodologies may prove beneficial.

3. Methodology

The method described here is a simple qualitative method defined in conjunction with the frame semantics theory. In stage 1, words related to *sight* and *hearing* senses a compared and then classified into two groups. For this purpose, all the synonyms of the English words *hear* and *see* were collected according to thesaurus dictionaries. Within this preliminary stage, 19 words were considered to be synonymous with *see* and ten words with *hear*.

In stage 2, verbs were classified based on a rough estimate of the number of elements they seem to have in common. For example, *glance* and *glimpse* seem to have more elements in common compared to other synonymous words. Then, the Persian equivalents of these verbs were looked up in the bilingual dictionary *Hezareh* (2005). For each of these verbs, a set of examples were found in English and Persian Websites, so that we managed to discover the relevant frame elements.

In stage 3, the English and Persian equivalents were compared. The equivalence of these words were shown to be partial because they had some different frame elements. Within these languages, the two words that had the most number of frame elements in common were considered to be equivalents. If the number of different elements exceeded the number of similar ones, the supposed words were classified as words without equivalence.

English vocabulary teaching methods were observed in five Iranian EFL classes. This observation gave us the idea of where to start our research. In other words, this was merely for discovering the teaching methods. We observed that the teachers mostly considered different words as synonymous if they wanted to clarify meanings using the L1. or different words as equivalents if they desired to clarify meanings using an L2. Both of these teaching methods were criticized for being misleading.

Frame semantics was considered as the criterion of our analysis. The frame elements for English words were extracted from *FrameNet* Website, whereas we discovered the frame elements for the Persian words based on analyzing samples of

Persian sentences or the intuitions about our daily experiences. Consequently, we utilized frame semantics and showed that neither equivalents nor synonyms are appropriate methods of teaching vocabulary.

Frame semantics is a theory that describes the effects of encyclopedic knowledge on definitions of words. This assists us in understanding how words in a culture might wrongly be used or interpreted within a different culture based on L1 experiences. It enables us to include an error analysis of EFL learners, as the errors might be due to a structure composed out of two different frames in L1 and L2 because an EFL student may consider them the same.

Frame semantics aids us in developing our teaching model. This model includes determination of both common and different frame elements of two synonymous or equivalent words. This means that common elements are the motivation behind using synonyms or equivalents in teaching vocabulary. In fact, teachers have actually ignored frame elements that are different. Our model suggests that it is possible to bridge the gap between two synonyms or two equivalent words.

4. Results

Our results refer to the *perception* frame and those of *sight* and *hearing* senses. First, we analyze *sight*, and then we elaborate on *hearing*.

4.1 Sight

For the verb *see*, the following equivalents are given in *Hezareh English-Persian Dictionary*:

- 1) *see* (vt): 1. *didan* 2. *didan*; *tamafa: kardan*; *mofa:hede kardan*

These are just examples of synonyms mentioned in (1). This list continues to include polysemous cases, as well. Verbs related to *sight* in English are *see*, *watch*, *notice*, *spot*, *witness*, *glimpse*, *catch*, *view*, *stare*, *peer*, *peep*, *peek*, *observe*, *behold*, *look*, *glance*, *gaze*, *gawk*, *gape*, and *eye*. In Persian, these verbs are *didan*, *nega:h kardan*, *mofa:hede kardan*, *mola:heze kardan*, *negaristan*, *xire fodan*, *nega:h anda:xtan*, *nazar anda:xtan*, *did zadan*, and *royat kardan*.

In English, the verb *see* is defined within perception-experience frame, that is, the person is an observing witness by the virtue of his or her presence alone. This is true about *didan* in Persian in which the observers see something unintentionally, and that is why they are called perceiver-passive. For instance, *I saw John this morning* indicates that perceiver is passive similar to *didan*; however, there are cases in which *didan* can be used to indicate a perceiver-agentive, as well that is illustrated in (2):

- 2) *Da:ram film mibinam.*

have film see-1st person-singular

I am watching a movie.

The word *didan* in example (2) is translated into *watch* that is a perceiver-agentive. This means that *see* is not mapped completely into *didan* in Persian. In Persian *film tama:fa: kardan* (“watch a movie”) is a bit different from *film didan* (“see a movie”) because the former is formally indicating an intentional action, whereas the latter is informally showing a random action that is being performed unintentionally.

