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Semantic insights into the Syntactic Patterns of the Concept of Attacking in Standard English

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Abstract

This study highlights some grammatical patterns in their association with some specific lexical items, mainly verbs, with the end-result of expressing the concept of attacking someone. These patterns are listed in Francis et al., (1996, p.616) *Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns 1: Verbs*. Moreover, the semantic traits characterizing such colligations of verbs and patterns are elicited and manifested. In other words, the concept of attacking someone or causing harm is discussed and analyzed from a pattern approach perspective in an attempt to relate its semantic phase to the syntactic patterns in which it appears. Data of the study is corpus-based. Results show that different patterns, sometime encompassing the same lexical verbs, convey various semantic notions.

Key words

Pattern grammar- semantic traits- lexis-grammar interrelations

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The Pattern Grammar

The pattern approach is the basis upon which this study is held. It is a corpus-driven description of English. Moreover, it is a modified and developed version of the Sinclairian insights and assumptions about the nature of lexis-grammar integration. Adopting the phraseological vision of language and the belief that all language is patterned, Hunston and Francis, (2000) suggest that a pattern is a frequently-occurring phrase which is firmly associated with a specific group of lexical items and vice versa; a lexical item is highly restricted to a specific group of grammatical patterns so as to convey a specific message or meaning. Moreover, not only do words with multiple senses occur in various patterns in which each pattern deliver a specific sense of the word but also these words that share a syntactic pattern also share a semantic domain, a semantic field, or a meaning group (p. 3). They state that:

A pattern is a phraseology frequently associated with (a sense of a word), particularly in terms of the prepositions, groups, and clauses that follow the word. Patterns and lexis are mutually dependent, in that each pattern occurs with a restricted set of lexical items. In addition, patterns are closely associated with meaning, firstly because in many cases different senses of words are distinguished by their typical occurrence in different patterns, and secondly because words which share a given pattern tend also to share an aspect of meaning (2000, p. 3).

Advocates of this approach conceive language as "sequences of morphemes that are more or less fixed in form" (Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 7); there are phraseological restrictions which can easily be observed. Francis, unlike Sinclair who asserts that "different senses of polysemous words are distinguished by differences in typical

pattern use", she suggests that "patterns select words of particular meanings (2000: 29)." For instance, she argues (1995) that adjectives that colligate with a pattern such as "*it+ link verb+ adjective+ clause (e.g. it is interesting/ likely/ clear/ important/ true or it is useful/ sensible/ possible to)*" relate to specific meaning domains which are "Modality, ability, importance, predictability, obviousness, value and appropriacy, rationality, and truth". In addition, "that-clause" selects adjectives which are different from those chosen by the "to infinitive-clause" except for *possible* which occur in both of them. Moreover, the less recurrence of the phrase *it is surprising that* in comparison to the negative version of *it is not/ hardly surprising that* testifies Francis's point of view. (cited in Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 29).

Hunston and Francis (2000) define patterns as "all the words and structures [or the particular phraseological items] which are associated to the word and contribute to its meaning." (Hunston and Francis 2000 p. 37). They state:

All the words and structures which are regularly associated with the word and which contribute to its meaning. A pattern can be identified if a combination of words occurs relatively frequently, if it is dependent on a particular word choice, and if there is a clear meaning associated with it. (Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 37)

This definition sets three conditions for a sequence of words to be recognized as a pattern. First, the combination of words is to be occurring on a frequent basis.

Second, the combination necessitates the permanent presence of a particular word. Finally, the whole combination should convey an explicit message.

As affirmed by Hunston and Francis (2000), the pattern approach to language utilizes the methodology of selecting random concordance lines to reveal the patterning of language or the patterns of a specific words. These concordance lines are to be either right-sorted or left-sorted alphabetically. Verbs are usually sorted to the right so as to elicit their complementation patterns.

However, if the frequency of a verb occurrence in passive and infinitive forms, the kind of modals colligating with a verb, or the nature of the subjects accompanying a verb are to be examined, verbs are likely to be sorted to the left. (37)

As far as nouns are concerned, they are also sorted to the right if their complementation patterns are what matters, and to the left in case of examining their modification patterns. (37)

In case of adjectives, sorting to the right reveals their complementation patterns as well as the kind of nouns modified by such adjectives. On the other hand, if the possibility of an adjective to co-occur with linking verbs is to be examined or the identification of the kind of modifiers collocating with it is the purpose; then, the adjective is to be sorted to the left. (37)

In Francis et al. (1996: 616-622), verb patterns are presented in an index entitled 'Meaning Finder' where verbs and their patterns are assignable into meaning groups. (Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 109).

To cut a long story short, "The pattern of a word consists of the elements that follow it, but it may also include elements which precede it." (Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 51).

Patterns of the Concept of 'attacking':

As suggested by Francis et al. (1996, p.616), the following patterns are some of the patterns in which this idea is expressed:

1. V + reflexive Pron.
2. V + at +n
3. V + on+ n
4. V+ through+ n
5. V + n + adj.
6. V + n + prep/ adv., V + n + adv./ prep.
7. V + n + against + n

1. V + Reflexive Pron.

This group of verbs indicates doing or causing physical harm to oneself. It includes the following verbs: *burn, cut, drown, electrocute, hang, hurt, inject, injure, kill, nick, prick, rupture,*

scratch, and *starve*. (Francis et al., 1996, p. 63). The key feature that characterizes this group of verbs in this particular pattern is the presence of **intention**. Even when intention is not apparently explicit as intention here encapsulates **causation**. Hereby, the researcher believes that the verb *martyrize* relates to this category. Supposedly, we can say *He martyrizes himself* as Jihadi members describe their killed ones who seek being martyrs *t'atab ?itfahada*. In this sense, being aware of the possibility that a tool or an act may cause oneself harm and insisting on using or doing it, is somehow an intention to do harm to oneself.

