

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to provide a survey of noun complementation in contemporary English, involving a variety of structural aspects. Some 400 complement-taking nouns (CTNs) taken from two learner's dictionaries have been investigated, together with a large number of examples selected from the Cobuild *Direct* Corpus. Using an eclectic approach to obtain a broad perspective, a number of syntactic and semantic criteria taken from various frameworks have been applied to the corpus examples to determine whether the post-head elements function as complements, as opposed to adjuncts. The criteria include obligatoriness, semantic restrictiveness, semantic (theta) roles, co-occurrence restrictions, preposition stranding, replaceability, pseudo-cleft and cleft constructions, mobility and proform-substitution. The investigation shows that the complement-adjunct distinction should be seen as a cline, ranging from the most typical complements, as in *her belief in God*, to less typical cases, as in *the current revival in popularity*.

The nouns have been categorised with regard to word formation. It is shown that approximately three quarters of the nouns are either derived from or related to other word classes, as in *insistence* and *familiarity*. The extent to which complements are "inherited" from their underlying verbs and adjectives has also been investigated, as exemplified by *dependence on . . .*, *suggestion that . . .* and *ability to . . .*. The study shows that for prepositional phrase complements (PPCs), approximately 34% are inherited, whereas for clausal complements, 52% of the complements are inherited. This implies that inheritance plays a less central role than often suggested by grammars of English.

The different structural types of complementation are accounted for in separate chapters: PPCs, as in *her allergy to pollen* (Ch. 4); prep + *-ing*-clause complements, as in *the prospect of being elected* (Ch. 5); *that*-clause complements, as in *the delusion that the crowd was cheering* (Ch. 6); and *to*-infinitival clause complements, as in *their vow to stay in the race* (Ch. 7). Further, the number and preferred order of complements, when more than one is present, are also accounted for (Ch. 8). As indicated by the material, double complements are rather infrequent and treble complements are rare. The internal order of complements appears to be relatively free, determined by factors such as complement length, end-weight and end-focus.

**Key words/phrases:** adjunct, complement, complementation, complementhood criteria, complement-taking nouns, prepositional phrase complement, prep + *-ing*-clause complement, *that*-clause complement, *to*-infinitival clause complement