# DD2417 Language Engineering 2a: Syntax

Johan Boye, KTH

## Formalizing syntax

We want an (automatic) procedure separating sequences of words that belong to the language from those who don't.

We'd like to identify who does what when/how/to whom .

- who: the subject
- does: the predicate
- what/when/how/to whom: the object, or adverbial, or complement

#### Information extraction

Among Republicans, 78% say that Biden did not win and 54% believe there is solid evidence of that, despite the fact that no such evidence exists.

```
CNN Politics, 2021-09-15.
```

```
Who? 78% of Republicans
Did? say
What? Biden did not win
When? -
How? -
```

#### Information extraction

Among Republicans, 78% say that Biden did not win and 54% believe there is solid evidence of that, despite the fact that no such evidence exists.

CNN Politics, 2021-09-15.

Who? 54% of Republicans

Did? believe

What? there is solid evidence that Biden did not win the election

When? -

How? despite the fact that no such evidence exists



#### Formalizing syntax

#### We'll have a look at two different formalisms:

- Context-free grammars (phrase-structure grammars), based on the notion of constituent or phrase
  - noun phrase, verb phrase, ...
- Dependency structures, based on the notion of grammatical functions
  - subject, predicate, complement, ...

## Word classes and interchangeability

Words of the same class can often be substituted for each other (but there are also many exceptions).

- There was a fly on the wall.
- There was a fear on the wall.
- Syntactically correct although the meaning is unclear.

But also a group of words can have the same role.

#### Constituents

A constituent is a group of words acting as a unit.

#### E.g. a noun phrase:

- Ideas entered his brain.
- An idea entered his brain.
- A brilliant idea entered his brain.
- A brilliant idea about prime numbers entered his brain.
- A brilliant idea about prime numbers that had struck him before several years earlier when he was working as a visiting professor in Paris entered his brain.
- etc.

#### Head words and modifiers

A phrase has a head and modifiers, e.g.:

A brilliant idea about prime numbers

- idea is the head
- Modifiers:
  - **a** 8
  - brilliant
  - about prime numbers (a prepositional phrase)

## Context-free grammars (CFG)



Noam Chomsky introduced context-free grammars in 1956.

Recall that a CFG consists of

- A set of terminal symbols (words, in our case)
- A set of non-terminal symbols (constituents, in our case)
- A set of rewrite rules on the form

$$A \rightarrow \alpha$$

where  $\alpha$  is a string of terminals and non-terminals.



#### Noun phrase

A noun phrase is a constituent where the head word is a noun, a pronoun, or a proper name.

NP o N Ideas NP o P He NP o PM John NP o DET N An idea NP o DET Adj N A great idea and a bad idea NP o DET Adj N PP A great idea about prime numbers etc.

where *PP* is a prepositional phrase.

#### **Nominals**

English (but not Swedish!) allows sequences of nouns. These are called nominals.

numbers
prime numbers
prime number theorem
prime number limit theorem
etc.

Nominal  $\rightarrow$  N Nominal  $\rightarrow$  Nominal N NP  $\rightarrow$  Nominal

## Prepositional phrases

A prepositional phrase has a preposition as a head word.

 $PP \rightarrow P NP$  about prime numbers

#### Verb phrases

```
VP \rightarrow V run VP \rightarrow V NP run a business VP \rightarrow V NP run a business in Sweden VP \rightarrow V PP run for president etc.
```

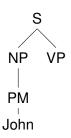
# DD2417 Language Engineering 2b: Syntax trees

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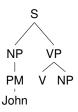
```
S 
ightarrow NP VP
NP 
ightarrow PM \mid Det N \mid Det N PP
VP 
ightarrow V NP \mid V NP PP
PP 
ightarrow P NP
N 
ightarrow pie \mid fridge
V 
ightarrow made
P 
ightarrow in
Det 
ightarrow the
PM 
ightarrow John
```



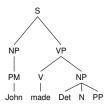
```
S 
ightarrow NP \ VP
NP 
ightarrow PM \ | \ Det \ N \ | \ Det \ N \ PP
VP 
ightarrow V \ NP \ | \ V \ NP \ PP
PP 
ightarrow P \ NP
N 
ightarrow pie \ | \ fridge
V 
ightarrow made
P 
ightarrow in
Det 
ightarrow the
PM 
ightarrow John
```



