

FN goes NIF: Integrating FrameNet in the NLP Interchange Format

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Abstract

FrameNet (FN) is a large-scale lexical database for English developed at ICSI Berkeley that describes word senses in terms of Frame semantics. FN has been converted to RDF LOD by ISTC-CNR, together with a large corpus of text annotated with FN. NIF is an RDF/OWL format and protocol for exchanging text annotations between NLP tools as Linguistic Linked Data. This paper reviews the FN-LOD representation, compares it to NIF, and describes a simple way to integrate FN in NIF, which does not use any custom classes or properties.

Keywords: FrameNet, NLP Interchange Format, NIF, Linguistic LOD

1. Introduction

FrameNet (FN) 8 is a large-scale linguistic resource for English developed at ICSI UC Berkeley. It documents the syntactic and semantic combinations (valences) of predicative word senses in terms of frames, lexical units, frame elements, and relations between them.

- **Frames** are conceptual situations along with their participants (eg `frame:Statement` corresponds to an event in which a statement is made)
- **Lexical Units (LU)** are phrases or words that evoke frames (eg `lu:announce.v` and `lu:declare.v` both evoke `frame:Statement`)
- **Frame Elements (FE)** are roles taken by participants in a frame: things, entities, places, etc) (eg `fe:Speaker.statement`, `fe:Message.statement`)

The FN lexical database also comprises a corpus of annotated sentences that exemplify all the above. FN has been converted to Linked Open Data (LOD) by ISTC-CNR 6, together with a large corpus of text annotated with FN. Below we refer to this conversion as FN-LOD. (Note: the Manually Annotated Sub-Corpus (MASC) 7 also includes FN, and 4 describes plans to interlink it with LOD. However, the MASC download page does not include LOD (RDF) formats.)

The NLP Interchange Format (NIF) 3 is a set of ontologies, specifications and software to enable the exchange of linguistic annotations as RDF/OWL LOD between Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools. The NIF model includes a core ontology to represent textual annotations and binding to text and reuses NLP vocabularies, such as: ITS and NERD for Named Entity Recognition (NER) (individuals and classes respectively), OLIA for modeling model tagsets produced by various types of NLP tools, MARL for sentiment/opinion, etc.

See 3 for a description of NIF, and 1 for a brief overview of NIF and related ontologies. An extensive bibliography is available on Zotero. Below we use "NIF" to refer to the core NIF ontology.

This paper reviews the FN-LOD representation, compares it to NIF, and describes a simple way to integrate FN in

NIF so that FrameNet-based annotations can be produced and consumed by NIF-compliant services. Crucially, this integration is achieved without resorting to any custom vocabulary (no new classes or properties). Instead, we align the core items of NIF and FN-LOD.

This FN-NIF integration is used in the Multisensor project (MS) 5. MS applies semantic technologies to the analysis of multimedia (including news articles and social media), and has standardized on using NIF for data exchange, in order to facilitate interoperation and extensibility.

Accompanying materials are available for download, including Orgmode source (`org`) and all local files referenced in the paper: Turtle RDF (`ttl`), ontologies in Manchester Notation (`omn`), figures in PlantUML (`puml`) and `png`.

We will use the following example sentence to illustrate the proposed integration:

Electrolux announced today the theme for its design competition.

1.1. SEMAFOR

Some softwares are available for automatic FN annotation. We used SEMAFOR 2 to annotate the sample sentence.

SEMAFOR uses a dependency parse (shown on top of Fig 1) to generate candidate frames for the sentence (shown at the bottom). Here we have highlighted the `Statement` frame, invoked by `lu:announce.v` and having FEs `Speaker`, `Time` and `Message`. The other candidate frames are dimmed out.

It may be easier to see the candidate frames in SEMAFOR's vertical layout (Fig 2). Here each column represents a frame.

