

CMPT 413: Computational Linguistics

SEM1: Natural Language Semantics

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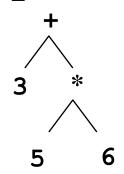
Semantics

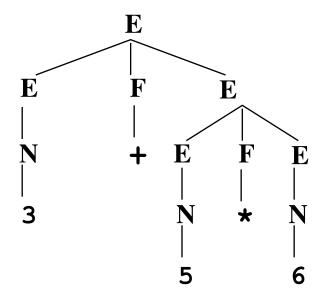
From Syntax to Meaning!

Adapted from slides by Jason Eisner used in: 600.465 - Intro to NLP - JHU

Programming Language Interpreter

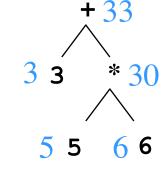
- What is meaning of 3+5*6?
- First parse it into 3+(5*6)

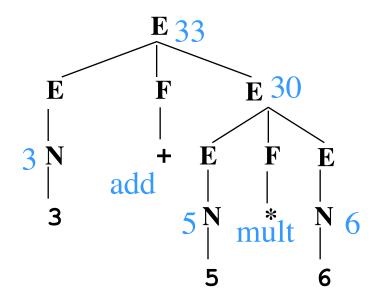




Programming Language Interpreter

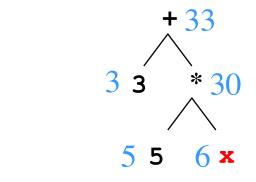
- What is meaning of 3+5*6?
- First parse it into 3+(5*6)
- Now give a meaning to each node in the tree (bottom-up)

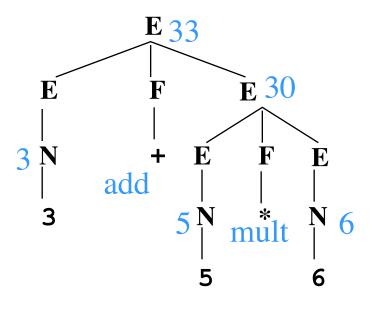




Interpreting in an Environment

- How about 3+5*x?
- Same thing: the meaning of x is found from the environment (it's 6)
- Analogies in language?

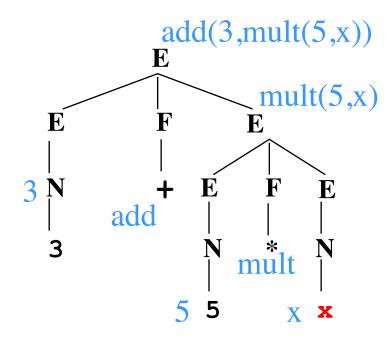




Compiling

- How about 3+5*x?
- Don't know x at compile time
- "Meaning" at a node is a piece of code, not a number

5* (x+1) -2 is a different expression that produces *equivalent* code (can be converted to the previous code by optimization)
Analogies in language?



What Counts as Understanding? some notions

- We understand if we can respond appropriately
 - ok for commands, questions (these demand response)
 - "Computer, warp speed 5"
 - "throw axe at dwarf"
 - "put all of my blocks in the red box"
 - imperative programming languages
 - database queries and other questions
- We understand statement if we can determine its truth
 - Truth can be determined by checking a model
 - A model stores facts about the world, beliefs, etc.
 - There are well-known equivalences between a formula in a logic and model for that formula, so we map NL into logic

What Counts as Understanding? some notions

- We understand a statement if we know *how* to determine its truth
 - A logic is an abstract language of statements such that:
 - Every statement has a model, and
 - A statement can be converted into another statement iff both statements are equivalent according to the same model
 - A statement is true iff it is **satisfiable** in a model
 - What are exact conditions under which it would be true? necessary + sufficient
 - Equivalently, derive all its consequences

Logic: Some Preliminaries

Three major kinds of objects

Booleans

• Roughly, the semantic values of sentences

Entities

- Values of NPs, e.g., objects like this slide
- Maybe also other types of entities, like times

Functions of various types

- A function returning a boolean is called a "predicate"
 e.g., frog(x), green(x)
- Functions might return other functions!
- Function might take other functions as arguments!

Logic: Lambda Terms

- Lambda terms:
 - A way of writing "anonymous functions"
 - No function header or function name
 - But defines the key thing: **behavior** of the function
 - Just as we can talk about 3 without naming it "x"
 - Let square = $\lambda p p^*p$
 - Equivalent to int square(p) { return p*p; }
 - But we can talk about $\lambda p p^*p$ without naming it
 - Format of a lambda term: λ variable expression

Logic: Lambda Terms

• Lambda terms:

- Let square = $\lambda p p^*p$
- Then square(3) = $(\lambda p p*p)(3) = 3*3$
- Note: square(x) isn't a function! It's just the value x*x.
- But λx square(x) = λx x*x = λp p*p = square (proving that these functions are equal – and indeed they are, as they act the same on all arguments: what is $(\lambda x \text{ square}(x))(y)$?)
- Let even = λp (p mod 2 == 0) a predicate: returns true/false
- even(x) is true if x is even
- How about even(square(x))?
- $-\lambda x \text{ even(square(x))}$ is true of numbers with even squares
 - Just apply rules to get λx (even(x*x)) = λx (x*x mod 2 == 0)
 - This happens to denote the same predicate as even does

Logic: Multiple Arguments

- All lambda terms have one argument
- But we can fake multiple arguments ...
- Suppose we want to write times(5,6)
- Remember: square can be written as λx square(x)
- Similarly, times is equivalent to $\lambda x \lambda y \text{ times}(x,y)$
- Claim that times(5)(6) means same as times(5,6)
 - $\text{ times}(5) = (\lambda x \lambda y \text{ times}(x,y)) (5) = \lambda y \text{ times}(5,y)$
 - $\text{ times}(5)(6) = (\lambda y \text{ times}(5,y))(6) = \text{times}(5,6)$

Logic: Multiple Arguments

- All lambda terms have one argument
- But we can fake multiple arguments ...
- Claim that times(5)(6) means same as times(5,6)
 - $\text{ times}(5) = (\lambda x \lambda y \text{ times}(x,y)) (5) = \lambda y \text{ times}(5,y)$
 - If this function weren't anonymous, what would we call it?
 - $\text{ times}(5)(6) = (\lambda y \text{ times}(5,y))(6) = \text{times}(5,6)$
- So we can always get away with 1-arg functions ...
 - ... which might return a function to take the next argument.
 - We'll still allow times(x,y) as syntactic sugar, though

Grounding out

- So what does times actually mean???
- How do we get from times(5,6) to 30 ?
 - Whether times(5,6) = 30 depends on whether symbol times actually denotes the multiplication function!
- Well, maybe times was defined as another lambda term, so substitute to get times(5,6) = (blah blah blah)(5)(6)
- But we can't keep doing substitutions forever!
 - Eventually we have to ground out in a primitive term
 - Primitive terms are bound to object code
- Maybe times(5,6) just executes a multiplication function
- What is executed by loves(john, mary)?