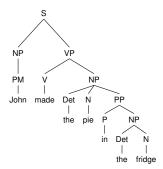
```
S 
ightarrow NP VP
NP 
ightarrow PM \mid Det N \mid Det N PP
VP 
ightarrow V NP \mid V NP PP
PP 
ightarrow P NP
N 
ightarrow pie \mid fridge
V 
ightarrow made
P 
ightarrow in
Det 
ightarrow the
PM 
ightarrow John
```



```
S 	o NP \ VP
NP 	o PM \ | \ Det \ N \ | \ Det \ N \ PP
VP 	o V \ NP \ | \ V \ NP \ PP
PP 	o P \ NP
N 	o pie \ | \ fridge
V 	o made
P 	o in
Det 	o the
PM 	o John
```

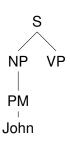


```
S \rightarrow NP \ VP
NP \rightarrow PM \mid Det \ N \mid Det \ N \ PP
VP \rightarrow V \ NP \mid V \ NP \ PP
PP \rightarrow P \ NP
N \rightarrow pie \mid fridge
V \rightarrow made
P \rightarrow in
Det \rightarrow the
PM \rightarrow John
```

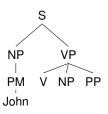


Suppose, at this point, we choose another rule.

```
S 
ightarrow NP \ VP
NP 
ightarrow PM \ | \ Det \ N \ | \ Det \ N \ PP
VP 
ightarrow V \ NP \ | \ V \ NP \ PP
PP 
ightarrow P \ NP
N 
ightarrow pie \ | \ fridge
V 
ightarrow made
P 
ightarrow in
Det 
ightarrow the
PM 
ightarrow John
```

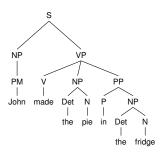


```
S \rightarrow NP \ VP
NP \rightarrow PM \mid Det \ N \mid Det \ N \ PP
VP \rightarrow V \ NP \mid V \ NP \ PP
PP \rightarrow P \ NP
N \rightarrow pie \mid fridge
V \rightarrow made
P \rightarrow in
Det \rightarrow the
PM \rightarrow John
```

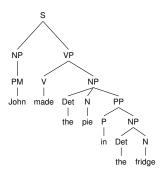


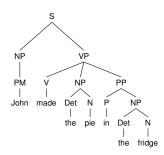
We could derive the same sentence, but in another way.

```
S 	o NP \ VP
NP 	o PM \mid Det \ N \mid Det \ N \ PP
VP 	o V \ NP \mid V \ NP \ PP
PP 	o P \ NP
N 	o pie \mid fridge
V 	o made
P 	o in
Det 	o the
PM 	o John
```



This sentence has two different syntax trees, so it is ambiguous.





#### Exercise

Write syntax trees for the sentences

John bought a watch.

John bought a watch in cash.

John bought a watch in pure gold.

John bought a watch in pure gold in cash.

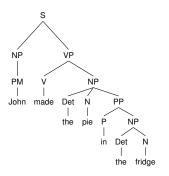
Invent the necessary grammar rules as you go along.

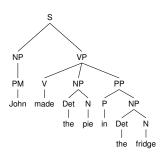
Use grammatically motivated constituents like NP, VP, etc.

# DD2417 Language Engineering 2c: Ambiguity

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This sentence has two different syntax trees, so it is ambiguous.





## Prepositional attachment ambiguity

#### 3 prepositional phrases give 5 analyses

- Put the block [[in the box on the table] in the kitchen]
- Put the block [[in the box] on the table in the kitchen]
- Put [[the block in the box] on the table] in the kitchen
- Put [the block [in the box on the table]] in the kitchen
- Put [the block in the box] [on the table in the kitchen]

Number of analyses grows as the Catalan numbers: 1, 2, 5, 14, 42, 132,...