In an Iranian EFL classroom, the students made errors in structures such as *see a movie*, *see a soccer match*, and so on. Frame semantics opens up the doors for finding a way of teaching *see*. In classroom, the EFL teacher needs to understand and point out to his or her students that *see*, in English, needs a person who unintentionally sees something and cannot be used for activities that require attention.

The verb *watch* in an English-Persian dictionary is shown in (3):

- 3) *watch* (vi, vt): *tama:fa: kardan*; *nega:h kardan*

In contrast to *see*, the perceiver in the verb *watch* has an agentive role. This is similar to *tama:fa: kardan* that is formally used to show an intention behind an action. Furthermore, *watch* is used to speak about something that is moving; although TV is not moving, there are moving things within it. This means that the features of the perceived phenomenon are important in classifying a scene as being watched, and here the event pertains to a moving phenomenon in English.

Whereas *watch* in English is used for many activities, such as *watching football* or *TV*, the terms used for *observers* differ altogether. For instance, observers who watch TV are called *viewers*, and if they are watching football at the stadium, they are called *fans*. If perceivers see an accident, for example, they are called *onlookers* or *bystanders*. In Persian, however, those who watch TV are called *binandeh* (literally, *seers*, meaning “viewers”); those who watch a match at the stadium are called *tama:fa:-gar* or *tama:fa-tfi* (literally, *watchers*, meaning “fans”); and those who see an accident are called *fa:hedin* (literally, *observers*, meaning “bystanders” or “onlookers”).

For the verb *notice*, the following equivalents are provided:

- 4) *notice* (vi, vt): *didan (ke)*; *motavadze fodan*; *fahmidan (ke)*

Although *notice* is related to viewing something, it is within the frame of becoming-aware because comprehending what you look at is very important. Here, the cognizer will recognize a phenomenon or topic. On the other hand, *didan (ke)* in

the example *didam ke nemidune mozu ro avaz kardam* (*I understood that he doesn't know about the subject, so I changed the topic*), here notice that *didam ke* literally equals *see that*. The verb *didam* in Persian is polysemous, and one of the frames related to this verb is the becoming-aware frame. Using *motavadze fodan* (“becoming aware”) and *fahmidan ke* (“understand that”) does not indicate to L2 learners that the process of becoming aware has been together with seeing something².

For the verb *spot*, an English-Persian dictionary gives the following equivalents:

- 5) *spot* (vt): *peyda: kardan; didan; tafxis da:dan; fahmidan; fena:xtan*

In English, *spot* is being defined as “to see or notice a person or a thing, especially suddenly or when it is not easy to do so,” for example *I finally spotted my friend in the crowd*. This specific meaning is not classified in Persian, so a part of the meaning is missing when we rely solely on a bilingual dictionary. For this purpose, a monolingual dictionary may provide a better understanding because the becoming-aware frame of reference comes true only when a person looks carefully at somebody or something—here the cognizer is called *the spotter*. For example, *a talent spotter* is a person who visits clubs and theaters looking for new performers. The verb *peyda: kardan* (“find”) is too general; *didan* (“see”) can be used in the becoming-aware frame; however, it does not specify the fact that perceivers or cognizers are looking for a special person or thing. The word *tafxis da:dan* (“recognize”) is about distinguishing something from something else and not trying to look at a scene carefully to find something. *Fahmidan* (“understand”) and *fena:xtan* (“know”) do not include searching for something through a body-part (i.e., the eyes).

The verb *witness* is shown in an English-Persian dictionary as follows:

- 6) *witness* (vt): *fa:hede . . . budan*

This verb focuses more on a perception. It may be a car accident or commission of a(n) (il)legal deed. The phenomenon in this case is a criminal scene or an accident, which is clear in English. In Persian, *fa:hed* (“witness”) is a person who sees a crime or an accident. Both are defined within the perception-experience frame, which requires person being present and seeing the deed.

²You can also say in English, “I saw/became aware/perceived/sensed that he doesn't know about the subject, . . .”