1.2. SEMAFOR Candidate Frame Filtering

SEMAFOR offers a JSON format (`./SEMAFOR.json`) where one can see the candidate frames and their targets (LUs) and FEs. It includes a `score` for each frame, which can help us pick the best frames:

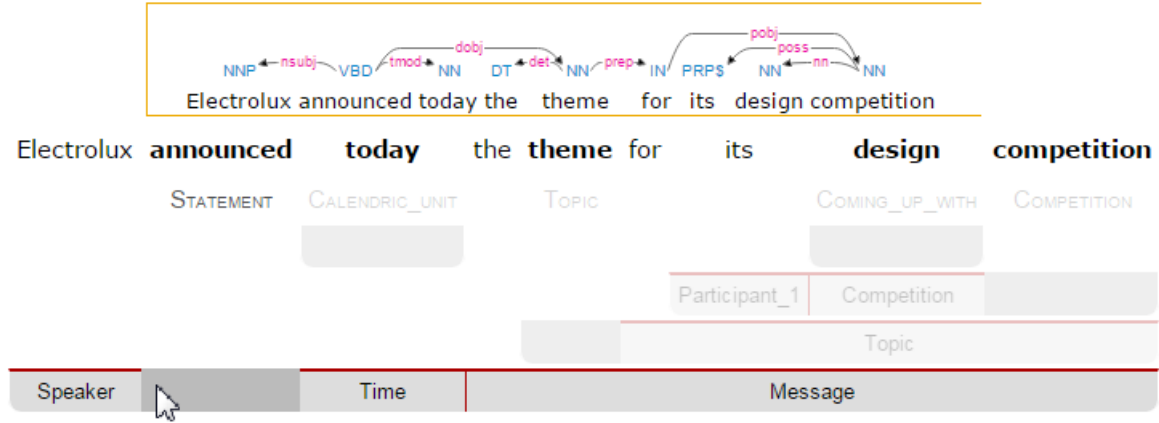


Figure 1: SEMAFOR Output, Horizontal Layout

| | Statement | Calendric unit | Topic | Coming up with | Competition |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| Electrolux | Speaker | | | | |
| announced | Statement | | | | |
| today | Time | Calendric_unit | | | |
| the | Message | | | | |
| theme | | | Topic | | |
| for | | | Topic | | |
| its | | | | | Participant_1 |
| design | | | | Coming_up_with | Competition |
| competition | | | | | Competition |

Figure 2: SEMAFOR Output, Vertical Layout

| Frame | Score |
|----------------|-------|
| Statement | 113.2 |
| Competition | 54.6 |
| Coming_up_with | 50.7 |
| Calendric_unit | 30.4 |
| Topic | 25.4 |

In this case the two top-scoring candidates (Statement and Competition) are the best frames. Calendric_unit is too small (equal to `lu:Time.statement`), Coming_up_with is wrong, and Topic is part of Statement.

We propose a simple approach to filter candidate frames based on score and a dependency tree structure (see Fig 6):

- Order candidate frames by decreasing score
- Repeat:
 - Add the highest scoring frame f
 - Discard any frames that are governed by f in the dependency tree

2. FN Ontologies

The OWL ontology representation of FN is described in 6, but a lot of technical details are missing, so one has to read

the FN Book 8 to understand the ontologies. There is a partial ontology diagram in the paper, but it doesn't show all classes and relations. Some elements are commented extensively using texts from the FN Book, but we found these texts more understandable when reading them in the book, since the comments don't capture the context. Many elements are not documented, eg class `fn:Header`, data property `fn:frame_cBy (xsd:string)`, etc. One can only surmise that `fn:frame_cBy` is the ID of the person who created the frame.

In this section we describe the available FN ontologies and RDF data files, provide diagrams to facilitate understanding, and derived files that are easier to consume.

2.1. Prefixes

FN uses the following prefixes, which we registered in `prefix.cc`.

| prefix | description |
|--------|---------------------|
| fn: | FN metamodel (tbox) |
| frame: | frame |
| fe: | frame element |
| lu: | lexical unit |
| st: | semantic type |

2.2. fntbox ontology

The *FN terminology box* fntbox is the FN metamodel. It's an OWL ontology that uses Restrictions extensively, and is easiest to understand in Manchester notation (OMN): `./fntbox.omn`. It has 16 Classes, 67 ObjectProperties, 49 DataProperties. Online documentation (OWLDoc) is available.

Most relations have inverses, which actually hinders understanding the *data hierarchy*. The PROV ontology designers have concluded that inverses actually harm interoperability by exerting a higher reasoning or querying cost:

When all inverses are defined for all properties, modelers may choose from two logically equivalent properties when making each assertion. Although the two options may be logically equivalent, developers consuming the assertions may need to exert extra effort to handle both (e.g., by either adding an OWL reasoner or writing code and queries to handle both cases). This extra effort can be reduced by preferring one inverse over another.