## Coordination ambiguity



The News Gazette, 2018

## Modifier ambiguity



Pratt Tribune, Oct 28, 2017

Time flies like an arrow.

Time	flies	like	an	arrow
Noun	Verb	Prep	Det	Noun

Time	flies	like	an	arrow
Noun	Verb	Prep	Det	Noun
Noun	Noun	Verb	Det	Noun

Time	flies	like	an	arrow
Noun	Verb	Prep	Det	Noun
Noun	Noun	Verb	Det	Noun
Verb	Noun	Prep	Det	Noun

Time	flies	like	an	arrow
Noun	Verb	Prep	Det	Noun
Noun	Noun	Verb	Det	Noun
Verb	Noun	Prep	Det	Noun
Verb	Noun	Conj	Det	Noun

# DD2417 Language Engineering 2d: Parsing

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#### Parsing strategies

#### Top-down

- Start at the root node, expand tree by matching left-hand side of rules.
- Derive a tree whose leaves match the input.
- We might use rules that could never match the input.
- Watch out for loops VP → VP PP

#### Bottom-up

- Start at the leaves, build tree by matching right-hand side of rules.
- Derive a tree whose root is S.
- Builds structures that will never be used in the tree.

## Parsing and dynamic programming

The number of possible trees grows exponentially with sentence length.

A naive backtracking approach is too inefficient.

But alternative trees share subtrees, so we can use dynamic programming.

- No work is repeated.
- Gives polynomial algorithm.
- Example: CKY (Cocke-Kasami-Younger)

The CKY algorithm requires the grammar to be in Chomsky Normal Form (CNF).

All rules have the form  $A \rightarrow BC$  or  $A \rightarrow word$ .

If the grammar is not in CNF, it has to be rewritten.

#### Translation into CNF:

- $A \rightarrow BCD$  is replaced by  $X \rightarrow BX$  where X is a new symbol.
- $A \rightarrow B$  is replaced by  $A \rightarrow word_1$  ...  $A \rightarrow word_n$

where  $word_1 \dots word_n$  are all the words derivable from B.

#### Quiz: Translate into CNF:

```
S 	o NP \ VP
NP 	o NN \mid Det \ NN \mid Det \ NN \ PP
VP 	o V \mid V \ PP
PP 	o P \ NP
NN 	o girl \mid rain \mid coat
V 	o runs
P 	o in
Det 	o the
```

```
A 
ightarrow BCD \Rightarrow A 
ightarrow BX \ X 
ightarrow CD
where X is a new symbol.
A 
ightarrow B \Rightarrow A 
ightarrow word_1 \ ... \ A 
ightarrow word_n
where word_1 \ldots word_n
```

are all the words derivable

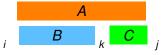
from B.

```
S \rightarrow NP VP
NP \rightarrow Det \ N \mid Det \ X
X \rightarrow NPP
VP \rightarrow V PP
PP \rightarrow P NP
N \rightarrow girl \mid rain \mid coat
NP \rightarrow girl \mid rain \mid coat
V \rightarrow runs
VP → runs
P \rightarrow in
Det \rightarrow the
```

## CKY algorithm

#### $A \rightarrow BC$

■ If there is an A somewhere in the input, then there has to be a B followed by a C



- If A extends from i to j, there must be a k, i < k < j, such that B extends from i to k, and C extends from k to j
- lacksquare 0 the 1 girl 2 in 3 the 4 coat 5 runs 6
- PP covers [2,5], PP → P NP
- *P* covers [2,3], *NP* covers [3,5]

## CKY algorithm

Partial parses are represented in (half a)  $N \times N$  table

- (*N* = length of input string)
- $\blacksquare$  cell [i,j] contains A if A covers i to j in the input string

		j						
		1	2	3	4	5		
	0	0-1	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5		
	1		1-2	1-3	1-4	1-5		
i	2	,		2-3	2-4	2-5		
	3				3-4	3-5		
	4					4-5		

## **CKY** algorithm

For A to cover [i, j]:

- $\blacksquare$   $A \rightarrow BC$  is a rule in the grammar
- there is a B in [i, k], and a C in [k, j], for some i < k < j
- to apply  $A \rightarrow BC$ , look for a B in [i, k], and a C in [k, j]

		j							
	1	2	3	4	5				
0	0-1	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5				
1		1-2	1-3	1-4	1-5				
2			2-3	2-4	2-5				
3				3-4	3-5				
4					4-5				

Example: Parse the sentence

<sub>0</sub> giant <sub>1</sub> cuts <sub>2</sub> in <sub>3</sub> welfare

given the grammar

```
S 
ightarrow NP VP N 
ightarrow giant NP 
ightarrow JJ NP N 
ightarrow cuts NP 
ightarrow NP PP N 
ightarrow welfare NP 
ightarrow N V 
ightarrow cuts PP 
ightarrow P NP JJ 
ightarrow giant VP 
ightarrow V PP P 
ightarrow in
```

## First translate into Chomsky Normal Form:

- remove NP → N
- lacktriangled add NP 
  ightarrow giant | cuts | welfare

```
S 	o NP VP N 	o giant

NP 	o JJ NP N 	o cuts

NP 	o NP PP N 	o welfare

NP 	o giant V 	o cuts

NP 	o cuts JJ 	o giant

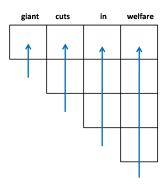
NP 	o welfare P 	o in

PP 	o P NP VP 	o V PP
```

Now fill the table left to right, bottom up.

When a cell is considered, everything needed to fill that cell is already in the table.

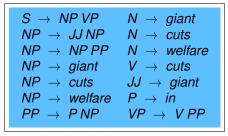
Nice property: Analyses input from left to right, in one sweep.

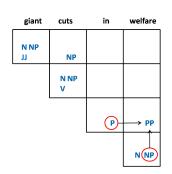


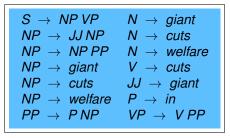
$egin{array}{lll} NP &  ightarrow JJNP & N \ NP &  ightarrow Siant & V \ NP &  ightarrow cuts & JJ \ NP &  ightarrow welfare & P \ \end{array}$	$ ightarrow giant \  ightarrow cuts \  ightarrow welfare \  ightarrow cuts \  ightarrow giant \  ightarrow in \  ightarrow V PP$
---	--

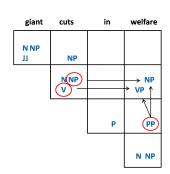
giant	cuts	in	welfare
N NP			
	N NP V		

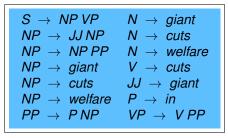
giant	cuts	in	welfare
N NP			
(11)—	→ NP		
	NNP V		

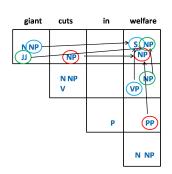




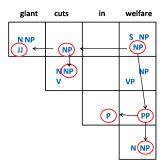








## Extracting trees from the CKY table



## Summary so far

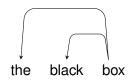
- Syntax can be described by means of context-free grammars
- Such grammars are generative
- Syntax trees describe the structure of sentences
- Ambiguous sentences have more than one tree
- By parsing (e.g. using the CKY algorithm), we can construct all trees for a given sentence (and grammar)

# DD2417 Language Engineering 2e: Dependency syntax

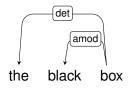
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## Dependency syntax provides an alternative view

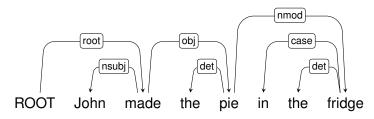
- Binary relations (dependencies) between words
- A head (governor) word is related to its modifiers (dependents)
- The dependencies form a tree.

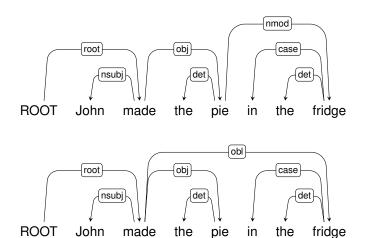


Usually the arcs are labeled with grammatical functions.