The verbs *glimpse* and *glance* in an English-Persian dictionary are shown in (7) and (8):

- 7) *glimpse* (vt): *nazari anda:xtan be; nega:hi kardan be; nega:he sari anda:xtan be; nega:hi edzma:li kardan be*
- 8) *glance* (vt): *nazari anda:xtan; nega:hi anda:xtan; neha:he sari?i anda:xtan*

This verb is defined in the punctual-perception frame in which the perceiver briefly perceives a phenomenon often resulting in partial or uncertain perception (*FrameNet*, 2001). In Persian, we need a combination of nouns and verbs to reconstruct such a meaning, so that (-i) in *nazar-i* shows the brevity of perception. The combination *nazar-i andaxtan* (literally, *look a fall*) shows that, in Persian, *falling* is a punctual event and that is why it is used with *a look*. The phrase *nega:he sari anda:xtan be* (literally, *look a quick fall to*) includes a brief look at something. Lastly, in *nega:hi edzma:li kardan be* (literally, *look-a brief do to*), the element *brief* clarifies the meaning of punctuality. Therefore, the strategy for constructing such a structure involves using phrases that include the complete description of the meaning.

Similarly, *glance* is defined within the punctual-perception frame; however, it is different from *glimpse*. When you *glance* at something, you quickly look at it and then look away. For example, when you are talking to somebody and you get bored, you may glance at your watch and then quickly look at the person you are talking to because you do not want to be rude. *Glancing* is an intentional activity. On the contrary, *glimpse* is seeing something quickly and unintentionally. For example, you might *catch the glimpse of a tiger in a jungle*. It means seeing the tiger briefly, but perhaps not completely. Considering this difference, all the mentioned equivalents in English are denoting *glance*, but not *glimpse*.

The verb *look at*, *behold* and *view* in an English-Persian dictionary are reiterated as in (9), (10) and (11):

- 9) *look at* (vi): *nega:h kardan; negaristan; nega:hi kardan be; nazari anda:xtan be*
- 10) *behold* [literary]: *negaristan; tama:fa: kardan; neza:re kardan*
- 11) *view* (vt): [formal] (i) *talaqi kardan; didan; nega:h kardan be; (ii) tama:fa: kardan; moja:hede kardan; nega:h kardan be; (iii) [house] ba:zdid kardan az; didan kardan az; (iv) televiziyun tama:fa: kardan*

We *see* everything that catches our eyes; we *look at* something when we intentionally cast our eyes upon something; we *behold* something when we look with attention; we *view* something when we survey it (Trusler, 1766). The level of

attention goes up more and more in the following order: *see*, *look at*, *behold*, and *view*. The verb *see* equals *didan*; *look at* equals *nega:h kardan be*; however, *behold* from the literary point of view is close to *negaristan* with less attention; and for the verb *view*, no exact equivalent can be found.

Trusler (1766) goes on mentioning that *beholding* is with wonder and attention, whereas *viewing* is with care and exactness. In Persian, *negaristan* can have the same role as *behold*, but for a higher degree of attention and focus on discovering phenomenon, no exact equivalent can be found; so, regarding this word, an empty space is a more likely choice.

The verbs *stare*, *gaze*, *gape*, *peer* and *glare* in an English-Persian dictionary come as follows

- 12) *stare* (vi): *xire fodan*; *zol zadan*; (*kasi*) *ma:taf bordan*
- 13) *gaze* (vi): *zol zadan*; *xire fodan*; *nega:h kardan*
- 14) *gape* (vi): (*az ta'adzob*) *daha:ne kasi baz ma:ndan*; *angoft be daha:n heyra:n ma:ndan*; *zol zadan*; *xire fodan*; *kasi ma:taf bordan*
- 15) *peer* (vi): *ba: deqat nega:h kardan*; *daqiq fodan*; *xire fodan*
- 16) *glare* (vi): *ba: asaba:niat nega:h kardan*; *xafmgin nega:h kardan*; *nega:he tonde anda:xtan*; *ba: xofunat nega:h kardan*
- 17) *gawk* (vi): *ber-o ber nega:h kardan*; *ma:taf bordan*