We agree with them and recommend to use exactly the FN properties shown in Fig 5, and **not** their inverses.

We made a diagram (Fig 3) showing all classes (`./fntbox.png`, source `./fntbox.puml`), their relations (object properties) and fields (data properties). For some properties we figured out the range from Restrictions; properties having a Union as domain are shown several times on the diagram.

To understand **fntbox** consider the classes in two groups and navigate top-down.

First are classes that represent texts and their annotation with frame instances and other linguistic info:

- **Header** holds together all **FullTextAnnotation** and **CorpDoc** about the same frame
- **FullTextAnnotation** represents a mode of annotation where sentences are "preselected" by a given text
- **CorpDoc** is a corpus comprising of documents and sentences that are carefully chosen by lexicographers to illustrate the possible valences of LUs, i.e. make various frames for each sense of each LU
- **Sentence** holds the text being annotated and some identifying information
- **AnnotationSet** is a set of annotations about one frame. One sentence may have several frames and they may even overlap
- **Layer** is a subset of annotations with a single purpose, indicated in `fn:layer_name`. Often used ones:
 - **Target**: LU that is target of the frame. Such layer has a single label
 - **FE**: frame elements

- **PENN**: part of speech (eg VBD, VVN, dt, nn)
- **PT**: phrase type (eg NP, AJP, PP, PPing)
- **GF**: grammatical function (eg Ext, Obj, Dep, Comp)
- **NER**: named entity recognition (eg person, location)

- **Label** is a word or phrase in an annotated Sentence (indicated by index `label_start`, `label_end`) that:

- Plays the role of LU instance. This is indicated by `fn:label_name` being "Target", and it's the single **Label** in a layer having the same `fn:layer_name`
- Or plays the role of FE instance. In this case `fn:label_FE` points to the FE definition (eg `fe:Speaker.statement`) and `fn:label_name` corresponds (eg "Speaker")
- Or carries a grammatical or POS tag in `label_name`
- Or indicates a lexically omitted FE (see 8 sec 3.2.3 Null instantiation) using `fn:label_itype` (eg "CNI", "DNI", etc), in which case `label_start`, `label_end` are omitted

Then are frame definition classes:

- **Frame** is a structure that abstracts over real-world situations, obtained through linguistic attestation
- **LexUnit** is the head-word of a sentence or sub-sentence that invokes the frame. An important goal of the FN project is to capture the meaning of words through annotated examples, that's why the LU can point to an **AnnotationSet** that supports it. It can also carry simple statistics (**SentenceCount**) used for managing the work of annotators
- **Lexeme** is the linguistic representation of a LU. One LU can have several lexemes
- **FrameElement** are entities (things, actors, times, messages, etc) that participate in a frame. They are classified with **FE_coreType** into Core, Core-Unexpressed, Extra-Thematic, Peripheral
- **FECoreSet** describes a set of alternative FEs, one of which must be present in the frame. A frame can have several core sets
- **SemType** classifies frames, FEs and LUs by type. Eg some sem types are:
 - for **Frame**: **Non-perspectivalized_frame**, **Non-Lexical_Frame**
 - for **FE**: **Sentient** (an agent), **Artifact**, **Message**, **State_of_affairs**

to underscores (eg transformed `lu:swing_(into).v` to `lu:swing__into_.v`). Then we converted it to `./fnabox.ttl`, which is more readable: all individuals are sorted by name and all statements about an individual are together.

Eg the triples about `frame:Statement` include:

```
frame:Statement
  fn:hasFrameElement fe:Time.statement,
    fe:Iteration.statement... ;
  fn:hasLexUnit lu:gloat.v, lu:explain.v,
    lu:declaration.n, lu:talk.v... ;
  fn:isInheritedBy frame:Telling,
    frame:Reveal_secret, frame:Recording... ;
  fn:isUsedBy frame:Unattributed_information,
    frame:Adducing... ;
  fn:uses frame:Communication .
```

Statements about a couple of the core FEs in that frame:

```
fe:Speaker.statement a fn:FrameElement ;
  fn:hasSemType st:Sentient ;
  fn:hasSuperFE fe:Speaker.speak_on_topic... .
fe:Message.statement a fn:FrameElement ;
  fn:hasSemType st:Message ;
  fn:hasSuperFE fe:Message.encoding,
    fe:Message.communication... .
```

2.5. fndata

`fndata_v5` is a corpus of FN annotations provided in RDF by ISTC-CNR. It's 540Mb RDF/XML (292Mb Turtle, 1.03Gb NTriples) and comprises 3.8M triples. It includes 5946 sentences and 20361 frame instances (`annotationSetFrame`), i.e. 3.4 frames per sentence. The info about each sentence takes 640 triples on average; about a quarter of these are pure frame instance info (45 triples per frame).