The key semantic feature in this pattern is the **reflexive pronoun** itself. Consequently, a [+**human**] subject is a necessity for this proposition to be conveyed. The opposite meaning will be attained in case of having [-human] subjects. For example, in *the cat electrocuted itself*, the pattern denotes a one hundred percent an **accidental** incident. To conclude this point, the interactive components in this syntactic pattern are the **subject** and the **object** which is the **reflexive pronoun**. The sense of *intention* that characterizes this pattern particularly stems mainly from this interaction between the subject and its reflexive pronoun that functions as an object.

Back to the argument of the relationship between intention and causation, the verb *rupture* illustrates more how they are interrelated. In *He ruptured himself*; the recipient of this utterance or construction will instinctively understand that the agent causes himself to get ruptured by lifting something too heavy even if this is not explicitly articulated. Therefore, rupturing oneself is supposedly somehow intentional.

The same explanation is applicable to the verb *scratch*. The pattern *scratch* [+oneself] guarantees the presence of intention since it may; for example, refer to someone who keeps rubbing his skin till he causes himself some scratches. In other words, the agent is aware that the end-result of rubbing the skin is that he will hurt himself by causing scratches to happen and they keep rubbing.

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Interestingly, the verb *scratch* may be thought of to be happening accidentally when the whole pattern, *scratch + oneself*, is followed by a prepositional phrase which shows the reason why a scratch has happened. For instance, in "*she scratches herself on the roses*", (CALD3); this construction may be thought of, at first glance, to be indicating unintentional occurrence of scratching. However, it is innate that roses may have thorns and; consequently, cause scratches. Therefore, passing carelessly through them does not deny the absence of somehow having intention to get hurt.

To clarify the point of intention here, we can conclude that intention may be equal to either having an explicit intention to get hurt or causing oneself to get hurt by seeking a reason to.

It is worth mentioning that intention should be coupled with the presence of a tool through which getting hurt can be achieved. However, a tool on its own can result in causing harm regardless of having intention or not. For example, a sentence such as *if you don't do it, I will hang myself* is common. The agent here has both the intention and the tool that guarantees fulfilling his desire to get hurt; the agent's intention necessitates the existence of a tool. It is plausible; also, to replace the verb *hang* with *kill, drown, cut, burn, injure, inject, electrocute, nick, hurt, scratch, starve, or prick*. The only exception here is the verb *rupture* since it is out of the control of the agent to get ruptured regardless of the causative side of it. It is weird to say *do it or I will rupture myself*. Nevertheless, having the tool will eventually bring about someone getting himself ruptured by lifting something too heavy, for example!

In some contexts, some of these verbs have an accidental sense of getting hurt. *Cut*; for instance, has two senses. The first is the intentional one that leads to the conclusion that the agent deliberately cut himself or his veins in an attempt to commit suicide, for example. Second, the accidental sense which indicates that the agent unintentionally gets himself cut as a result of not recognizing that a sharp edge of a paper may cause a cut, being sleepy, or being unconscious, supposedly. Similarly, the verbs *burn, hurt, injure,*

electrocute, and *scratch* have an accidental sense that is understood from the situational or linguistic context.

As for *hang*, *inject*, and *starve*, these verbs always convey the intentional sense whether they are used in this pattern or in any other pattern.

The rest of the verbs in this group, namely; *nick*, *prick*, *kill*, and *drown* may colligate with different patterns denoting a sense of accidental occurrence of harm. For instance, in *the sharp knife nicked my skin and blood came out of it*, or *that nail in the door nicked my cat/ me*, one tends to assume that this kind of a nick happened accidentally. However, the same syntactic construction which is in the previously-mentioned two examples, S+ V+ O; sometimes, conveys an intentional sense of the verb *nick*. For example, *I nicked his bike* means I deliberately stole his bike. Moreover, if the verb *nick* is passivized as in *we were nicked*; then, we will get the meaning that (= we were intentionally cheated by someone and charged an extra unjustifiable amount of money).

The intransitive form of the verb *drown* as in *he drowned* indicates unintentional drowning which may be a result of a sudden painful cramp or a sudden storm or tidal wave. A sentence such as *her palm was pricked with a needle* may be understood as the subject was unaware that there was a needle somewhere and once she put her palm on it; accidentally, she felt the prick on it.

2. V + at + n

The lexical verbs that colligate with this pattern relate to three groups as suggested by Francis et al., (1996, p.616). The first is the "Eat Away" group which encompasses the verbs: *eat away at*, *chip away at*, *nibble away at*, and *whittle away at* (168). The second is the "Shoot" group in which the verbs: *shoot*, *snipe*, *spit*, *aim*, *come*, *fire*, *fly*, *gob*, *rush*, and *strike* are included (168). Finally, the "Hit Back" set which is represented by the verbs: *hit back at*, *strike back at*, and *get back at* (169).

2.1 The "eat away" group

This pattern encompasses the verbs: *eat away at*, *nibble away at*, *whittle away at*, and *chip away at* (Francis, 1996, p.168). What is noteworthy about this group of verbs in their colligation with this pattern in particular is that a sense of [+gradual reduction] is depicted. In addition, this gradual reduction results from the [+repetitive occurrence] or the [+continuous happening/existence] of the action that expresses the kind of harm represented.

In *Adam's death eats away at her*, the continuous absence of Adam and the fact that she keeps remembering this harsh experience repeatedly every now and then results in gradually reducing her stability, inner peace, and happiness, for instance.

The sentence *Alzheimer's is nibbling away at her memory* indicates a gradual loss of memory and the ability to think.

Extra examples include: *Inflation is eating away at our savings*, *His anxiety/ hesitation whittled away at the evidence* which is equivalent to *his anxiety makes the evidence weaker or less effective*, and *Cancer chipped away at the cells* in an indication to the proposition that *cancer makes them smaller*.

2.2 The "shoot" group

This group includes the verbs: *aim*, *come*, *fire*, *fly*, *gob*, *rush*, *shoot*, *snipe*, *spit*, and *strike* (Francis et al., 1996, p. 168). The semantic trait that gathers all of these verbs is a [+abrupt] occurrence of the action. Moreover, there is always a [+direction/path] of the attack through which something is sent from a starting point or some source to an end-point or a target. In some instances, people may function as an instrument and move from a start point to an end one with the purpose of attacking. In other words, a kind of [+movement] of a[+tool] is depicted.