Whereas *stare* and *gaze* are defined as “to look at somebody or something for a long time,” Trusler (1766) believes that there is a great difference between them: *Staring* implies looking with wonder and impudence, *gazing* with wonder and respect. He further believes that “the impudence of some fellows, is so great that, they will *stare*, a modest woman, out of countenance” (p. 97). However, “when our Saviour first appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection; they *gazed* on him, with astonishment and rapture” (p. 97). In Persian, *xire fodan* includes a meaning of wonder and respect, whereas *zol zadan* has a negative meaning of impudence. Therefore, it seems that *stare* is close in meaning to *zol zadan* and *gaze* close to *xire fodan*. The level of negativity can increase in Persian because *ber-o ber nega:h kardan* includes the meaning of wonder and stupidity; this, of course, is similar to *gawk* that means “stare at somebody or something in a rude or stupid way.” For *gape*, it is only possible to find phrases such as (*az ta'adzob*) *daha:ne kasi baz ma:ndan* (literally, *from wonder, his or her mouth is wide open*) or *angoft be daha:n heyra:n ma:ndan* (literally, *he confused while his or her finger is in his or her mouth*).

Peer is “looking carefully at something, especially when not seeing it clearly.” This kind of looking occurs together with attention to find out something. No equivalents can be found in Persian for this word. Phrases such as *ba: deqat nega:h kardan* (literally, *carefully look at something*) can be used instead. *Glare* means “to look at somebody or something angrily for a long time.” This is not categorized in Persian, so phrases can be used, instead. For instance, *ba: asaba:niat nega:h kardan* (literally, *to look at somebody angrily*) is a phrase that explains the meaning of glare.

The verbs *peek* and *peep* in an English-Persian dictionary are shown as follows:

- 18) *peek* (vi): *dozdaki nega:h kardan; zire tfefmi nega:h kardan; did zadan*
 19) *peep* (vi): *dozdaki nega:h kardan; nega:hi anda:xtan; nazari anda:xtan; did zadan; sarak kefidan*

Both are used to mean “looking secretly at something,” *peep* happens quickly and especially through a narrow opening, and *peek* briefly without being seen. The difference between these two verbs is a matter of focus on discovering phenomenon, and the method of looking secretly at something. *Peeping* is related to “looking through a narrow opening or over it,” but *peeking* is “looking at something or somebody from a hidden place.” In Persian, we have to use phrases to explain looking secretly; phrases such as *dozdaki nega:h kardan* (literally, *to look secretly*). Still, the phrases do not show the intended diverse meaning.

The verb *observe* is shown in the following way in an English-Persian dictionary:

- 20) *observe* (vt): *didan; mofa:hede kardan; mola:heze kardan; mota:le?e kardan*

Observe is defined as “an agentive perceiver who looks carefully at something.” Surely, *didan* is not a good equivalent. In fact, *mofa:hede kardan* is a better equivalent for this verb because both are used to indicate looking at a phenomenon with the aim to learn about something. *See* involves using eyes passively, *look* is more about the direction, and *watch* involves the movement of eyes. The Persian equivalent *mola:heze kardan* means “to observe something in order to prove something.”

Inserting some of the most current lexical equivalents in Table 2, some empty spaces might be seen in this table that may be filled only with explanations provided by phrases or sentences:

Table 2. *Presentation of Partial Bilingual Equivalents for Words Related to Sight Sense*

Sight Lexemes		Sight lexemes	
English	Persian	English	Persian
see	didan	look at	nega:h kardan
watch	tama:fa: kardan	notice	×
spot	×	witness	fa:hed budan
glimpse	×	glance	nazar anda:xtan
behold	negaristan	view	×

stare	zol zadan	gaze	xire jodan
gape	×	peer	×
gawk	×	glare	×
peek	×	peep	×
observe	mo ja:hede	×	molaheze
	kardan		kardan

Note. In this table, constructions such as *dozdaki nega:h kardan* are not considered because lexically, it is still *nega:h kardan* and not a new lexeme.

Table 2 shows that there are words related to *sight* and are not categorized in Persian. When reading a novel, nonnative readers may experience difficulties in understanding the exact meaning of the text. Beginner students may find it difficult to distinguish the exact words related to *see* when referring to a bilingual or monolingual dictionary. The same condition might be true about other senses; we continue this section with an analysis of the words related to *hearing*.

