

5.3 Homework Tip

When we argue that a sentence is bad for a given reason, it is important to provide evidence that there are no other possible reasons. The most convincing way to do this is to provide minimal pairs, that is, pairs sentences that differ only in the property in question and contrast in grammaticality. For example, to establish that *devour* requires an NP complement, it is more convincing to give the data in (1) than the data in (2).

(1) a. Pat devoured the ice-cream.

b. *Pat devoured.

(2) a. Pat devoured the ice-cream.

b. *The dogs devoured.

5.4 Further reading

Copestake, Ann, Dan Flickinger, Carl Pollard, and Ivan A. Sag. 1999. Minimal Recursion Semantics: an Introduction. Manuscript, Stanford University: CSLI.