- The root of the tree of a whole sentence is almost always the main verb.
- Often a ROOT node is added (so every word is the child of some node).

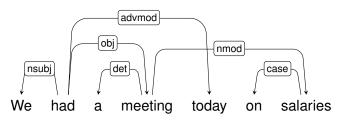




## **Projectivity**

A tree is projective if no edges cross.

In English, most sensible sentences and phrases are projective. Some exceptions:



## Universal dependencies

Where do the labels (nsubj, obj, det, ...) come from?

The Universal Dependencies initiative provides a common set of part-of-speech tags, morphological features, and dependency relations.

	Nominals	Clauses	Modifier words	Function Words
Core arguments	nsubj <u>obj</u> iobj	csubj ccomp xcomp		
Non-core dependents	obl vocative expl dislocated	advcl	advmod* discourse	aux cop mark
Nominal dependents	nmod appos nummod	acl	amod	det clf case
Coordination	MWE	Loose	Special	Other
conj cc	fixed flat compound	list parataxis	orphan goeswith reparandum	punct root dep

## Treebanks and annotated data

A treebank is a corpus in which each sentence has exactly one parse tree.

- Manual annotation by linguists
- Provides frequency information: How often are various relations/rules used?
- Reusability: Many parsers, part-of-speech taggers can be built upon it
- Provides a way to evaluate systems.

The Universal Dependencies website provides links to treebanks in may languages, using the same tags and relations.

## Dependency parsing

Parsing can be done using dynamic programming (Eisner's algorithm).

- This will give all parse trees of a given sentence in  $O(n^3)$  time
- Much like the CKY algorithm for context-free grammars

However, much more popular (and more efficient) is to use transition-based parsing

- Greedy, deterministic algorithm
- Returns a single, projective, tree
- By using statistics from a treebank, the returned tree is most often (but not always) the "best" tree (the most probable interpretation of the sentence)

# DD2417 Language Engineering 2f: Dependency parsing

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## Transition-based dependency parsing

## A parser configuration consists of:

- the buffer, initially containing the token ROOT + all the words of the sentence
- the stack, initially empty
- the (partial) dependency tree being contructed, initially containing all the words but no arcs.

#### The goal is to reach a final configuration, in which:

- the buffer is empty
- the stack only contains ROOT
- the tree is complete (there is an arc to every word)

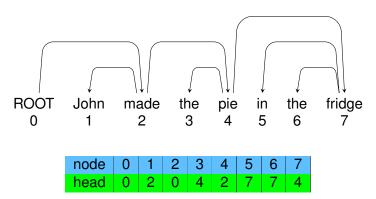
## Transition-based dependency parsing

### Three possible transitions:

- shift (SH): take the next word from the buffer, and push it onto the stack
- left arc (LA): create an arc from the topmost word to the second topmost word on the stack, then remove the second topmost word
- right arc (RA): create an arc from the second topmost word to the topmost word on the stack, then remove the topmost word

## Representing dependency trees

Unlabeled trees can be represented by a list of head positions.



ROOT	John	made	the	pie	in	the	fridge
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STACK

ROOT John made the pie in the fridge BUFFER

ROOT	John	made	the	pie	in	the	fridge
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ROOT

John made the pie in the fridge BUFFER

STACK

ROOT	John	made	the	pie	in	the	fridge
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STACK ROOT John

made the pie in the fridge

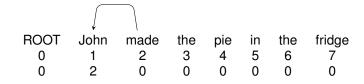
ROOT	John	made	the	pie	in	the	fridge
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ROOT John made STACK