4.2 Hearing

The following synonyms are found for the verb *hear*: *overhear, eavesdrop, listen, perceive, catch, tune in, make out, discern, devour, hark, hearken, get wind of, get an earful, be all ears, give an audience to, give ears, lend an ear* and *listen up*. The possible Persian equivalents are *fenidan, guf da:dan, guf kardan, be guf residual, and guf fara: da:dan*. The number of words related to *hearing* are fewer than to the *sight*. In an English-Persian dictionary, the words *hear* and *listen* are given as follows:

21) *hear* (vt): *fenidan*

22) *listen* (vi): *guf da:dan; guf kardan*

The verb *hear* in English is defined within the perception-experience frame. Similarly, *fenidan* in Persian is defined within the same frame. The verb *listen* is different because the listener intentionally listens to something. Both *guf da:dan* and *guf kardan* require an agentive perceiver, but they seem to be delicately different in meaning. The verb *guf da:dan* implies more attention than *guf kardan*, so in a sentence suggesting to someone to listen, the Persian speaker may say, *you must learn guf da:dan and not just guf kardan*. Both of them are actually different from *guf gereftan* because this verb includes performing what the hearer heard—in addition to listening.

The verb *overhear* is shown in an English-Persian dictionary as follows:

23) *overhear* (vt): *etefaqi fenidan; na:xa:ste fenidan; be gufe kesi xordan*

This verb is similar to *hear* in that it is unintentional, but with a higher level of being unintentional. This verb does not exist in Persian, so the dictionary has explained it as “accidentally hearing something,” or “hearing unintentionally.” This

is in contrast to the verb *eavesdrop* in which a person intentionally listens to somebody. The Persian equivalents in an English-Persian dictionary are given as follows:

- 24) *eavesdrop* (vi): *esteraqe sam? kardan*; *guf ista:dan*; *penha:ni guf da:dan*
 25) *listen in* (vi): *penha:ni guf kardan*; *esteraqe sam? kardan*
 26) *wire-tap* (vt): *be moka:lema:te telefonie . . . guf da:dan*; *telephone . . . ra: kontorol kardan*

All of the verbs *eavesdrop*, *listen in*, and *wire-tap* are intentional listening conditions. They are different from the verb *listen* with regard to their performing style, that is, they are done without permission. They are similar to *spying*. The difference is that these verbs appertain to the hearing sense; in other words, they are spying through the hearing sense. For *eavesdrop*, there is a good equivalent in Persian, *esteraqe sam? kardan*. Whereas in *esteraqe sam? kardan*, the kind of eavesdropping is not determined, *fa:l guf ista:dan* is possible, simply by listening secretly, for example, from behind the door.

Wire-tap is completely different because it is listening secretly to a telephone conversation; nevertheless, this is not categorized in Persian, and it is explained in the dictionary, for example, *be moka:lema:te telefonie . . . guf da:dan* literally is *listen to telephone conversations secretly*.

The English-Persian dictionary translates the word *catch* as follows:

- 27) *catch* (vt): *fahmidan*; *motavadze fodan*; *daryaftan*; *dark kardan*; *fenidan*

This verb is defined within *Oxford Dictionary* as “to hear or understand something,” using the following example: *I didn’t quite catch what you said*. It indicates that this verb is perceived through cognition and hearing. Persian has no equivalent. Neither *fahmidan* (“understand”), nor *fenidan* (“hear”) are appropriate equivalents for the verb *catch*. Also, there is no equivalent in Persian for the verbs *discern* and *make out*:

- 28) *discern* (vt): *didan*; *mofa:hede kardan*; *tafxis da:dan*; *tamiz da:dan*; *ra:h bordan be*; *pey bordan be*; *daryaftan*; *dark kardan*; *fahmidan*
 29) *make out* (vt): *be zahmat didan*; *be zahmat sar dar a:vardan*

Oxford Dictionary defines *discern* as “to see or hear something, but not very clearly.” *Make out* is defined as “to manage to see somebody or something; to read or hear something.” The Persian equivalents do not cover the whole meaning and are sometimes related to only a portion of meaning. This is true about *make out* that is not covered by Persian words.

