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A conceptual analysis  
of a set of English and French verbs  
from an axiological point of view

by Bert Leo Irma PEETERS

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A thesis submitted for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of the Australian National  
University

"All parts of the present thesis,  
with the exception of quotes  
identified as such, consist of  
original work undertaken by the  
candidate"

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bert Leo Irma Peeters', written in dark ink. The signature is positioned above the typed name.

Signed : Bert Leo Irma PEETERS

## ABSTRACT

The aims of the present work are manifold and various. It has been the author's intention to provide a contribution to the study of linguistic meaning by slightly adapting the methodology of **conceptual analysis** (i.e., Anna WIERZBICKA's approach to semantics), and looking at it from the point of view of **axiology** (i.e., André MARTINET's approach to semantics); furthermore, to investigate the meaning of a set of verbs according to the methodology just referred to; finally, to indicate how **conceptual axiology** can promote the study of lexical relations (and, possibly, the study of translational adequacy as well).

Part One, essentially, describes how conceptual axiology differs from conceptual analysis. One difference is that the former makes a distinction between "formulas" and "glosses": a formula reflects the meaning of a word in a particular **syntactic frame** (e.g., "X began to Z"), whereas a gloss expresses the meaning of a word in a particular sentence (e.g. "John began to run"). A gloss, therefore, is a "realized formula". Formulas and glosses constitute a hypothesis of what speakers want to convey to their addressees. Another difference between conceptual axiology and conceptual analysis resides in the role that **linguistic economy** plays within the former. It is argued, among other things, that no two words can permanently have the same value (inherent economy of the language).

Part Two is the "backbone" of the investigation. It applies the methodology of conceptual axiology to verbs denoting a commencement, a continuation, or a cessation in English and in French. It is shown that there are some remarkable differences in the way in which both languages encode these concepts by means of verbs. Sixteen verbs were selected for this empirical study, of which eight are English and eight French.

Part Three provides a summary and an outlook. In the latter part, it is claimed that the empirical study of sixteen verbs undertaken in Part Two can, and as a matter of fact should, be enlarged to include all words denoting a commencement, a continuation or a cessation. The result would be a study of what the author, in earlier publications, has called an **axiological field**. A few remarks on the possibility of checking translational adequacy conclude the dissertation. It is hoped that a more comprehensive study of this kind could eventually lead to the publication of new translations, which are better than the existing ones.

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Bert Peeters  
January 1989

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