Logic: Interesting Constants

- Thus, have "constants" that name some of the entities and functions (e.g., times):
 - Gilly an entity
 - red a predicate on entities
 - holds of just the red entities: red(x) is true if x is red!
 - loves a predicate on 2 entities
 - loves(Gilly, Lilly)
 - Question: What does loves(Lilly) denote?
- Constants used to define meanings of words
- Meanings of phrases will be built from the constants

Logic: Interesting Constants

- most a predicate on 2 predicates on entities
 - most(pig, big) = "most pigs are big"
 - Equivalently, $most(\lambda x pig(x), \lambda x big(x))$
 - returns true if most of the things satisfying the first predicate also satisfy the second predicate
- similarly for other quantifiers
 - all(pig,big) (equivalent to $\forall x \text{ pig}(x) \Rightarrow \text{big}(x)$)
 - exists(pig,big) (equivalent to $\exists x \text{ pig}(x) \text{ AND big}(x)$)
 - can even build complex quantifiers from English phrases:
 - "between 12 and 75"; "a majority of"; "all but the smallest 2"

A reasonable representation?

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish
- First attempt: swallowed(Gilly, goldfish)
- Returns true or false. Analogous to
 - prime(17)
 - equal(4,2+2)
 - loves(Gilly, Lilly)
 - swallowed(Gilly, Jilly)
- ... or is it analogous?

A reasonable representation?

- Gilly swallowed <u>a</u> goldfish
 - First attempt: swallowed(Gilly, goldfish)
- But we're not paying attention to a!
- goldfish isn't the name of a unique object the way Gilly is
- In particular, don't want

Gilly swallowed a goldfish and Milly swallowed a goldfish

to translate as

swallowed(Gilly, goldfish) AND swallowed(Milly, goldfish)

since probably not the same goldfish ...

Use a Quantifier

- Gilly swallowed <u>a</u> goldfish
 - First attempt: swallowed(Gilly, goldfish)
- Better: $\exists g \text{ goldfish}(g) \text{ AND swallowed}(\text{Gilly}, g)$
- Or using one of our quantifier predicates:
 - exists(λg goldfish(g), λg swallowed(Gilly,g))
 - Equivalently: exists(goldfish, swallowed(Gilly))
 - "In the set of goldfish there exists one swallowed by Gilly"
- Here goldfish is a predicate on entities
 - This is the same semantic type as red
 - But goldfish is noun and red is adjective .. #@!?

Tense

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish
 - Previous attempt: exists(goldfish, λg swallowed(Gilly,g))
- Improve to use tense:
 - Instead of the 2-arg predicate swallowed(Gilly,g)
 try a 3-arg version swallow(t,Gilly,g) where t is a time
 - Now we can write:
 - ∃t past(t) AND exists(goldfish, λg swallow(t,Gilly,g))
 - "There was some time in the past such that a goldfish was among the objects swallowed by Gilly at that time"

(Simplify Notation)

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish
 - Previous attempt: exists(goldfish, swallowed(Gilly))
- Improve to use tense:
 - Instead of the 2-arg predicate swallowed(Gilly,g)
 try a 3-arg version swallow(t,Gilly,g)
 - Now we can write:
 - ∃t past(t) AND exists(goldfish, swallow(t,Gilly))
 - "There was some time in the past such that a goldfish was among the objects swallowed by Gilly at that time"

Event Properties

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish
 - Previous: ∃t past(t) AND exists(goldfish, swallow(t,Gilly))
- Why stop at time? An event has other properties:
 - [Gilly] swallowed [a goldfish] [on a dare] [in a telephone booth] [with 30 other freshmen] [after many bottles of vodka had been consumed].
 - Specifies who what why when ...
- Replace time variable t with an event variable e
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), exists(booth, location(e)), ...
 - As with probability notation, a comma represents AND
 - Could define past as λe ∃t before(t,now), ended-at(e,t) 2013-04-02

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in <u>a</u> booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), exists(booth, location(e)), ...
- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in <u>every</u> booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), <u>all(booth, location(e))</u>, ...

 $\exists g \text{ goldfish}(g), \text{ swallowee}(e,g) \qquad \forall b \text{ booth}(b) \Rightarrow \text{location}(e,b)$

Does this mean what we'd expect??

says that there's only <u>one</u> event with a single goldfish getting swallowed that took place in a lot of booths ...

- Groucho Marx celebrates quantifier order ambiguity:
 - In this country a woman gives birth every 15 min. Our job is to find that woman and stop her.