It is noteworthy that the attack can be physical or verbal depending on the lexical verb used. In both cases there is something sent from a point to another. In case of verbal attacks, vigorous

words function the same as bullets, arrows, or spit in the case of physical attacks.

A plausible semantic trait of the verb *snipe* is that the source of attack is [+unseen]. It is unknown and cannot be pinpointed. The sniper is most probably shooting at someone from a hidden place or position. This is only applicable when *snipe at someone* is meant to indicate a physical attack by shooting bullets. If this pattern is intended to deliver the proposition of a verbal attack; then, both the critic and the receiver of his severe and unpleasant criticism can easily be known and recognized. For instance, in *during the last conference, the president sniped at the prime minister* both the attacker and the receiver of the verbal attack are known.

It is; also, worth mentioning that the verb *snipe* besides the verb *fly at* are the only two verbs in this group that may deliver a sense of a verbal attack.

Unlike the verbs: *shoot, fire, and snipe*, where there is a weapon from which a bullet, an arrow, or a missile is directed and sent towards a moving or fixed target, the verbs: *fly at, rush, and come at* suggest that the source of attack is itself in a **state of movement** towards the target so as to threaten or attack it. The attacker is the tool by which the attack will be fulfilled. The sentences: *they rushed at the guards, the dog came at me or the man came at her with a knife, and Sara flew at me for forgetting our third anniversary* mean: a group of people were moving towards some guards with the purpose of physically attacking them, a dog came towards someone to attack him or someone was moving in the direction of someone else with a knife in his hand to attack her, and finally, Sara attacked me either verbally or physically for forgetting our third anniversary, respectively. If *fly at* is meant to indicate a verbal attack; then, we have unpleasant and vigorous words sent from a fixed source towards a receiver or a target. In this exact case the attacker is not in a state of movement. The attacker is not the tool by which the attack is performed; it functions only as the source from which the attack initiates.

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As far as the verb *aim* is concerned, it is important to highlight the possibility that the tool of attack is directed towards the target but not necessarily sent, fired, or thrown. This verb portrays the state of being ready to fire or attack by directing a weapon towards a target. The firing itself may not start or it may start after an unspecified period of time; it could be short or long but what is certain is that it is not immediate, supposedly.

Consequently, a sentence such as *most of the rockets aimed at the Russian capital for ten hours* is conceivable since it means that these rockets are being pointed towards the Russian capital for ten hours before being launched or fired at it. It may; also, mean that the rockets were pointing towards this spot and after ten hours, they were not sent; they were deactivated.

It is necessary to shed light on the verb *aim* in the imperative mood. In *aim at the same spot*, *aim at the main cities*, or *aim at the green bottles*, the meaning attained is that a weapon will be immediately fired, sent, or thrown towards a target after being directed to it, supposedly.

The tool of attack in case of the verbs *spit* and *gob* is saliva or spit. What is noticeable about this kind of attack is that the spit thrown from the mouth towards someone may not hit him or touch the target physically. Spit is intended to be thrown in the direction of a target but it may not reach it. For example, in *she spat at George's face*, it could be only a drizzle or some few dots of her spit that reached George's face; not the whole amount of spit sent.

The verb *strike at*; also, indicates a direction of the attack and the target of it is always, most probably, the foundation or the center of an entity which connotes the huge destructive effect of the attack. This meaning is clear from instances such as: *their rejection of her color strikes at the very heart of her being* and *the new political parties strike at the foundation of our community* (Collins dictionary).

2.3 The "hit back" group

The verbs: *hit back at*, *strike back at*, and *get back at* relate to this group. (Francis et al., 1996, p. 169). What is significant about these verbs is that they; also, convey a sense of [+**abruptness**]. In addition, the idea of [+**retaliation or taking revenge**] is dominating. It is a **converse attack**. This sense mainly stems from the adverb *back* in this pattern; the adverb here is the active syntactic component which leads to the semantic notion of retaliation.

The verbs *hit* and *strike* being followed by the same adverb which is *back* to form the two phrasal verbs: *hit back* and *strike back* can convey the meaning of attacking someone in return even if they are not followed by the preposition *at*. If we say, for instance, sentences such as: *you are strong enough to hit back* or *he is ready to strike back*, we will get the meaning that someone is about to retaliate even if the preposition and its object are not added. Therefore, *you are strong enough to hit back* means the same as *you are strong enough to hit back at them*. On the contrary, the phrasal verb *get back* must be followed by the preposition *at* so as to deliver the notion of taking revenge on someone as well as to differentiate it from the other phrasal verb: *get back to* which means: to talk again to someone over the phone, to return to a place after you have been somewhere else, or to continue doing something that you have started to do earlier.

The phrasal verb *get back* can convey the meaning of retaliation without being followed by the preposition *at* only when the receiver of retaliation is located between the verb *get* and the particle *back*; hence, a different pattern is created. For instance, *I will get you back* means the same as *I will get back at you*.

In conclusion, the sense of **converse** attack is conveyed through using the particle *back*, supposedly. Therefore, the particle is the most effective component in this particular pattern.

3. V+ on+ n

Verbs colligate with this pattern are entitled as the pounce group (Francis et al., 1996, p. 220). They refer to either a physical or an emotional attacks; the phrasal verbs utilized in this pattern manifest prevention of some harmful activities. Verbs relate to this group are: *dump, fire, jump, lean, pounce, prey, round, set, stamp, swoop, trample, turn*; in addition to the phrasal verbs, *clamp down, come down, crack down, and gang up*. (Francis et al., 1996, p. 220). Once more, the presence of [+**intention**] is a key semantic trait that characterizes this construction. Moreover, verbs in this pattern reflect a sense that attacks, either verbal or physical, are a bit more [+**aggressive, intensive, and somehow prompt, abrupt, sudden or unorganized**] than the same verbs in other patterns. In other words, it is a **a spur of the moment** kind of attacks. For instance, both *fire at* and *fire on* portray a physical attack being conducted against someone; however, recipients have the notion that *firing at* someone is a planned and [+**malicious**] action while *firing on* someone is a quick decision that is made promptly.

