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Using Frame Semantics to analyse semantic shift, expansion and divergence in NNS English: the case of 'best' and 'terror' in Malaysian English

Lexical creativity in New Englishes, the literature shows, pushes linguistic borders and in some instances gives rise to debates on whether a form is really creative or merely divergent. This paper reports on a study of the use of the words 'best' and 'terror' in spoken Malaysian English, which in many instances, are rather different from the way they are used in native as well as other varieties of English. A corpus-based method will be employed in the study to generate the data that is needed to analyse the use of the two words in spoken Malaysian English. The spoken sub-corpora of *ICE Malaysia* is the source corpus. The way in which the words are used in the Malaysian context, and the meanings they acquire due to this use will be analysed using Frame Semantics. Frame Semantics provides a semantic and syntactic combinatorial framework that helps to show the system of concepts or frame(s) of the words. To discover the extent to which the two words shift, expand or are divergent in meaning in comparison to native use, the outcome of the analysis will be compared with the information on the two words in FrameNet, an online lexical resource for contemporary English that is based on the principles of Frame Semantics. It is hoped that the findings will provide some new understanding of creativity and linguistic acceptability particularly in the context of New Englishes and other varieties of NNS English.