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∃woman (∀15min gives-birth-during(woman, 15min))
∀15min (∃woman gives-birth-during(15min, woman))
```

- Surprisingly, both are possible in natural language!
- Which is the joke meaning (where it's always the same woman) and why?

• What about:

 Every prof admires, and every student detests, some course.

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in <u>a</u> booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), exists(booth, location(e)), ...
- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in every booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), <u>all(booth, location(e))</u>, ...

 $\exists g \text{ goldfish}(g), \text{ swallowee}(e,g) \qquad \forall b \text{ booth}(b) \Rightarrow \text{location}(e,b)$

- Does this mean what we'd expect??
 - It's $\exists e \forall b$ which means same event for every booth
 - Probably false unless Gilly can be in every booth during her swallowing of a single goldfish

- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in <u>a</u> booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), exists(booth, location(e)), ...
- Gilly swallowed a goldfish in <u>every</u> booth
 - ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), all(booth, λb location(e,b))
- Other reading ($\forall b \exists e$) involves quantifier raising:
 - <u>all</u>(booth, λb [∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower
 (e,Gilly), exists(goldfish, swallowee(e)), location(e,b)])
 - "for all booths b, there was such an event in b"

Nouns and Their Modifiers

- expert
 - $-\lambda g \exp(g)$
- big fat expert
 - $-\lambda g \text{ big}(g), \text{fat}(g), \text{expert}(g)$
 - But: bogus expert
 - Wrong: λg bogus(g), expert(g)
 - Right: λg (bogus(expert))(g) ... bogus maps to new concept
- Baltimore expert (white-collar expert, TV expert...)
 - $-\lambda g$ Related(Baltimore, g), expert(g) expert from Baltimore
 - Or λg (Modified-by(Baltimore, expert))(g) expert on Baltimore
 - Can't use Related for that case: law expert and dog catcher
 - = $\lambda g \text{ Related(law,g)}, \text{ expert(g)}, \text{ Related(dog, g)}, \text{ catcher(g)}$
 - = dog expert and law catcher

Nouns and Their Modifiers

- the goldfish that Gilly swallowed
- every goldfish that Gilly swallowed
- three goldfish that Gilly swallowed

 λg [goldfish(g), swallowed(Gilly, g)]

like an adjective!

three swallowed-by-Gilly goldfish

Or for real: λg [goldfish(g), $\exists e$ [past(e), act(e,swallowing), swallower(e,Gilly), swallowee(e,g)]]