The verb *dump* followed by the preposition *on* and a noun delivers a sense of unfair or bad treatment. It is a kind of emotional attack in which the agent of the construction is criticizing the patient for doing something. *John dumps on Mary* is quite different from *John dumps Mary*. In the first sentence the relationship between John and Mary is still existing with a kind of spiritual harm being delivered from John towards Mary. However, in the second sentence, John ends his relationship with Mary; they are no longer friends, a spouse, or whatever.

The verb *fire* conveys a sense of a physical attack in which weapons such as guns or arrows are used. The construction: *fire +on + n* conveys a notion of a sudden attack in which an observant subject suddenly gets ready holding his gun and awaiting for his victim to appear.

The verb *jump* indicates a physical attack. To be more accurate, it is a sudden physical attack. What is noteworthy here is that the

action of jumping is a physical motion and more interestingly it happens suddenly even if the doer has an intention to jump or the thought of jumping, the exact moment at which the decision of conducting the jump is made comes suddenly and promptly. Moreover, a sense of **pursuing, watching, following** or **tracing** someone is detected. The subject keeps observant, alert, and ready to attack suddenly.

As far as the verb *pounce* is concerned, it is thought-provoking how it manifests both physical and verbal attacks depending on the animacy of the object in a construction. In case the object is a [+animate] but [-human], a physical attack is experienced by that object. On the contrary, if the subject is a [+animate] and [+human]; then, the construction may denote either a verbal criticism or a physical attack being directed towards someone. For instance, in *the cat will pounce on the rat*, the *cat* will cause the *rat* to be physically harmed. However, in *they are awaiting to pounce on any slip of my tongue*, the harm can be a verbal one in which harsh criticism is being directed towards someone for saying something inappropriate or it may denote a physical attack against someone. In both cases, the attack seems to happen suddenly; supposedly, in the same way as the act of pouncing occurs. In addition, the element of observation is plausible here.

Lean on someone indicates a kind of verbal harm since it encompasses threatening someone to persuade him/ her to do something.

The factor of animacy again plays a crucial role in deciding whether the attack performed is a physical or a non-physical one in the case of the verb pattern: *prey+ on+ noun*. If the subject is a [+animate] and [-human] one; then, the attack is a physical one as in *lions preys on dears*. However, if the subject is an agent; [+human], attacking someone else can be an emotional or a physical one. What is noteworthy about this case is the syntactic property which characterizes the object of the pattern; it is always a [+plural] noun which indicates a weak group of people who can easily be hurt or

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deceived such as *He preys on children, lone women, the elderly...etc.*

The verb *round* in this pattern *round+ on+ noun* is usually used to indicate aggressive and fierce criticism; however, it may suggest a physical attack in case of unhuman animate subjects as in *the fox rounded on its pursuers* (CALD3).

The following verb is interesting in that it has two patterns with the same preposition being utilized and the same idea of physically attacking someone being delivered; however, in one pattern the attack occurs [+**accidentally**] and in the second it is [+**caused**] by someone else. The verb *set* in the pattern: *set + on + noun* indicates that someone or an animal attacks someone as in *the vicious dog set on him*. In the second pattern which is *set +noun +on + noun*, the sense of **causation** exists. There is an incentive for the attack to happen. The agent of the sentence urges someone or an animal to cause harm to someone else physically; for example, both *he sets his dogs on them* and *she sets her brother on him* manifest a physical attack that is instigated by someone.

What is unique about the verb *swoop* in this pattern is that it necessitates the semantic trait of [+ **authority**] to be present in the agent of the sentence. The agent should always be authorized to perform the act of swooping on a place as in *the police swooped on the club at 3 a.m.* In addition, the sense of suddenness is conveyed.

Similarly, the semantic trait [+**authority**] accompanies the subject of *stamp* in *stamp+ on+ noun*. It is a forceful deliberate attack conducted with the intention to prevent something illegal, wrong, or harmful. Lexical items such as *the army* or *the police* are likely to colligate with this verb in a subject position. As far as the object of this construction is concerned, it always denotes a harmful activity. Hence words such as *inflation*, *opposition*, or *strike* can colligate with this pattern.

Words that colligate with the verb *trample* in this exact pattern; namely, *trample+ on + noun* are always nouns such as: *needs*, *rights*, or *values*. They function as objects to a subject that

encapsulates the semantic trait of [+ **political entity/ institution/ position/ occupation...etc.**] such as *diplomats, leaders, presidents...etc.* These assumptions are elicited from sentences such as: *She accused the government of trampling on the needs and rights of the ordinary citizen* and *He argues that the Congress and President Clinton trampled [on] the constitutional rights of legal immigrants in the new welfare reform law.* (CALD3).

Suddenness is the key element in the pattern *turn+ on+ noun*. It indicates a verbal attack or criticism. On the contrary, the phrasal verb *gang up on* always denotes a physical attack as in: *he keeps complaining that his colleagues gang up on him.*

As far as the other phrasal verbs colligating with this pattern are concerned, a shared semantic proposition that characterizes the use of: *clamp down, come down, and crack down* is that the purpose of the attack is to prevent and stop harmful activities, practices, actions, or consequences not to cause them. In addition, the subject of the sentence should have the semantic trait of [+**authority**] to be able to prevent or repress such actions. The lexical items *government* and *police* are likely to be located in a subject position in this pattern as in: *police are clamping down on drivers who exceed the speed limit.* (Collins Online Dictionary). The use of the phrasal verb *crack down on* connotes a sense of **gradual increase** in the severity of official actions being taken against illegal practices. Consequently, it; also, connotes **repeated** attempts from an authorized entity/ institution to repress harmful actions and these attempts are of **ascending severity**. In *the library is cracking down on people who lose their books* (CALD3), the meaning that librarians keep setting rules which are of an increasing nature of harshness to control loss of books can plausibly be inferred. Finally, the phrasal verb *come down on* can indicate either a physical or a verbal attack. In *the ministry of education is coming down on truants*, there is an indication that harsh official actions are being taken against truants which are to be considered as a physical practice. However, in *she came down on me for drinking heavily*, it is, more likely, a verbal attack.

