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Representing the Continuum between Arguments and Adjuncts within Predicate-Frames

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Introduction

In the context of an automated task of acquisition of predicate-frames in Japanese, we introduce a method to observe and evaluate distinction criteria between arguments and adjuncts on a large scale. Rather than a binary classification, we are interested in a representation of the continuum between arguments and adjuncts.

complements = arguments ∪ adjuncts

Method and resources

We aim at modeling the two extremes of the continuum between arguments and adjuncts.

Prototypical argument: a type of complement which appears in every predicate-frame (i.e. usage) of a given verb.

Prototypical adjunct: a type of complement which never appears in any predicate-frame of a given verb.

Here, the goal is to build two lists of verbs, one list to retrieve prototypical arguments, one another to retrieve prototypical adjuncts. We rely on an existing resource: 動詞項構造シソーラス. We consider two case markers: wo (prototypical argument), and de (prototypical adjunct).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Predicate-frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wo-list of verbs</td>
<td>2,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de-list of verbs</td>
<td>4,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>動詞項構造シソーラス</td>
<td>5,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Comparison of the two lists of verbs with 動詞項構造シソーラス
For each list of verbs we retrieve instances of predicate-frames. We process about 1.9M sentences from the BCCWJ with a dependency parser to build examples as in figure 1.

Table 2. The two lists of examples
We build two lists of examples. In the wo-list, every complement marked with the wo particle is considered as an argument. In the de-list, every complement marked with the de particle is considered as an adjunct.

Evaluation

We evaluate distinction criteria on 31,531 examples, all containing at least one complement marked with the wo particle and one complement marked with the de particle.

We add an extra criterion which is the combination of ordering and head dependence (i.e. the product of their degree of autonomy).

Our evaluation method rely on the idea of a continuum between arguments and adjuncts. For a criterion to be relevant to this task, it needs to order properly the complements along the continuum. That is, even if a criterion assigns a low autonomy to an adjunct it can still be accurate if it assigns – in the same context – an even lower autonomy to an argument (as shown in table 3).

Table 3. Evaluation on the example of figure 1
It appears that accuracy can be slightly improved by combining different criteria.

Experiment

We apply two existing argument/adjunct distinction criteria to our lists of examples to compute a measure of autonomy expressing the placement of complements along the continuum. The autonomy measure ranges from 0 to 1. 0 corresponds to an argument, 1 corresponds to an adjunct.

Ordering: arguments tend to be closer to the verb than adjunct.

autonomy_{ordering}(c) = \frac{\text{distance}(c)}{\text{number of complements}}

Head dependence: arguments tend to cooccur with a narrower range of verbs than adjuncts.

autonomy_{head\_dependence}(c) = \frac{\text{productivity}(c)}{\text{count}(c)}

Complements are sorted according to their degree of autonomy toward the verb.

With both criteria it appears that prototypical arguments tend to have a lower autonomy than prototypical adjuncts.