The English-Persian dictionary, *Hezareh*, defines the verbs *hark* and *hearken* as follows:

30) *hark* (vi): [literary] *guf da:dan*; *guf fara: da:dan*

31) *hearken* (vi): [old use]: *guf fara: da:dan (be)*; *niyufidan*

The verb *hark* is archaic and used in an imperative form to order somebody to listen to something. *Hezareh* also mentions that *hark* is used in a literary form. The Persian equivalents can be used in variety of sentences, including imperative forms, and they are not categorized as archaic. On the other hand, *hearken* is archaic, but it is different from *hark* because it can be used in all grammatical structures, including imperative forms. Among the two equivalents, the verb *niyufidan* is more appropriate because it is archaic. The empty spaces in Table 3 indicate that there were found no lexical equivalents for the items displayed:

Table 3. *Presentation of Partial Bilingual Equivalents for Words Related to Hearing Sense*

Hearing Lexemes		Hearing Lexemes	
English	Persian	English	Persian
hear	jenidan	listen in	×
listen	guf kardan	wire-tap	×
×	guf da:dan	discern	×
overhear	×	make out	×
eavesdrop	esteraqe sam	hark	×
	kardan		
hearken	njufidan		

For the English word of *hearing*, no lexical or compound equivalents were found in Persian. That is why lots of blocks are empty.

5. Discussion

As the previous section showed, many words in English are not grammatically or semantically categorized in Persian. Also, they might be grammatically incompatible for being used in a special construction that is not defined in L1. They might be semantically incompatible because the L2 words might be used for a special look at some event that is not being categorized in L1. Whatsoever, this incompatibility leads to the wrongful vocabulary applications. Consequently, in vocabulary teaching and in reading comprehension, providing a bulk of synonyms for every word confuses EFL learners because each new synonymous word is different from one another both grammatically and semantically.

This incompatibility and lack of bilingual exposure to L2s result in inappropriate linguistic expressions. This is similar to what Xu and Li (2011) found

in Chinese students learning the English language. Our data is not, however, a mere consideration of equivalents; they include the use of synonyms in an L2, as well. Furthermore, we are about to show that mere use of both equivalents and synonyms leads to inappropriate linguistic expressions.

On the other hand, unlike Aztler (2011), who has a quantitative look at teaching vocabulary based on frame semantics, our method is a qualitative one. It tries theoretically to bridge the incompatibility gap between synonyms in L2 or equivalent words in L1. In Aztler's research, statistical issues connected the data and analysis together. Whereas, in our research, the frame semantics itself guarantees the use of synonyms or equivalent words.

Observing five reading-based general English teaching classes, two methods were used to teach the new vocabulary in the classroom. First, the teachers used English synonyms to introduce the meaning of new words. Second, they used Persian equivalents to define the new words. Both of these methods may be problematic in an L2 because there are neither absolute synonyms nor absolute equivalents. Furthermore, it was observed that the students learned a new lesson completely, but still were unable to answer the vocabulary tests. We suggest that although students learn the meaning of new words, they experience problems with frames of reference. They do not have the same experience that English speakers have when they use the L2 vocabulary. We believe that this experience should be provided to EFL students via simulated real contexts and detailed explanations.

Using synonyms might cause problems for L2 learners because L1 learners might consider synonymous words like a mathematical equation of A equals B; however, this absolute synonymy is rarely seen in languages. For example, in classroom, the meaning of *watch* might be expressed by partial synonyms such as *look at* and *see*, without expressing the differences. The L2 learner might consider these three words identical, although they are de facto different grammatically and semantically.

Using equivalents from the L1 to express the meaning of the L2 has the problem of different categorizations. For example, if we say that *watch* equals *tama:fa: kardan* and *see* means *didan*, then, in Persian, we have the construction *da:ram film mibinam*, meaning "I am seeing a movie." The L2 learner uses this strategy to construct grammatically and semantically erroneous constructions. This might be true about the words *gaze* and *stare* that are semantically different in English, but in Persian, they are considered to have the same equivalent. When a language lacks its equivalent in another language, the instructor may explain the meaning with context phrases and synonyms.