We extracted all triples about `iran_missile_fullTextAnnotation_sentence_52` into `./iran_missile_sentence_52.ttl`. This is sentence 3 of paragraph 10 of a `fullTextAnnotation` corpus named "iran_missile":

This project was focused on the development of a longer ranged (150 - 200 km) and more heavily armed version of the Israeli Gabriel anti - ship missile (not as sometimes reported with the development of a ballistic missile based upon Israeli Jericho surface - to - surface missile technology).

Extracting the triples was easy since the URLs of nodes in these triples share the same base

This file played a crucial role in allowing us to understand the structure of FN RDF data and the meaning of most fields (see Fig 3 and field descriptions above).

- This subset includes 6 manually annotated frames: *Gizmo*, *Bearing_arms*, *Cause_to_make_progress*, *Cause_to_make_progress*, *Project*, *Type*
- SEMAFOR reports these frames (except *Gizmo*), and a number of smaller frames (often consisting of a single word): *Artifact*, *Cardinal_numbers*, *Degree*, *Duration_attribute*, *Frequency*, *Increment*,

Part_inner_outer, *Place_weight_on*, *Range*, *Statement*, *Vehicle*, *Weapon*

Gizmo is invoked by this phrase: "*surface - to - surface missile technology*". It is not recognized by SEMAFOR probably because it may have an older set of frame definitions.

3. Comparing FN to NIF

Since our goal is to integrate FN to NIF, we'll start with a comparison between the two. Compare `fn:box` (Fig 3) to the NIF class and property diagram (Fig 4).

3.1. Text Framing

The document is the basic level at which there is correspondence between FN and NIF: `fn:Document` and `nif:Context`. The text is stored in `fn:text`, respectively `nif:isString`.

At the level above document, FN has `fn:CorpDoc` or `fn:FullTextAnnotation` (two kinds of corpora). NIF uses `nif:Context` for this as well, using `nif:broaderContext` to point to higher-level contexts (but we are not aware of NIF data actually using this pattern).

Below document, `fn:Sentence` is the basic FN level to which frames are attached. Then follow `fn:AnnotationSet`, `fn:Layer`, `fn:Label`. Char offsets are attached to `fn:Label`: `fn:label_start`, `fn:label_end`. NIF uses a generic class `nif:Structure` with subclasses `Paragraph`, `Sentence`, `Phrase`, `Word`, etc. Char offsets are specified at each level (`nif:beginIndex`, `nif:endIndex`).

One can also provide the text at this level (`nif:anchorOf`), though this is redundant because `referenceContext/isString` is mandatory and contains the full text.

3.2. Text Links

Every NIF string (`Paragraph`, `Sentence`, `Phrase`, `Word` etc) must point to the enclosing context (`nif:referenceContext`). NIF has property `nif:subString` (and inverse `nif:superString`) that can be used to point uniformly from higher level texts to lower level texts (eg from `Paragraph` to `Sentence` to `Phrase` to `Word`). However it is not often used. There is also a specialized property `nif:word` (inverse `nif:sentence`) that points from a sentence down to its words; but it is not declared as specialization of `nif:subString`. One can also make chains of sentences (`nif:previousSentence`, `nif:nextSentence`) and words (`nif:previousWord`, `nif:nextWord`), and point to the first/last word of a sentence.

In contrast, FN has non-uniform treatment of links: to navigate from `Sentence` to its strings (`Label`), one has to follow the property path `sentenceInDocument/annoForSentence/hasLayer/hasLabel`.