Adverbs

- Lilly passionately wants Billy
 - Wrong?: passionately(want(Lilly,Billy)) = passionately(true)
 - Better: (passionately(want))(Lilly,Billy)
 - Best: ∃e present(e), act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Lilly),
 wantee(e, Billy), manner(e, passionate)
- Lilly often stalks Billy
 - (often(stalk))(Lilly,Billy)
 - many(day, λd ∃e present(e), act(e,stalking), stalker(e,Lilly), stalkee(e, Billy), during(e,d))
- Lilly obviously likes Billy
 - (obviously(like))(Lilly,Billy) one reading
 - obvious(likes(Lilly, Billy)) another reading

Speech Acts

- What is the meaning of a full sentence?
 - Depends on the punctuation mark!?
 - Billy likes Lilly. \rightarrow assert(like(B,L))
 - Billy likes Lilly? \rightarrow ask(like(B,L))
 - or more formally, "Does Billy like Lilly?"
 - − Billy, like Lilly! → command(like(B,L))

• Let's try to do this a little more precisely, using event variables etc.

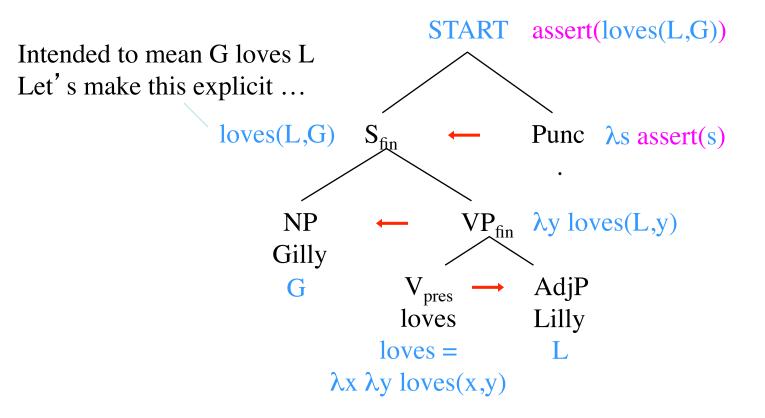
Speech Acts

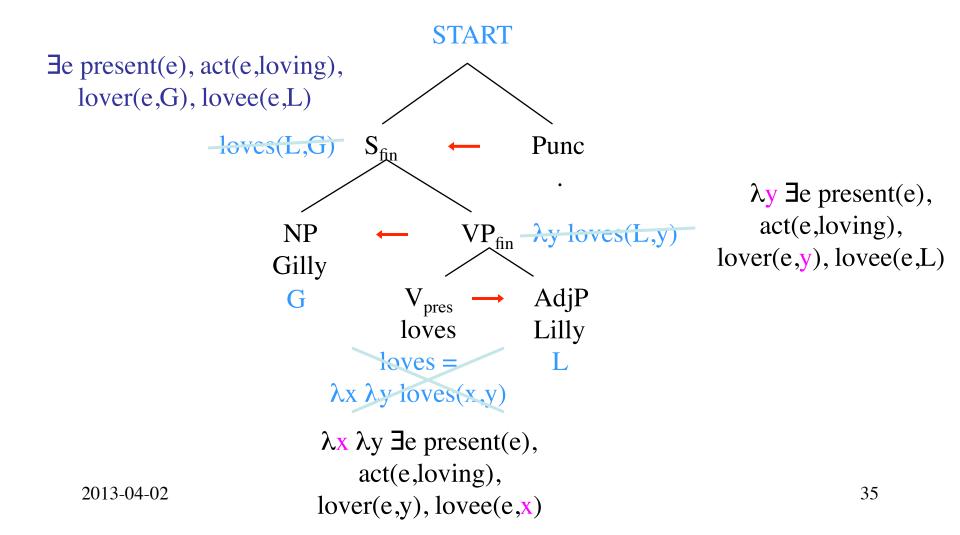
- What did Gilly swallow?
 - ask(λx ∃e past(e), act(e,swallowing),swallower(e,Gilly), swallowee(e,x))
 - Argument is identical to the modifier "that Gilly swallowed"
 - Is there any common syntax?
- Eat your fish!
 - command(λf act(f,eating), eater(f,Hearer), eatee(...))