To solve the problems described in the results section, we suggest applying frame semantics upon teaching vocabulary. This method requires the general knowledge of synonyms in their linguistic-cultural complex on the part of EFL teachers. For instance, teachers need to explain that *watch* and *see* are different in English in that *see* needs a passive perceiver, whereas *watch* needs an agentive perceiver. Furthermore, in some perceptual experiences, the verb *watch* is used because it involves intentional perception. Consequently, in the example of a football match, fans *watch* it and not *see* or *look at* it.

To give but one example, the following paragraph may be analyzed in the classroom:

- Ekman wanted to know something else. Can a face show that a person is not telling the truth? Ekman did some experiments. In one experiment, he used a group of nurses. He asked them to watch a movie. Then he divided the nurses into two groups. He asked the first group to describe the movie accurately. Then he asked the second group to lie about the movie. Ekman filmed both groups. (See Mackey, 2010, p. 12)

In the third line, the verb *watch* is used. What Ekman wants and what nurses did can be categorized correctly only if the EFL learner knows that *watch* is different from *see*. The teacher should also put forward the features of the movie that they have watched.

Based on the above example, what are crucial in teaching the word *watch* are grammatical and semantic facts that are being internalized in the mind of a native speaker. The verb *watch* needs a structurally special perceived element:

- NP (animate) + *watch* + NP (*movie, TV, football, volleyball, . . .*)
- NP (animate) + *see* + NP (generally everything)

Here, we have shown that object is one of the most important factors in the selection of the right verb. Here, *TV* corresponds with *watch* in English. In fact, our background knowledge is important in constructing cognitively meaningful relationships.

Features of subject are important in the proper verbs selection, as well. In regard to a subject, the structural elements would be explained as follows:

- NP (agentive, intentionally, attention, low goal-oriented) + *watch* + NP
- NP (passive, unintentionally, no attention, low goal oriented) + *see* + NP

All in all, subject and object features in selecting the verb are part of our background knowledge about words and phrases.

How can EFL teachers acquire the required linguistic-cultural awareness? The free Website *English FrameNet* explains in details the experiences behind each word in English. This Website describes words within their domains. For example, *hearing* and *sight* senses are defined within the *perception* frame of reference. This frame is divided into two separate domains: perception-experience and perception-active. Each frame is divided in a series of frame elements that are compared for the words categorized under a special frame.

We believe that EFL teachers may derive linguistic-cultural awareness from this Website for the purpose of teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. For instance, a teacher finds the word *shore* and can explain it in relation to the synonyms such as *beach* or *coast*. The L2 learner would not know that these words are not used interchangeably unless they knew that *shore* is what we can see within the sea and *coast* is what we see in land. Similarly, professional readers and teachers are suggested to analyze words of an L2 if they are determined to use or teach each word appropriately. This does not mean using words in appropriate contexts, but it means providing yourself or students with the background knowledge that native speakers usually take for granted.

As it is observed within the data in a bilingual dictionary, synonymys are economically problematic for a language. No language tries to create lots of synonymous words with the same meaning or functions. We encourage teachers to enrich their students' vocabulary by means of linguistic-cultural awareness and not by sole memorization of synonymys. Each word has its own frame of reference; even in some cases, synonymys can be interchangeably substituted.

A test concerning the use of synonymys (see Appendix) may be given to students. The choices for all of the questions are *watch*, *see*, and *look*. Lots of students would have, at least, one mistake because they are confronted with synonymous words, that is, they consider these words as the same thing.

We theoretically suggest the application of frame semantics on teaching vocabulary and reading texts, giving the chance to students to experience L2 words; however, further studies are necessary to examine the efficiency of using frame semantics in the Iranian EFL classrooms. This might be a good question for further studies, whether applying frame semantics can help students differentiate the right answer to questions such as those mentioned in Appendix.