the pie in the fridge BUFFER

Next move: LA

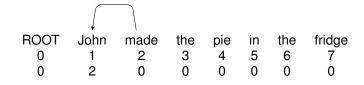




ROOT made STACK

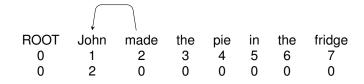
the pie in the fridge BUFFER





ROOT made the STACK

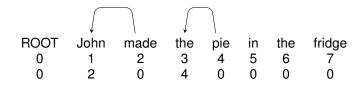
pie in the fridge



ROOT made the pie STACK

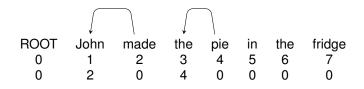
in the fridge BUFFER





ROOT made pie

in the fridge BUFFER

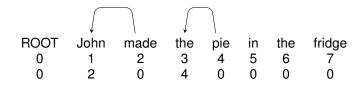


ROOT made pie in

STACK

the fridge BUFFER



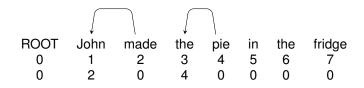


ROOT made pie in the

fridge BUFFER

STACK

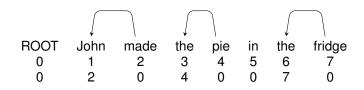




ROOT made pie in the fridge STACK

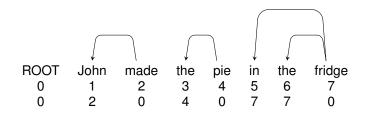
BUFFER





ROOT made pie in fridge

BUFFER

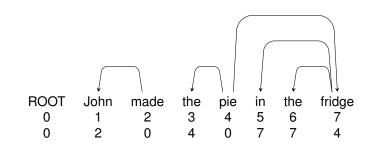


ROOT made pie fridge

STACK

BUFFER

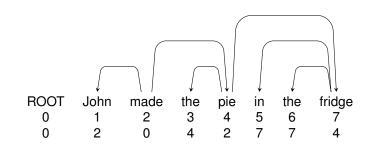




ROOT made pie STACK

**BUFFER** 

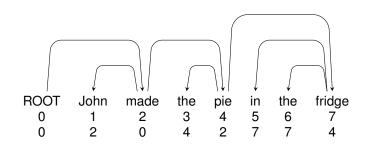




**ROOT made** STACK

**BUFFER** 





ROOT BUFFER

Terminal state

# Arc-standard algorithm

The algorithm we just looked at is called the arc-standard algorithm.

- possible moves are SH, LA, RA.
- in every parser configuration, one move needs to be selected
- algorithm is greedy, choices can not be undone
- we need an oracle to choose the correct action

# Creating an oracle

An automatic oracle can be trained through machine learning.

We need a data material to use a training set:

 data points are parser configurations, with associated correct moves

Given such a training set, we can train a classifier:

- 3 classes: SH, LA, RA for unlabeled trees
- For labeled trees (with n labels) we would have 2n + 1 classes: n LA moves, n RA moves, and 1 SH move.

The moves can be extracted from treebanks with correct dependency trees.



		made 2		•			_
0							
0	2	0	4	2	7	7	4

STACK

ROOT John made the pie in the fridge BUFFER

ROOT	John	made	the	pie	in	the	fridge
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0							
0	2	0	4	2	7	7	4

STACK ROOT John

made the pie in the fridge



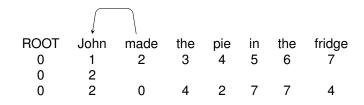
		made 2		•			•
0							
0	2	0	4	2	7	7	4

ROOT John made

STACK

the pie in the fridge

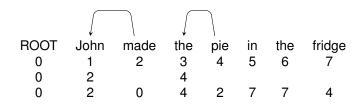




ROOT made

the pie in the fridge

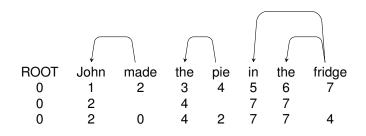




ROOT made pie

in the fridge





ROOT made pie fridge

STACK

BUFFER



- Stack: ROOT made pie
- Buffer: in the fridge
- Correct move: SH

- Stack: ROOT made pie
- Buffer: in the fridge
- Correct move: SH

- Stack: ROOT VERB NOUN
- Buffer: ADP the fridge
- Correct move: SH

- Stack: ROOT VERB NOUN
- Buffer: in the fridge
- Correct move: SH

#### Evaluation

#### Common metrics:

- Labeled attachment score (LAS): Percentage of words that get correct head and label
- Unlabled attachment score (UAS): Percentage of words that get correct head