- I ate my fish.
 - **assert**(∃e past(e), act(e,eating), eater(f,Speaker), eatee(...))

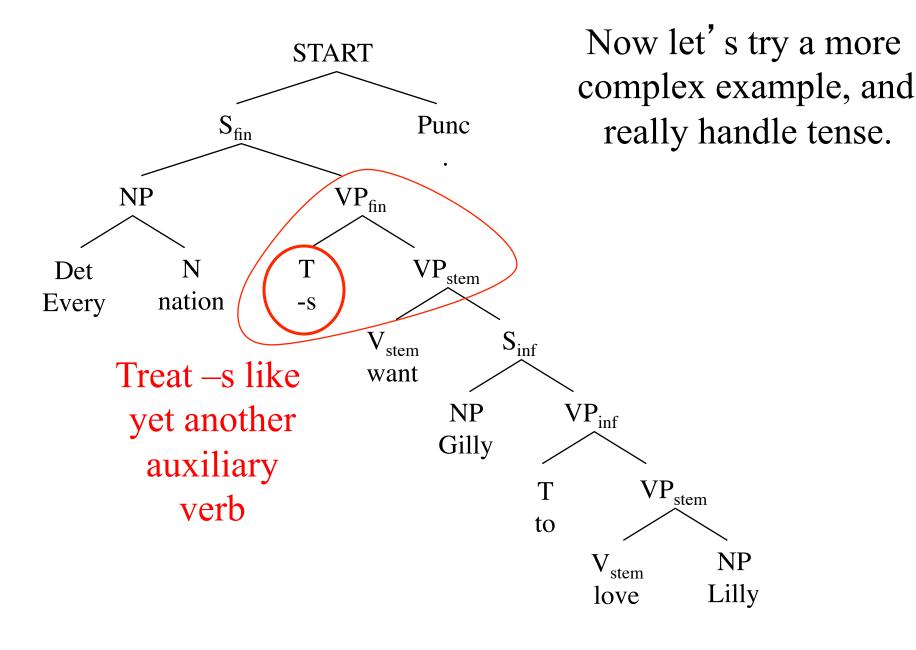
• We've discussed what semantic representations should look like.

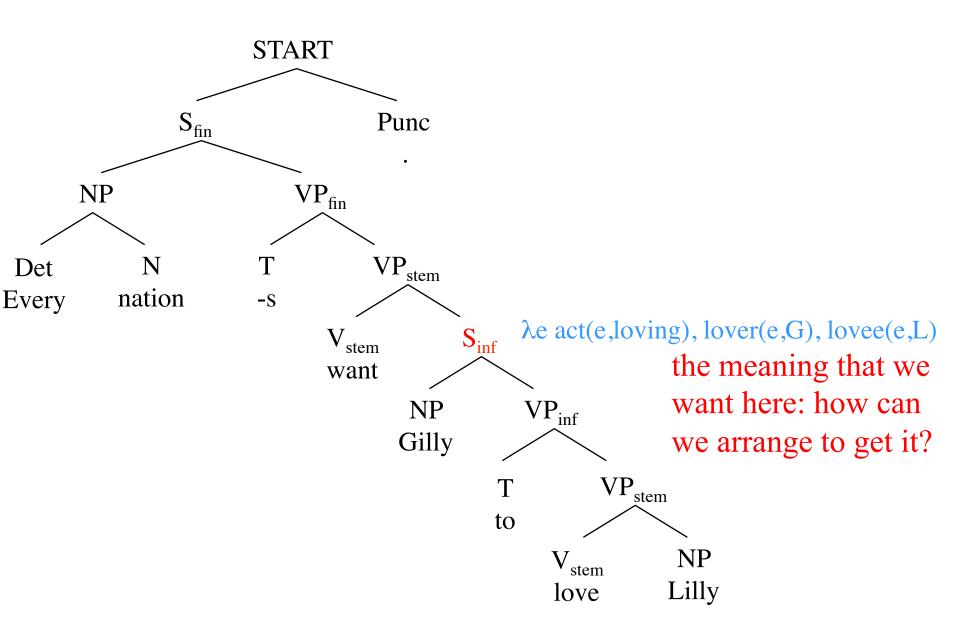
- But how do we get them from sentences???
- First parse to get a syntax tree.
- Second look up the semantics for each word.
- Third build the semantics for each constituent
 - Work from the bottom up
 - The syntax tree is a "recipe" for how to do it

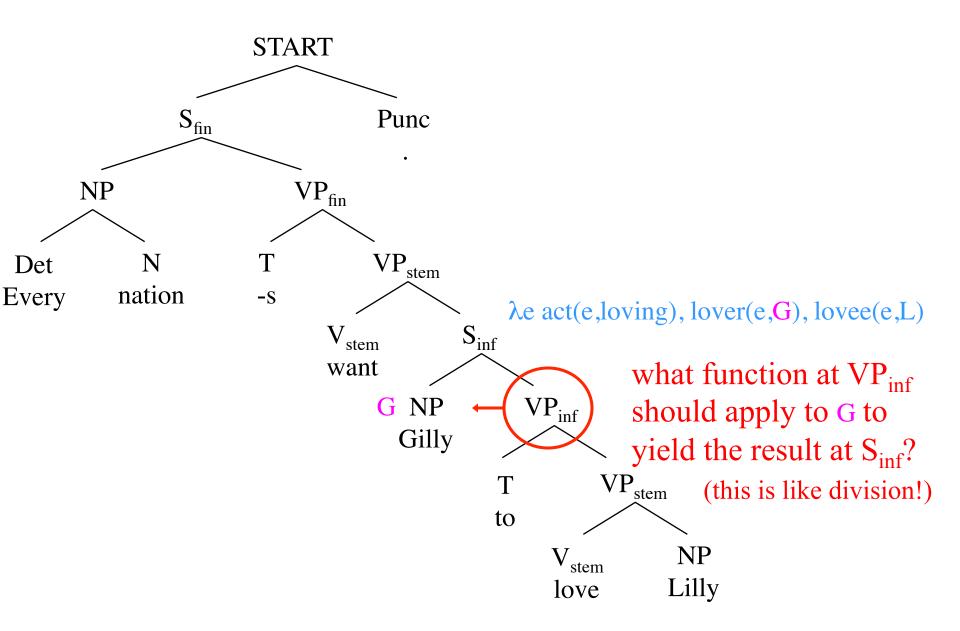
- Instead of $S \rightarrow NP$ loves NP
 - S[sem=loves(x,y)] → NP[sem=x] loves NP[sem=y]
- might want general rules like $S \rightarrow NP VP$:
 - V[sem=loves] → loves
 - $VP[sem=v(obj)] \rightarrow V[sem=v] NP[sem=obj]$
 - S[sem=vp(subj)] \rightarrow NP[sem=subj] VP[sem=vp]
- Now Gilly loves Lilly has sem=loves(Lilly)(Gilly)
- In this manner we'll sketch a version where
 - Still compute semantics bottom-up
 - Grammar is in Chomsky Normal Form
 - So each node has 2 children: 1 function & 1 argument
 - To get its semantics, apply function to argument!

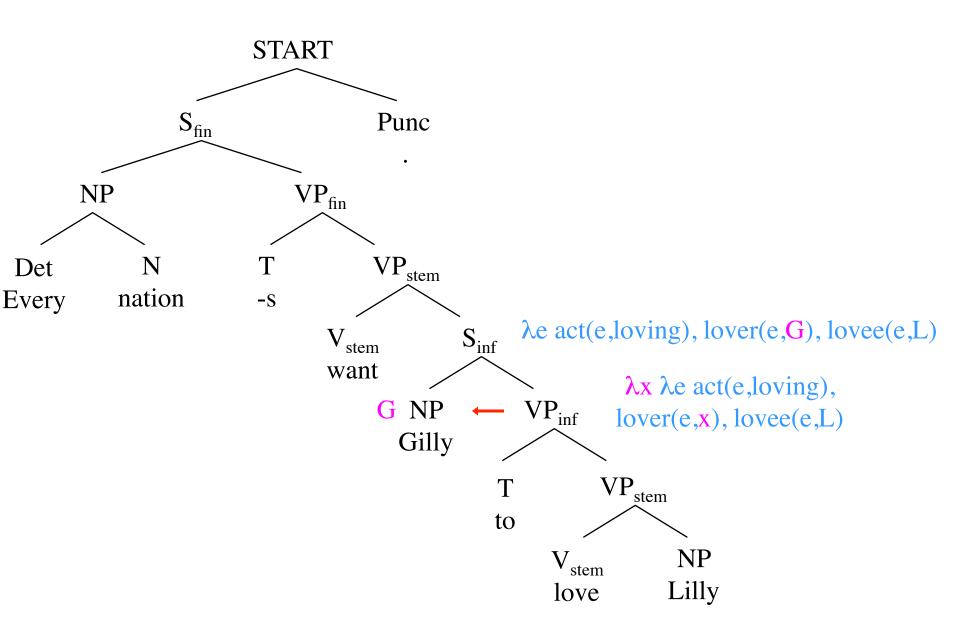


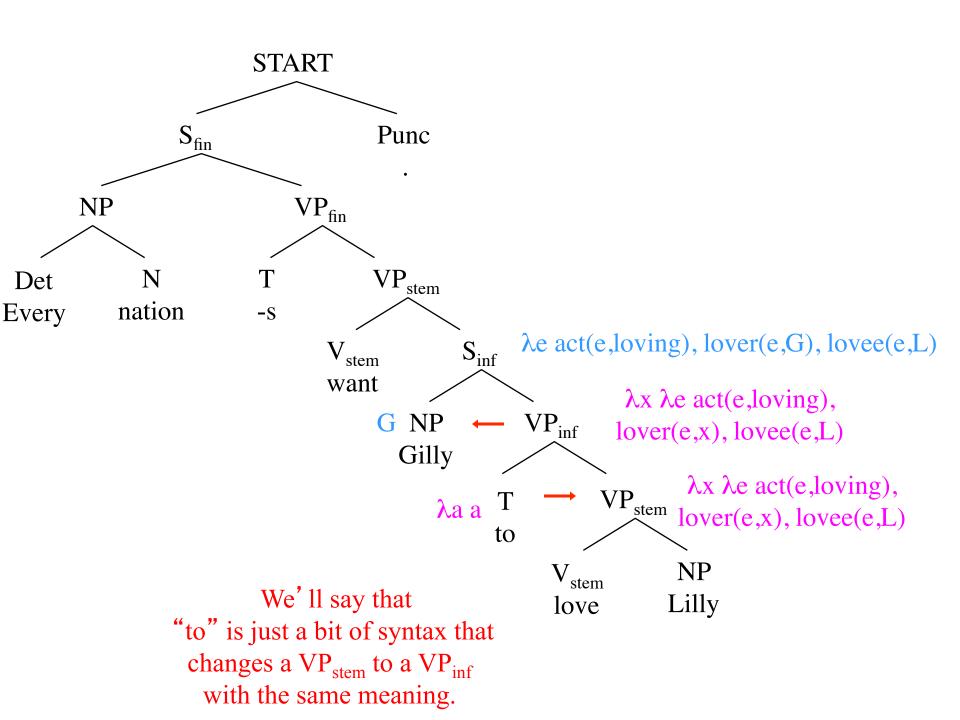


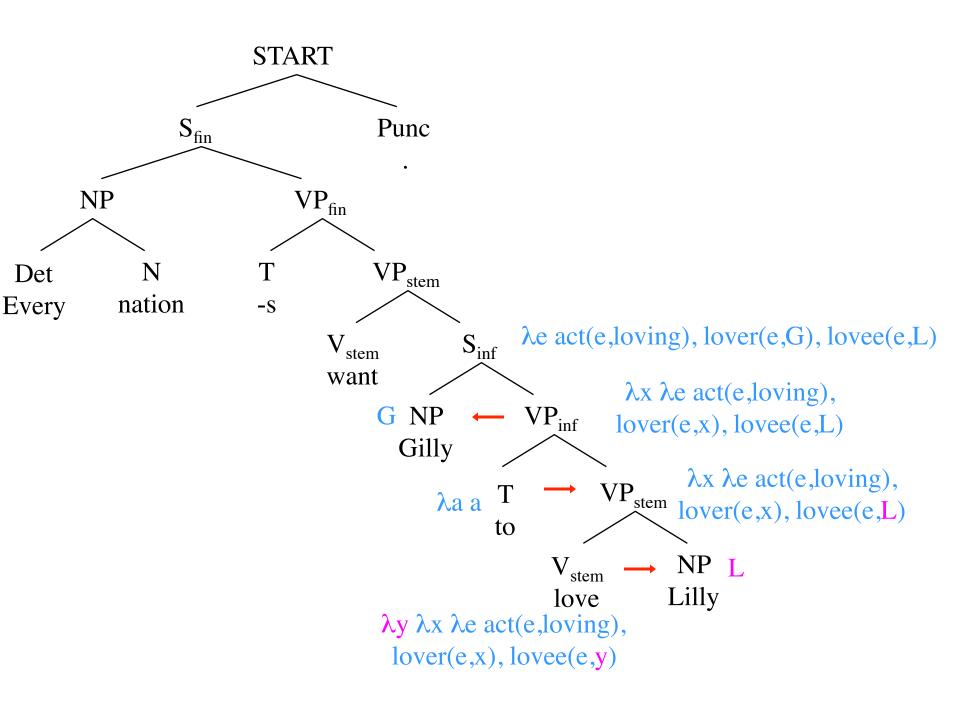


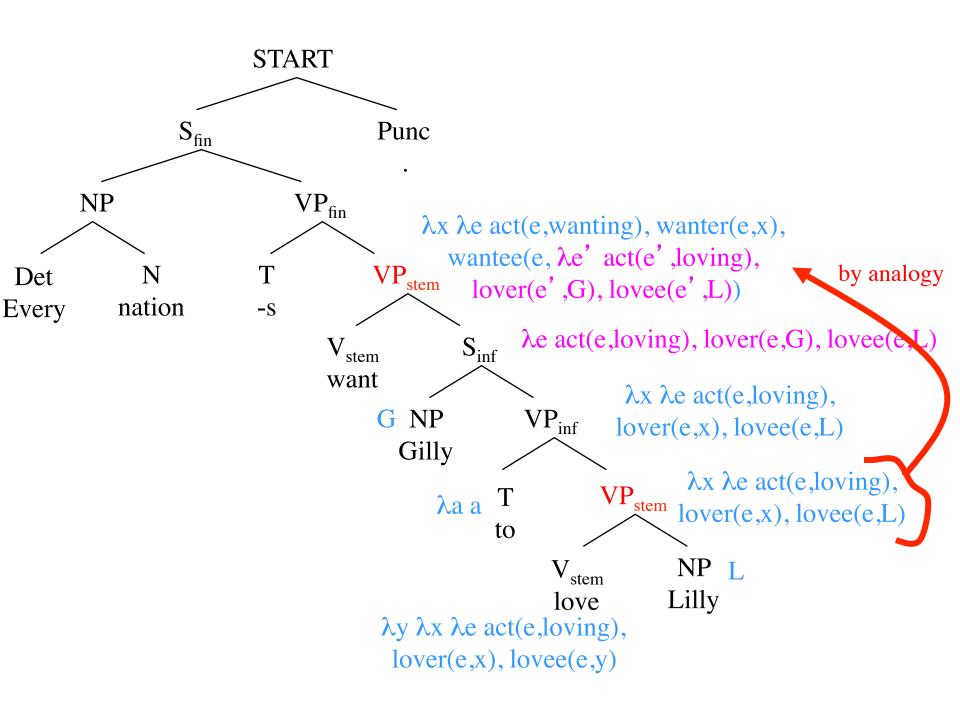