6. Conclusion

We showed that neither thesaurus nor bilingual dictionaries alone are appropriate sources for teaching vocabulary skills and reading comprehension. In fact, languages include only partial synonymys, and bilingual dictionaries only include partial equivalents. Monolingual dictionaries do not include the necessary

detailed analyses of synonyms, either. We showed that words within a frame are differentiated from each other, whether grammatically or semantically. In Results section, we illustrated that teaching vocabulary with the aid of synonyms or L1 equivalents does not significantly contribute to answer the exam questions (i.e., EFL reading comprehension in classroom setting). Instead, we suggest using semantic frames (i.e., native speakers' background knowledge or experiences) to explain the differences between synonymous words. This can be performed via paraphrasing what is put forward in *FrameNet* about the L2 speaker's background knowledge of each word.

This research implies that teaching new vocabulary by the use of synonyms or L2 equivalents expands the vocabulary of Iranian EFL learners, but does not contribute toward the proper utilization of this vocabulary. Furthermore, students who are taught using synonyms and L2 equivalents may not do well in vocabulary tests, compared to those who know the frames of these words, that is, the experiences related to each word.

Teachers may benefit from frame semantic studies of Charles Fillmore and the *FrameNet* Website resources, which is a database providing lots of information about experiences behind each word. This Website is available online, and English language teachers can use it to distinguish the differences between words and frames.

Whereas we were able to use *FrameNet* as a good source of English language frames, we were not able to locate a similar Website for the Persian language, and so we used traditional bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. The creation of the relevant Persian database is out of the scope of this research and may be undertaken by interested linguists in future.

Lastly, this has been a theoretical research, applying frame semantics upon both synonyms in English and Persian. Our proposed teaching methods to the Iranian EFL students have yet to be evaluated statistically and empirically. Testing the effects of frame semantics in teaching vocabulary is a very interesting subject for further research. Moreover, the effects of frame semantics on reading comprehension might be another subject of future studies.

Acknowledgements

We cannot express enough thanks to Mr. Scott for his kind revision of this article.

References

Atzler, J. K. (2011). *Twist in the list: Frame semantics as vocabulary teaching and learning tool*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.

- Baker, C. F. (1999). *Seeing clearly: Frame semantics, psycholinguistic, and cross-linguistic approaches to the semantics of the English verb see*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Berkeley University.
- Cienki, A. (2007). Frames, idealized cognitive models, and domains. In D. Geeraerts & H. Cuyckens (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of cognitive linguistics* (pp. 170-187). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Croft, W., & Cruse, D. A. (2004). *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). Frame semantics. In H. Ö. Hakhoe (Ed.), *Linguistics in the morning calm* (pp. 111-138). Seoul: Hanshin.
- Fillmore, C. J. (2007). Valency issues in *FrameNet*. In T. Herbst & K. Götz-Votteler (Eds.), *Valency: Theoretical, descriptive, and cognitive issues 187* (pp. 129-160). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Fillmore, C. J., & Atkins, B. T. (1992). Toward a frame-based organization of the lexicon: The semantics of RISK and its neighbors. In A. Lehrer & K. Eva (Eds.), *Frames, fields, and contrast: New essays in semantics and lexical organization* (pp. 75-102). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Haghsheenas, A. M., Samei, H., & Entekhabi, N. (2005). *Millennium English-Persian dictionary*. Tehran: Farhang Moaser Publishers.
- Mackey, D. (2010). *Read this! Fascinating stories from the content areas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perception Frame. (2001). In *FrameNet*. Retrieved August 7, 2014, from the World Wide Web: <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/index.php?q=frameIndex>.
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trusler, J. (1766). *The difference between words, esteemed synonyms in the English language, and the proper choice of them determined together with, so much of Abbe Girard's treatise, on this subject, as would agree, with our mode of expression (Vols 1 & 2)*. Michigan: University of Michigan Library.
- Ungerer, F., & Schmid, H. J. (2006). *An introduction to cognitive linguistics*. London: Longman.
- Xu, F., & Li, T. (2011). Semantic frame and EVT for Chinese EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(3), 649-654.

Appendix

The questions with which less proficient students may have problems. These questions are better answered if frame semantics is used to teach them.

watch, see, look

You can't far in this fog.

Denny and Phil good tonight.

Did you Coronation Street yesterday evening.

. out for pickpockets.

Can you the blue car on the left.

. you tomorrow, if nothing comes in between.

It like rain, doesn't it?

Oh yes, I what you mean.

Hey, what's wrong? You really unhappy.

I am afraid. Linda has to a doctor.