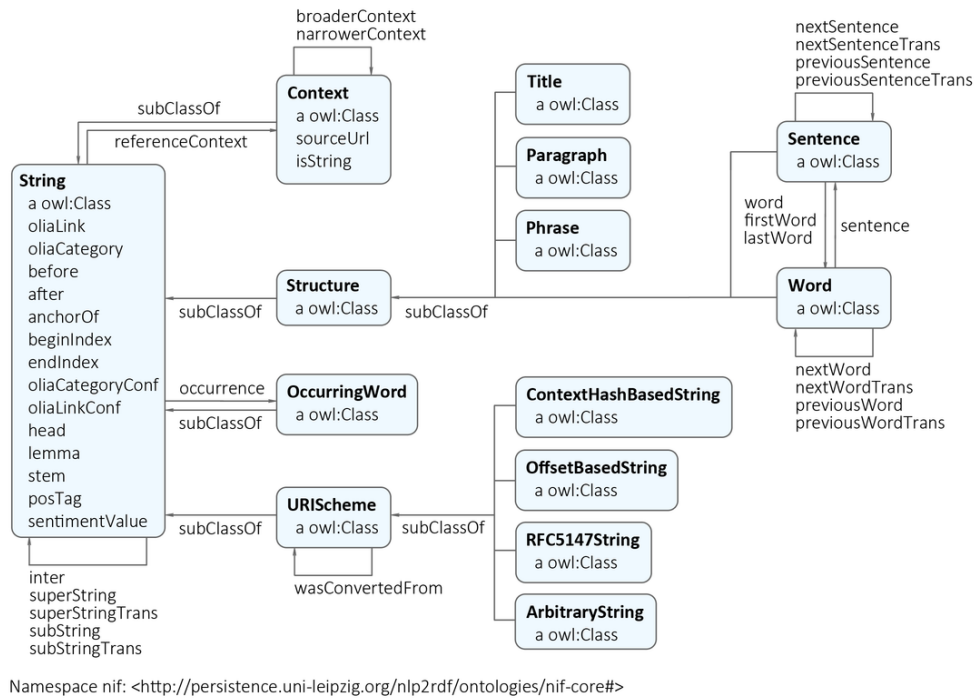


Figure 4: NIF Core Ontology

3.3. Text Nodes

FN doesn't recommend any convention for the URLs of text nodes, but you can see a pattern in sec 2.5.. Eg `iran_missile_fullTextAnnotation_sentence_52_annotationSet_6_layer_2_label_0` is the URL of label 0 in layer 2 in set 6 of sentence_52 (which is actually sentence 3 of paragraph 10 of the fullTextAnnotation corpus. Note: labels, layers and sets use only even numbers in this representation). This label represents the phrase *surface-to-surface missile* (from offset 282 to 253) representing `fe:Use.gizmo` of `frame:Gizmo`. This convention makes labels **relative** to annotation sets (frame instances), and indeed this is borne out by the fntbox class diagram (sec 2.2.).

In contrast, NIF strongly recommends to adopt a URL scheme that is based on character offsets and is thus **global** within the document (`nif:Context`). The class `nif:RFC5147String` provides such a scheme. The above phrase would be addressed like this (`<#char=0,2353>` represents the complete text).

```
<#char=282,253> a nif:Phrase;
  nif:referenceContext <#char=0,2353>.
```

The reason is to ensure interoperability between different NLP tools that all output NIF format over the same text. Using a uniform node addressing scheme ensures that the triples produced by the different tools will "mesh" together. This is perhaps the most significant difference between FN and NIF:

- FN defines Labels "as needed" by linguistic annotation, and locally. Several Label nodes can point to the same piece of text (offsets in the document). Labels are not shared between different annotations (NLP features).

- NIF typically defines Strings for every word and sentence of the document, globally. Each piece of text is represented by one node (but of course, Words overlap their containing Phrases and Phrases overlap their containing Sentences).

Several NLP features can be attached to this node:

- `nif:oliaLink` for syntactic individual
- `nif:oliaCategory` for syntactic class
- `its:taIdentRef` for Named Entity individual
- `its:taClassRef` for Named Entity class; etc

4. Integrating FN in NIF

As we have seen in the previous section, the FN and NIF models for representing annotated text are totally different. Therefore we propose to represent the minimum possible FN nodes, and point to them from `nif:String` using `nif:oliaLink`.