What is noteworthy regarding the phrasal verbs: *clamp down on*, *crack down on*, and *come down on* is that the subject is -in most cases- an **authorized collective** noun that encapsulates a [+animate/human] individuals. The following collective nouns are likely to colligate with these phrasal verbs: *committee*, *jury*, *Senate*, *army*, *family*, *club*, *ministry*, *assembly*...etc. On the contrary, collective nouns such as: *flock of sheep*, *herd of cows*, *fleet of ships*, and *convoy of trucks* cannot occur in this case since they indicate a [-human] animacy. To conclude, the combination of the semantic traits [+ authority] and [+human] and the syntactic trait of [+ collective] subject is what characterizes this pattern. Nevertheless, the subject is not necessarily a collective noun since words such as *referees*, *teachers*, *doctors*...etc can be utilized. However, the trait of [+human] is a must. Even in case of collective nouns being used, it is conceivable that the collective noun refers to human individuals who are in charge of taking official actions against illegal or harmful behaviors.

4. V+ through+ n

Verbs that may be slotted in this pattern are: *bore*, *break*, *cut*, *dig*, *drill*, *pierce*, *poke*, and *smash* as suggested by (Francis et al, 1996, p. 240). What characterizes the combination of these verbs with the preposition *through* followed by a noun is the image of [+**penetration**] or that of something or someone forcing itself/ himself through a barrier, a crowd, a hardship, or something solid or hard. Hence, the key element in this pattern is supposedly the preposition *through*. Moreover, the literal meaning of the verbs in this group connotes an implicit or explicit presence of an **instrument**, such as a drill or an auger, through which damage represented in producing deep holes or penetration took place.

The phrasal verb *break through* is not an exception as it may seem to be. Although it does not connote usage of instruments such as axes, drills, augers...etc, it portrays an

image of resisting a barrier or pushing oneself through an obstacle using one's own human body as in: *protesters broke through the fence/ police cordon*. The human body functions as an instrument through which penetration occurs.

Unlike the suggestion that these verbs in this pattern convey only a sense of destroying something or damaging it, other purposes can be pinpointed. For example, one can *pierce through* a nose to wear some decorating rings.

However, if *a bullet pierces an armor or a tank*; then, the sense that a hole is being produced through that armor or the tank causing partial damage to it is obtained. Similarly, if one *drills through* a wall producing holes to be able to hang some decorating portraits, the wall will not get destroyed in any sense; on the contrary, it gets decorated and modified. On the other hand, when someone *drills through soil* to search for oil, for instance, the soil will get damaged and destroyed.

In addition, the verbs in this pattern connote a sense of **repeated** actions or attempts of either producing holes or producing a way/ path through something. An image of a round hole with a specific depth results from and depends on repeated *drilling, digging, or boring through* something. Nevertheless, holes produced are not necessarily round-shaped ones; if *digging through soil*; for instance, occurs using hands not mechanical diggers, the hole obtained is most probably not round. Moreover, when a needle *pierces through* a piece of cloth, a sense of repeated piercing through cloth is depicted which results in repeated holes or a number of holes to be apparent on it; however, each hole is produced at once. In other words, each single hole appears as a result of a single act of piercing not repeated piercing at the same spot. Therefore, it is the relationship between the **verb** on one hand and the **object** on the other that conveys the image of a hole being produced as a result of a repeated action at the same spot or a lot of holes being produced in different successive spots again as a result of repeating the action of trying to produce such holes. In case of

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having a subject such as a *needle* and an object such as *cloth* or *fabric*; then, the last meaning is more likely to be assumed. However, if the subject is a *drill* and the object is a *wall*; then, the conceived meaning will supposedly be that of a single hole being produced by several repeated attempts at one single spot.

Despite all of what has been suggested, repetition, with both assumptions: that of repetition in one single spot resulting in one single hole or that of repeating the action in different successive spots producing many holes, is not necessarily a depicted sense. For example, in *the bullet pierces through the tank* or *this sharp point pierces through my ears*, one time of piercing results in one hole in one place.

The verbs *cut through*, *break through*, and *smash through*; also, suggest a sense of repeated attempts to: go deeper producing a cut through something in case of *cut through*, produce a path through a crowd or penetrate a barrier in case of *break through* (*protesters broke through the police cordon*), and finally, hit a wall, gate, or door to destroy it and go through it in case of *smash through* (*protesters smashed through the ministry gates using trucks*).

The combination of *poke+ through+ noun* indicates penetrating or trying to appear through an opening as suggested by (Francis et al., 1996. P.240). In: *the grass is poking through the soil*, the meaning obtained is that the grass is trying to find a path through the soil to appear or come out of it. It is worth mentioning that *poke+ in+ noun*; also, indicates forcing or pushing a finger or a pointed instrument into something or someone with a possibility to cause pain or destroy something such as: *she poked me in the eye with her pen* or *she is poking a strain in the couch*.

V+ n+ adj.

The verbs: *burn*, *bury*, *skin*, *boil*, *eat*, *flay*, *roast*, and *swallow* can be located in this pattern to indicate either a cruel

physical attack or a vigorous and merciless verbal criticism. The adjective which always colligates with this pattern is *alive* (Francis et. al., 1996, p. 284). Supposedly, the adjective [+*alive*] is the key element in this construction since it adds more to the degree of cruelty of the attacks performed.

The verbs *burn* and *bury* in this combination can indicate either an intentional physical attack or an accidental one depending on the **animacy** of the subject as in: *demonstrators were burnt alive, and the avalanche buried the skiers alive*, respectively.

In addition, *swallow someone alive, boil someone or an animal alive, and roast someone or an animal alive*, all denote physical kind of pain such as: *the whale swallowed him alive, snakes swallow rats alive, Chinese people boil frogs alive, and they roasted the snake alive and ate it*.