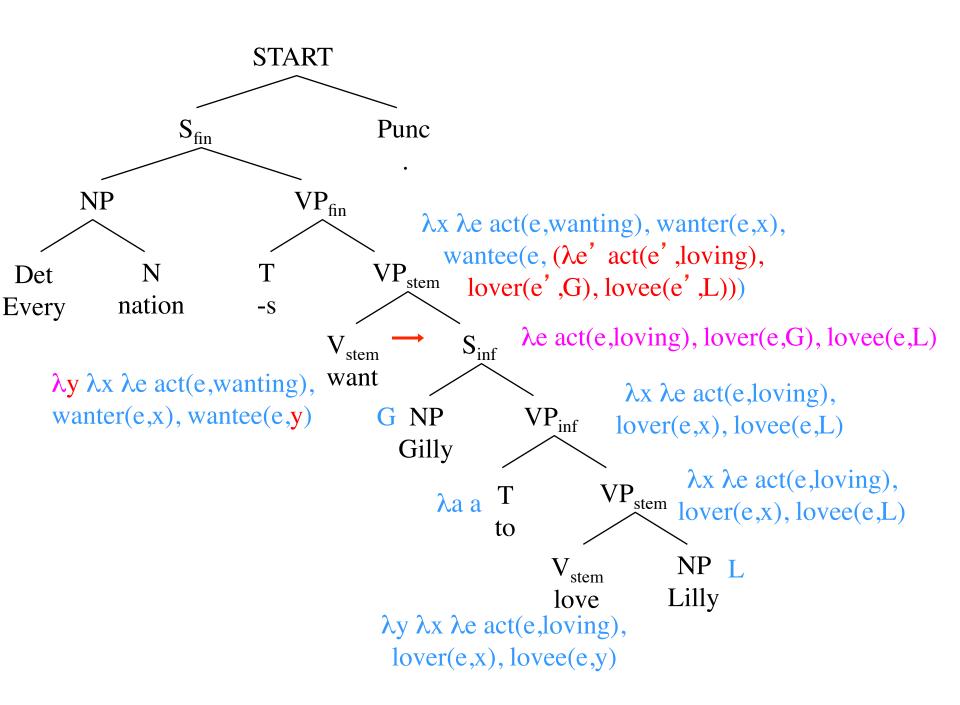


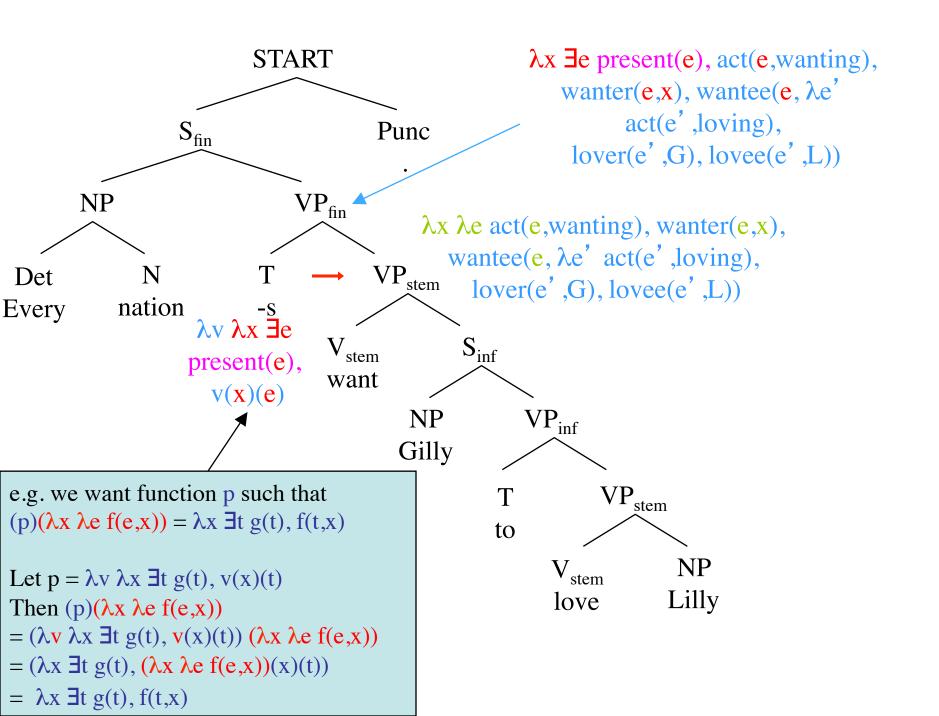


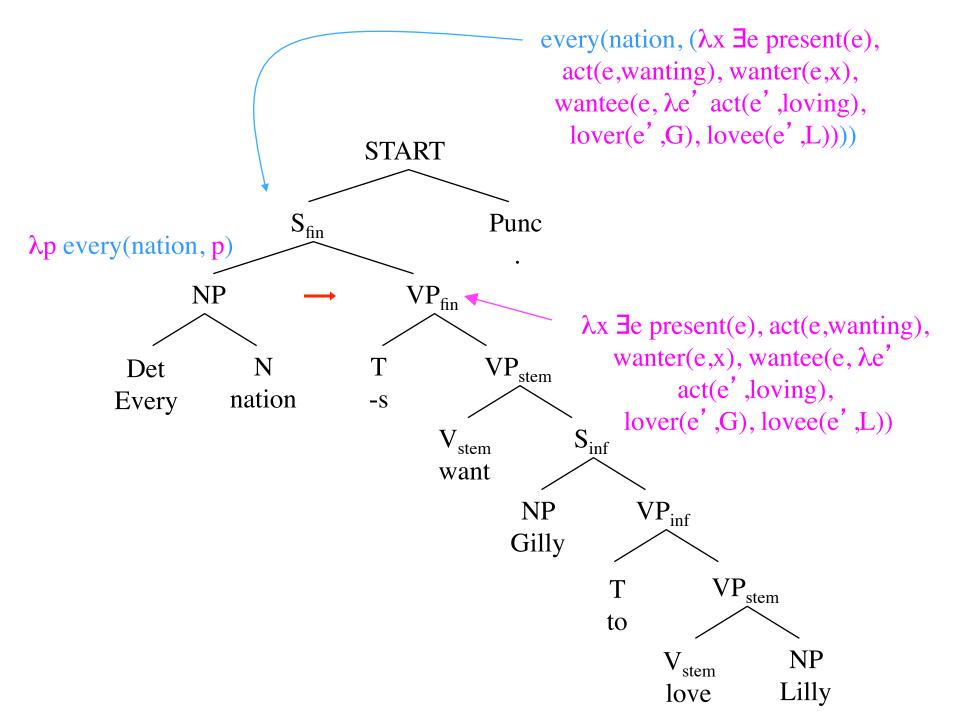


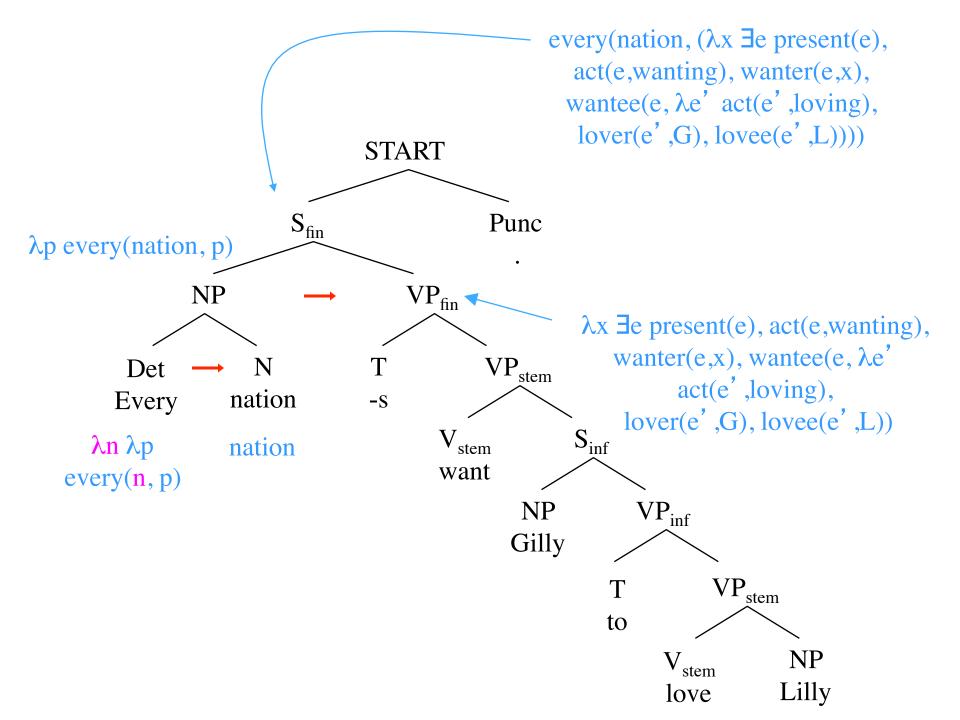


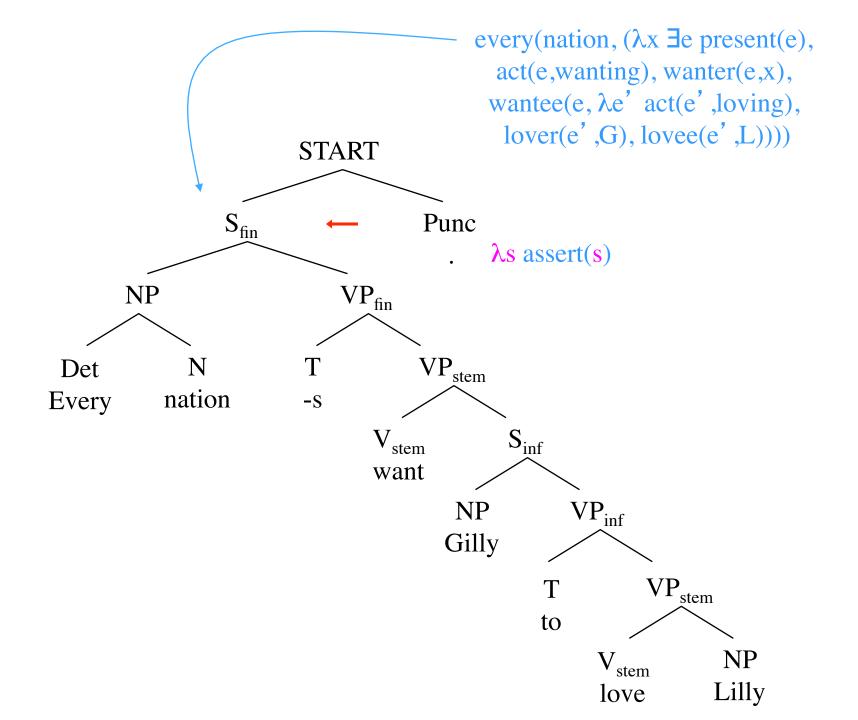




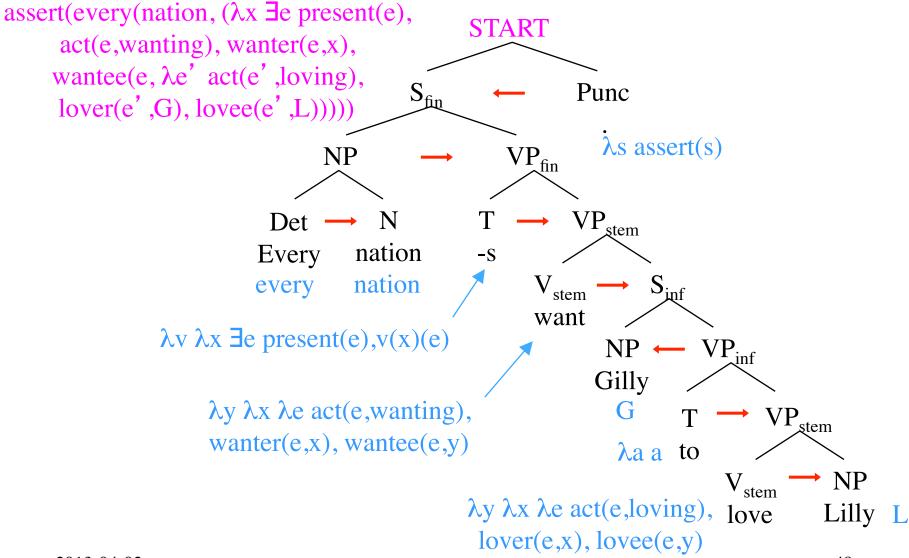








In Summary: From the Words



Intensional Arguments

- Willy wants a unicorn
 - \exists e act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Willy), exists(unicorn, λ u wantee(e,u))
 - "there is a unicorn u that Willy wants"
 - here the wantee is an individual entity
 - \exists e act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Willy), wantee(e, λ u unicorn(u))
 - "Willy wants any entity u that satisfies the unicorn predicate"
 - here the wantee is a type of entity
- Willy wants Lilly to get married
 - ∃e present(e), act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Willy),
 wantee(e, λe' [act(e',marriage), marrier(e',Lilly)])
 - "Willy wants any event e' in which Lilly gets married"
 - Here the wantee is a type of event
 - Sentence doesn't claim that such an event exists
- Intensional verbs besides want: hope, doubt, believe, ...

Intensional Arguments

- Willy wants a unicorn
 - \exists e act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Willy), wantee(e, λ g unicorn(g))