We propose a representation that integrates FN in NIF (Fig 5), relying on a dependency parse of the sentence. Let *head* be a head-word that governs *word1..N* (and by extension, the phrases governed by these words). Assume *head* corresponds to *lexUnit* that invokes *frame*, and the frame has elements *frameElement1..N*, corresponding to *word1..N*. Just for illustration, assume the frame also has a lexically omitted FE *frameElementN+1* of type CNI (constructional null instantiation).

The easiest way to understand the representation is to think of `fn:AnnotationSet` as **frame instance** and think of `fn:Label` as **FE instance**. The representation consists of 3 parts:

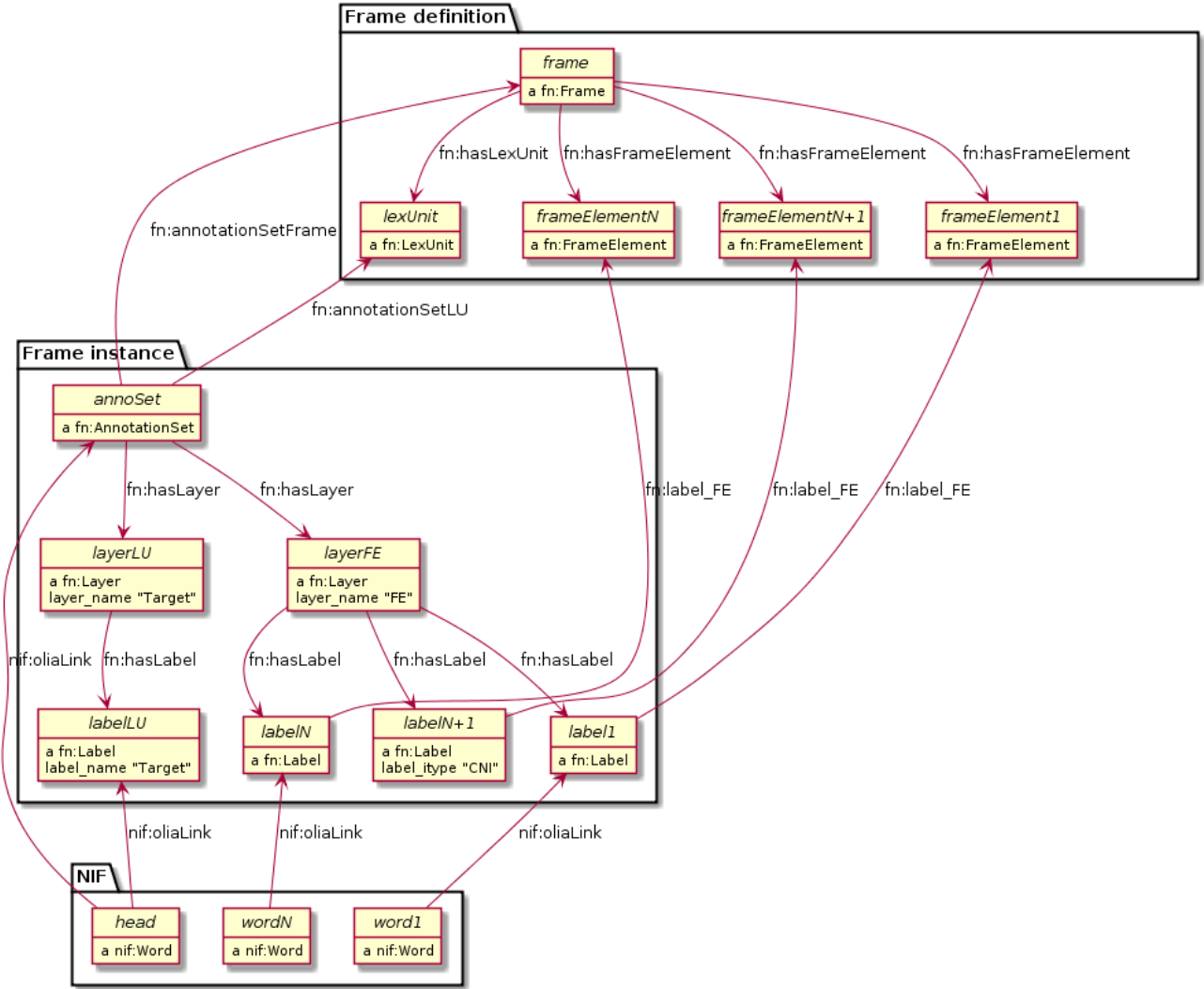


Figure 5: FrameNet Integration in NIF

- **NIF** includes word offset info, as well as the dependency tree from *head* to *word1..N* (not shown). `nif:dependency` or specific dependency parsing properties are used for that tree. Eg MS uses `upf-deep:deepDependency`
- **Frame instance** connects `nif:Words` to frames.
- **Frame definition** is defined in the `fnabox` ontology (sec 2.4.)