On the contrary, the following examples: *the committee skinned him alive for not being creative, if she comes late, her father will flay her alive, and the teacher ate his students alive after losing the competition* refer to scolding someone or telling someone off severely and ruthlessly. Hence causing him to be emotionally hurt. However, in case the object is an animal as in *hunters skinned/ flayed the deer alive, and Chinese eat kinds of fish alive*, the verbs indicate a physical kind of pain.

5. V+ n+ prep/ adv, V+ n+ adv/ prep.

These two patterns encapsulate two meaning groups as suggested by Francis et al., (1996, p. 316&317). The first is the 'Batter' group that encompasses the verbs: *batter, bash, butt, hit, knife, skewer, slap, strike, wallop, and whack*. The second is the 'Bend' group to which the verbs: *align, bend, carve, fast forward, flip, fold, lock, move, pare, pull, push, rip, roll, round, set, slick, smooth, snap, space, tear, tilt, tip, train, twist, whip, and wind* relate.

All the verbs of the '*batter*' group denote a physical attack except for *bash* and the phrasal verb *slab someone down* that

can indicate a verbal attack. The verb *bash* when used to refer to a verbal attack, it is not located in this pattern under investigation. However, it is located in a V+ n pattern such as: *he kept bashing his wife*. In addition, the preposition *down* in *bash someone down* does not pinpoint a location as it is the case in the physical indication of the verb. The sentence *they bashed her down* conveys the idea that they unpleasantly prevented her from talking or making any suggestions, but in *she bashed him on the head*, the prepositional phrase presents the spot that is being bashed or exposed to a physical attack.

What characterizes this pattern is that the **prepositional phrase** accompanying all the verbs usually functions as a [+location] indicator. The location could be a part of a human/animal body that is being physically hurt such as: *they knifed him in the chest*, or *he skewered the fish through the mouth*; an inanimate object which receives hard hitting causing it to get destroyed or be broken as in *she was bashing away on the keyboard*, or *the waves are battering against the rocks*; or finally an inanimate thing against which someone got himself physically hurt such as *I hit my head on the shelf*. However, the prepositional phrases in sentences such as *they were hit in the city* and *he hit his toe with a hammer* show the location where the act of hitting takes place and the [+instrument] with which the act of hitting is performed, respectively.

It is noted that the actions performed may occur intentionally or accidentally depending on the linguistic context.

It is worth emphasizing that the semantic traits of [+repetition] and [+long period of time] always accompany the verb *batter* as in: *the hostage was battered on the head to death* or *he was battering on the door*. Moreover, the use of the adverb *around*; also, encapsulates the same semantic traits as in: *he is battering his child around*.

The verb *butt* is special in that it denotes that the act of hitting took place using either a **head** or **horns**. The sentence *the ox butts him on the back* suggests that the ox uses his horns to butt someone on his back. In addition, the verbs *slap* and *wallop* utilize the **flat part** of the hand in specific to perform the physical act of doing harm to someone even if it is not explicitly stated. Finally, the verb *whack* encompasses a [+noise] semantic characteristic as in: *he wacked the tree with a stick*.

The second group of verbs that appear in this pattern, namely the 'bend' group, encompasses the following verbs as suggested by Francis et al., (1996, pp.316 & 317): *align, bend, carve, fast forward, flip, fold, lock, move, pare, pull, push, rip, roll, round, set, slick, smooth, snap, space, tear, tilt, tip, train, twist, whip, and wind*. In disagreement with what is assumed by Francis, not all the verbs in this group do express the idea of causing destruction or attacking someone. Although a change in the original state of something is depicted, this change is not necessarily a result of having the incentive to destroy, cause harm or attack. It could be a change to decorate, adjust, or improve something.

Out of the twenty six verbs of this group, the following eleven verbs are the ones that are thought to be supposedly denoting a sense of attacking or destroying: *pull, rip, push, set, snap, tear, tip, train, twist, whip, and wind*.

As far as the verb *pull* is concerned, it has a number of interpretations depending on the preposition or the adverb that follows. First, in case it is followed by a noun and then the adverb *apart*, it conveys a sense of verbal attack or harsh criticism as in *critics pull his novel apart*. The noun located between the verb and the adverb most probably refers to a [+piece of work] noun such as a paper, an essay, an article, a thesis...etc. When it is used to pinpoint breaking of something into its smaller component parts, it is intended to improve that thing by reordering the pieces in a different way as in: *he pulls his car apart to improve it*. Therefore, the sense of destruction that is traced is not a mere, though

intentional, desire to destroy. On the contrary, it is an intention to make something perform better. In other words, it is characterized by a [+**intentional**] desire to destroy but the incentive behind such an intentional desire is a positive, may be [+**inquisitive**], one. Second, in case the verb *pull* is followed by a noun and a prepositional phrase that starts with the preposition *on*, the meaning intended is to threaten a person using a weapon as in: *the criminal pulled a knife on her husband*. Hence, the noun that follows the verb *pull* is always one that reflects a weapon or an **instrument** with which the act of threatening someone is conducted. Third, the preposition *down* in *pull something down* refers to destroying a building. Hence, the noun slotted between the verb *pull* and the preposition *down* should always has a [+**building**] reference. It is worthy of notice that the linear order of *pull+ something+ down* is a must for this proposition to be conveyed since *pull+ down+ something* denotes another different sense. In *they pull down one thousand dollars a month*, the meaning communicated is that an amount of money is being earned. What follows the preposition *down* should be a [+**monetary**] noun which represents an amount of money. Moreover, it is possible for nouns referring to persons to be slotted in between the verb *pull* and the preposition *down*; however, in such a case the subject of the construction cannot be an agent or more specifically it is an [+**inanimate**] subject. For example, *her illness pulls her down* conveys the sense that she becomes physically weaker. Fourth, the verb colligation with the preposition *in* necessitates the presence of a [+**authorized**] agent such as a police officer, for instance. The pattern denotes a kind of attack which is to physically arrest someone. Even if such an attack is authorized, still a kind of harm or emotional instability is depicted. Further, the preposition *up* in this pattern indicated a verbal telling off of someone. It requires a [+**animate**] noun or pronoun to be slotted in between the verb and the preposition. For example, *her dad pulled her up for coming home late every night*. Finally, the lexical item *pieces* is a must in the colligation of the verb *pull* with

the preposition *to* as in *they pull her or her attitude to pieces*. It denotes a harsh verbal criticism.

