

## NLP Tutorial 1: Verb Subcategorisation Frames

The intention of this tutorial is to get you to think explicitly about the description of a class of linguistic data, and to try to learn to tap your (possibly native-speaker) intuitions about English.

### 1. Preliminary Data Collection

Using the verbs in the list below, determine the range of subcategorisation frames licensed by English verbs (in their active declarative uses). Use the following categories:

np

pp[+p] i.e. with a specific preposition.

pp i.e. with any, or at least a number of prepositions.

s[fin] - e.g. (that) Fred eats cakes

s[bse] - e.g. (that) Fred eat cakes

vp[bse] - e.g. eat cakes

vp[inf] - e.g. to eat cakes

vp[ing] - e.g. eating cakes

vp[pasp] - e.g. eaten

ap

*adjective phrase*

*hope sentence. I hope that sentence.*

Try to think of all uses of a verb, and if different subcategorisation frames seems to correspond to a difference in meaning, treat these as separate homophonous items. Note down any restrictions that a verb or one use of it puts on the form of its subject (e.g. sentential, 'it', 'there').

Treat the complements as a set, i.e. unordered, but see if you can detect any constraints on order.

### 2. Extending the coverage

For each class, try to think of at least one other member that shares the same distribution. Do the classes you defined in stage 1 exhaust the possibilities?

### 3. Semantics

Do the syntactic classes that you have defined correspond to semantic ones? When a verb subcategorises a vp, what is understood as the subject of that vp?

### 4. Interpreting Grammatical Descriptions

Can you think of any other ways of getting the required grammatical coverage than having a phrase structure rule for each subcat frame?

30/6/87.

laugh

pp [at, about], nothing.

break

np, nothing (the cave broke)

(CRASHED)

kill

np

NAME, STAR.

send

call

put

turn

see

expect

np, S, vp (inf), np np

persuade

np, vp (inf)

hope

vp (inf) s[fin]

tend

vp (inf), np,

bother

vp, pp (about) sentential

(SURPRISE)

promise

vp (inf) np vp (inf) np np

believe

ask

seem

be

can

have

Verb  
Component