We don't use `fe:label_start` and `fe:label_end` because those would duplicate `nif:beginIndex` and `nif:endIndex` unnecessarily.

The same word could participate in several frames (as LU or FE), in which case it will have multiple `nif:oliaLink`.

The lexically omitted FE *labelN+1* (of type CNI) has no corresponding NIF node. Nevertheless, it is a full participant in the frame.

The nodes *labelLU* and *layerLU* are redundant and carry no information (except the fixed string "Target"). There's a direct link `nif:oliaLink` from *head* to *annoSet*, which itself

points to *frame* and *lexUnit*, so there's little reason to use the indirect path `fn:hasLayer/fn:hasLabel`. In fact the indirect path can be considered harmful, since it causes *head* to have two `nif:oliaLink`, which could cause confusion if *head* participates in several frames. We have included these redundant nodes in Fig 5 to be faithful to the `fntbox` ontology 2.2.. But they can safely be omitted, which we have done in sec 4.2..

The links of *label1..N+1* (`fn:hasLabel` and `fn:label_FE`) are not redundant. The former ties the frame **instance** together, while the latter points the specific FE in the frame **definition**.

4.1. Querying FN NIF

FN in NIF involves a fairly complex graph structure. In this section we show a few queries to extract data from that graph. We use SPARQL property paths liberally (including inverses `^`) and indicate the input parameter of a query with `$`. We don't bother to check the types of intermediate nodes, relying that the specific FN properties will occur only on appropriate nodes.

Find the Frame and LU corresponding to a head-word (if

indeed it is the head-word of a frame-annotated phrase):

```
select * {
  $head nif:oliaLink ?annoSet.
  ?annoSet fn:annotationSetLU ?lu;
  fn:annotationSetFrame ?frame}
```

We could also use the round-about path

```
select * {
  $head nif:oliaLink [
    fn:label_name "Target";
    ^fn:hasLabel/^fn:hasLayer ?annoSet.
  ?annoSet fn:annotationSetLU ?lu;
  fn:annotationSetFrame ?frame]}
```

After getting the Frame and LU, we'd want to get all FE and the corresponding *word1..N*:

```
select ?fe ?word ?itype {
  # Find the ?annoSet and ?frame
  $head nif:oliaLink ?annoSet.
  ?annoSet fn:annotationSetFrame ?frame.
  # Get all ?fe, ?label, (optionally) ?word
  ?frame fn:hasFrameElement ?fe.
  ?annoSet fn:hasLayer/fn:hasLabel ?label.
  ?label fn:label_FE ?fe.
  optional {?word nif:oliaLink ?label}
  optional {?label fn:label_itype ?itype}}
```

Each row of the result-set will have a ?fe of the frame, and either ?itype (for lexically omitted FEs) or the corresponding NIF ?word. We don't return ?label because it's used only for connectivity but doesn't carry useful info. Find all frames of a sentence together with the corresponding fn:AnnotationSet. Usually nif:word is used to point out the words of a sentence (that is also the practice in MS):

```
select * {
  $sentence nif:word/nif:oliaLink ?annoSet.
  ?annoSet fn:annotationSetFrame ?frame}
```

Find all frames of the complete text (nif:Context) together with the corresponding fn:AnnotationSet. NIF mandates that nif:referenceContext is used to connect each word to the complete text:

```
select * {
  $context ^nif:referenceContext/
    nif:oliaLink ?annoSet.
  ?annoSet fn:annotationSetFrame ?frame}
```

4.2. Representing the Sample Sentence in FN NIF

Fig 6 represents the sample sentence as NIF, adding FN annotations. We represent 3 of the 5 candidate frames (Statement, Topic, Competition); the filtering described in sec 1.2. would leave only the top frame Statement

- The top layer shows Frame definitions (fntbox)
- The bottom layer shows NIF words and dependency links between them

- The dotted arrows represent frame instances, connecting words to frames. For simplicity, we don't show the Label, Layer, AnnotationSet nodes (see sec 4.)