Similarly, the verb *rip* can; also, indicate either a physical or a verbal attack. A sentence such as: *financial issues ripped the family apart* indicates presence of fights or quarrels between the family members. Moreover, in a sentence such as: *They rip her apart*, there is a sense of severe criticism or sarcasm that is being directed towards someone. The physical sense of the verb is perceived in combinations with the adverbs *up* and *off* as in: *she ripped the letter up* which indicates a physical tearing of a letter, and *he ripped me off* which tells that someone deceives someone else causing him to pay an extra amount of money.

It is a pattern that has a [+**monetary**] kind of harm related to it.

Additionally, the verb *push* indicates a number of senses depending on the preposition or the adverb that follows. First, the colligation with *around* in *push someone around*, denotes a rude verbal communication with someone. Second, *pushing in* indicates a physical act of pushing someone to rudely take his turn in a queue. Although the pattern is different, a sense of annoying someone is depicted. Third, to *push off someone* is to verbally ask him to leave in a rude way. Once again, it is a different pattern from that under investigation, but it still denotes verbal rudeness towards someone. Fourth, colligating with the preposition *out* also indicates verbal rudeness towards someone that results in getting him leaving a job or quitting participating in an activity. Finally, *pushing* someone or something *over* denotes a physical act of [+**causing**] someone or something to fall by pushing him or it.

As far as the phrasal verb *set against* is concerned, it has a **causative** use which indicates that something causes some people to become enemies and attack each other or fight with one another. However, this meaning is encapsulated in a different pattern; the pattern encompasses this proposition is *set+ n+ against+ n*. such as *the last match has set Mark against Tom*. Similarly, the phrasal *set on* behaves in the same way in which someone causes an animal or another person to attack someone else as in: *they set their dogs on*

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him. Moreover, to *set a person up* is to deceive him so as to drive him to do something or to make him emotionally feel guilty and depressed. The key semantic feature of the verb *set* in this aforementioned pattern is that of [+**inciting**] or encouraging someone to do or feel something unpleasant or violent. A different pattern is; also, utilized to indicate the idea of attacking or causing harm in case of the two phrasal verbs of *set upon* and *set in*. *Set upon* is usually used in the **passive** voice as in: *she was set upon by some criminals*, and *set in* is used as an **intransitive** verb that indicates the long presence of something unpleasant as in: *infection sets in for at least three weeks*.

The verb *snap* can indicate both a verbal and a physical attack but again both senses are expressed in a pattern that is different from that suggested by Francis and the other co-authors. The pattern utilized is *snap+ at+ noun*. When the subject is [+**human**], the attack conducted is a verbal one in which someone speaks unfriendly to someone else as in: *he snapped at her*. On the contrary, if the subject is a [-**human**], the attack is a physical one in which jaws are used **in trial** to attack and bite someone such as: *the dog snapped at him*. It is important to emphasize that the act of biting does not necessarily occur; it is an attempt that can be fulfilled successfully or unsuccessfully. The **intransitive** use of the verb *snap*; also, suggests that someone becomes angry, an animal tries to bite someone, or plausibly something [+**thin**] such as an aerial, a twig, a branch, or a ruler gets destroyed or broken by someone or something intentionally or accidentally. The semantic features [+**angry**] and [+**abrupt**], signalize the attack denoted in the aforementioned patterns of the verb *snap*.

As far as the verb *tear* is concerned, it denotes damage of something in which the prepositional phrase refers either to the [+**cause**] that leads to the act of tearing as in: *I tore my skirt on the chair as I stood up* (CALD3), or a [+**location**] such as: *two pages had been torn from the novel*. In addition, the combination of the verb *tear* with the adverb *apart* denotes a number of senses.

First, it portrays a quarrel or verbal disagreement as in: *her attitude tore them apart* which suggests that the attitude of someone caused some others to quarrel. Second, it may indicate physical damage of something as in: *the earthquake has torn the building apart*. Third, it conveys a verbal attack or criticism as in: *journalists tore the prime minister apart for his last decisions*. In addition, the two phrasal verbs: *tear down* and *tear up* express an **intentional** destruction of a building and tearing of a paper, respectively.

The combination of the verb *tip* with the adverb *over* indicates doing harm to someone or damaging something by causing him/it to fall onto one side as in: *she tipped the table over*. Most probably, there is not any premeditated or even a spur of the moment intention to cause harm. However, if the situational or linguistic context portrays a quarrel or a fight; then, the tipping over can be conducted deliberately.

The pattern that consists of the verb *train* followed by a noun and then a prepositional phrase indicates pointing a **weapon** towards someone as in: *they trained a gun on him*. Sometimes, the lexical items *camera* or *light* colligate with the verb *train* in this pattern expressing the same concept of aiming something towards someone or a place. The prepositional phrase refers to the person being threatened or the place on which lights or cameras are directed.

The verb *twist* is used to indicate occurrence of an injury not necessarily in this exact specific pattern. It is possible to be used **intransitively** as in: *I fell and my leg twisted*. However, when it is used in the pattern under examination, namely V+ n+ prep/ adv, the prepositional phrase usually **locates** either the place where the injury occurred or the **reason** why the injury took place. The noun following the verb is usually a part of the body and the two most colligating lexical items in this case are: *ankle* and *knee*. Consider; for example, *he twisted his ankle on a slippery rock*, and *his hands were twisted behind his back*.

Using the verb *whip* in this pattern indicates causing harm to a person or an animal using a whip. Therefore, a prepositional phrase such as *with a whip* is not likely to be slotted in a sentence

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such as: *he whipped his donkey* as it is implicitly understood that the instrument being used is a whip. Rather, an adverb such as *twice* is more sensible and plausible to be utilized; *he whipped his donkey twice*. However, a prepositional phrase such as *on the back* locates where the act of whipping takes place. In addition, the adverb *across* in *a branch whipped her across her face* takes a similar attitude to that of prepositional phrases which are located in this slot when colligating with different verbs in referring to a place or a part of the body that is being experiencing the attack or the harm. Hence, adverbs are more likely to colligate with the verb *whip* in this pattern to indicate the concept of causing or doing harm to someone or something.