./fn-nif-example.ttl represents all SEMAFOR candidate frames. Compared to sec 4., we elide the redundant nodes *labelLU* and *layerLU*.

5. Conclusions

We presented an integration of FN in NIF that allows us to emit various linguistic info about text corpora in NIF in an integrated way: frames (FN), POS tagging (eg Penn), morphological, syntactic and dependency parsing (OLIA), named entities (ITS), etc. This integrated representation is used by the MS project.

5.1. Future Work

5.1.1. Represent Confidence

Sec 1.2. remarked that SEMAFOR emits a confidence score for each candidate frame. It would be useful to emit this score, allowing clients to select the most probable frames.

NIF has a property nif:oliaConf (confidence of nif:oliaLink and nif:oliaCategory). But we cannot use it, since the same word may participate in several frames and thus have several nif:oliaLink.

We could use the NIF Stanbol profile to associate several annotations with the same String and emit confidence for each one. However:

- Compared to NIF Simple, it uses completely different properties, eg fise:entity-reference vs its:taIdentRef and fise:entity-type vs its:taClassRef (we raised an issue against the NIF ontology about this).
- There are stability problems: NIF Stanbol shows different classes and properties compared to 3 fig.3 and Stanbol EntityAnnotation Structure, eg

| NIF Stanbol | NIF and Stanbol |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| nif:EntityAnnotation | fise:EntityAnnotation |
| nifs:extractedFrom | fise:extracted-from |
| nif:oliaConf | fise:confidence |

5.1.2. Create an RDF Shape Description

Our representation doesn't define any new properties: it only combines FN and NIF properties in an appropriate way. From this point of view, it is not an ontology but an *application profile*, *data pattern* or *RDF Shape*. Recently the W3C RDF Shapes working group has made great advances in analyzing requirements for defining data shapes and formalizing languages to describe them.

It would be useful to define the FN-NIF integration (Fig 6) as an RDF Shape. We could use the brief Shex language or the more formal SHACL language.

5.2. Acknowledgements

This work is part of the MultiSensor project that has received funding from the European Union under grant agreement FP7 610411. Object diagrams are made with PlanTUML

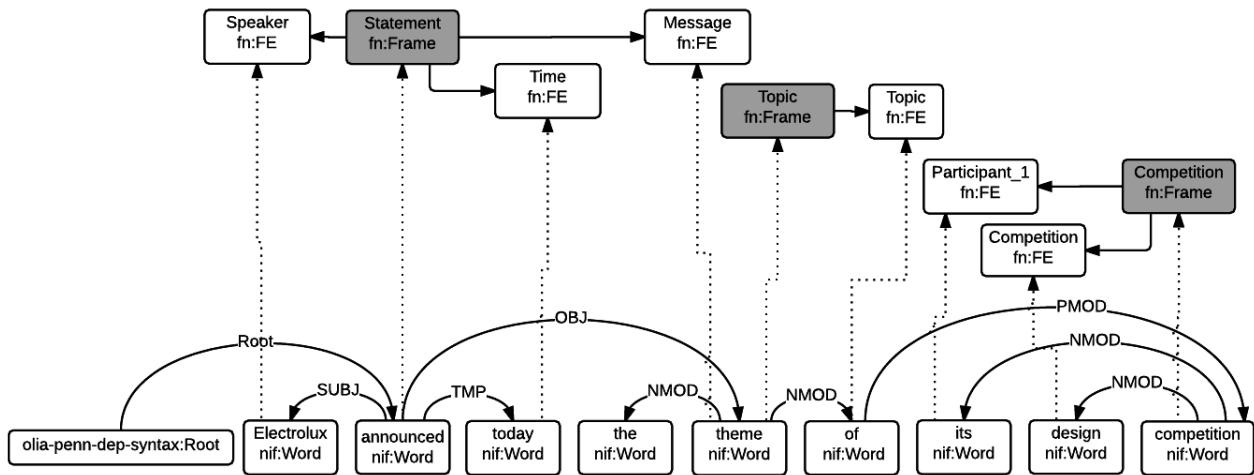


Figure 6: FN NIF Example

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All links were last accessed on 20 Jan 2016

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