It is important to highlight the fact that the verb *whip* colligates with prepositional phrases but the propositional meaning conveyed does not include any sense of attacking people or causing harm to them. For example, in *her scarf whipped in the wind*, the prepositional phrase denotes a reason why the scarf moves in a way that is similar to that of a whip. Also, in *he whipped into the meeting room*, the prepositional phrase indicates a place where someone moves to very quickly.

The last verb in this group is *wind*. It refers to attacking someone and preventing him/ her from breathing or causing him/ her to find difficulty or [+suffering] in breathing as a result of directing hits to the stomach. However, this sense can be delivered while not utilizing the pattern under investigation as in *he winded him*. If it is *he winded him with a punch*; then, the prepositional phrase indicates an instrument or the means by which the attack is completed. The prepositional phrase of a sentence such as: *refugees were winded with constant stamps on their sides*; also, highlights the means of attacking or the tool utilized to perform the act of winding. When it is combined with the adverb *up*, the verb *wind* refers to a kind of emotional harm that is being directed towards someone or a trial to annoy or deceive a person as in: *he knows how to wind her*

up or *they keep winding me up*. Either the attack is a physical or a verbal one, in both cases **intention** exists.

6. V+ n+ against+ n.

The verbs: bring, direct, hold, level, and perpetrate appear in this pattern to denote physically or verbally attacking someone or destroying something (Francis et. al., 1996, p. 345). Once again, what is special about these verbs in this pattern is the existence of [+intention] to cause harm. For instance, in he brought extra charges against our company, they perpetrated atrocities against innocent people, she directed a knife against him, he holds their lie against them, they levelled charges of corruption against him, the intention to cause harm sparkles. In addition, collocations are actively present in this pattern. For instance, the verb bring seems to collocate with lexical items such as: suits, charges, or complaints. Also, the verb perpetrate collocates with atrocity. Similarly, level co-occur with accusations or legal charges. Verbal harm can be depicted in a sentence such as: the manager levelled charges of corruption against him where accusations is being directed towards someone publicly. The verb direct in this pattern can denote either physical attacks in case it is followed by a noun that indicates a weapon or emotional hostility if followed by an accusation. The verb hold in this pattern is special since it indicates an emotional kind of harm that is being practiced against someone so as to keep threatening, extorting, or exploiting him for one's own advantage. Physical benefits can be the result of such a practice; however, it can be a mere desire to cause feelings of stress and discomfort. In accord with Francis, the prepositional phrase defines people or entities that experience the harm being performed against them; it is the preposition against that plays a crucial role in portraying the concept of two entities, parties, or situations opposed to each other.

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Conclusion:

The following charts conclude the semantic traits which most probably associate with the aforementioned patterns:

	human	Intention	Reflexive	Repetition/ continuity	Abrupt
The <i>hang</i> group (v+ refl. Pron.)	+	+(Malicious)	+	-	+/-
The <i>eat away at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+/-	-	-	+	-
The <i>shoot at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+	+	-	+/-	+
The <i>hit back at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+	+ malicious	-	-	+
The <i>pounce</i> group (v+ on+ n)	+/-	+ Spur of the moment	-	-/ + (crack down on)	+
The <i>smash</i> group (v+through+ n)	+/-	+	-	+	-
The <i>burn alive</i> group (v+ n+ adj.)	+	+	-	-	-
The <i>batter</i> group (v+ n+ prep/ adv.)	+/-	+/-	-	+	-
The <i>bend</i> group (v+ n+ prep/ adv.)	+/-	+	-	-/+	+/-
The <i>level</i> group (v+ n+ against+ n).	+	+	-	-/+ (hold)	-

	Gradual destruction	Path/ direction	Instrument	Retaliation	Prompt
The <i>hang</i> group (v+ refl. Pron.)	-	-	+	-	+/-

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The <i>eat away at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+	-	+	-	-
The <i>shoot at</i> group (v+ at+n)	-	+	+	-	+
The <i>hit back at</i> group (v+ at+n)	-	+/-	+	+	+/-
The <i>pounce</i> group (v+ on+ n)	-	+	+	-	+
The <i>smash</i> group (v+through+n)	+	+	+	-	-
The <i>burn alive</i> group (v+ n+ adj.)	-	-	+	-	-
The <i>batter</i> group (v+ n+ prep/adv.)	-	-	+	-	-
The <i>bend</i> group (v+ n+ prep/adv.)	+/-	-	+	-	-
n+ prep/adv.)					

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The <i>level</i> group (v+n+ against+n).	-	-	+(legal cases, accusation, knife)	-	-
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	Causation/incentive	Authority	Penetration & resistance	Noise	Collocational
The <i>hang</i> group (v+ refl. Pron.)	+ rupture	-	-	-	-
The <i>eat away at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+	-	-	-	-
The <i>shoot at</i> group (v+ at+n)	-	+/-	-	+	-
The <i>hit back at</i> group (v+ at+n)	+	-	-	-	-
The <i>pounce</i> group (v+ on+n)	+ (set sb on)/ -	+ Swoop Stamp Clamp down on	-	-	-
		Crack down on come down on			

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The <i>smash</i> group (v+through+ n)	-/ +	-	+	+	-
The <i>burn alive</i> group (v+ n+ adj.)	-/ +	-	-	-	+ alive
The <i>batter</i> group (v+ n+ prep/ adv.)	-	-	-/ (+ skewer)	+ whack	+/-
The <i>bend</i> group (v+ n+ prep/ adv.)	+ Push out Set against	+(pull in)/ -	-	-/ + (whip/ strike)	-/ + (whip)
The <i>level</i> group (v+ n+ against+ n).	+	-	-	-	+ 1.Perpetrate atrocity 2.Bring suite/ charges/ complaints 3.Level accusation

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