 - "Willy wants anything that satisfies the unicorn predicate"
 - here the wantee is a type of entity
- Problem (a fine point I'll gloss over):
 - $-\lambda g unicorn(g)$ is defined by the actual <u>set</u> of unicorns ("<u>extension</u>")
 - But this set is empty: $\lambda g \text{ unicorn}(g) = \lambda g \text{ FALSE} = \lambda g \text{ dodo}(g)$
 - Then wants a unicorn = wants a dodo. Oops!
 - So really the wantee should be <u>criteria</u> for unicornness ("<u>intension</u>")
- Traditional solution involves "possible-world semantics"
 - Can imagine other worlds where set of unicorn ≠ set of dodos
 - Other worlds also useful for: You must pay the rent
 You can pay the rent
 If you hadn't, you'd be homeless

Control

- Willy wants Lilly to get married
 - ∃e present(e), act(e,wanting), wanter(e,Willy),
 wantee(e, λf [act(f,marriage), marrier(f,Lilly)])
- Willy wants to get married
 - Same as Willy wants Willy to get married
 - Just as easy to represent as Willy wants Lilly ...
 - The only trick is to construct the representation from the syntax. The empty subject position of "to get married" is said to be <u>controlled</u> by the subject of "wants."

Other Fun Semantic Stuff

Temporal logic

- Gilly <u>had swallowed</u> eight goldfish before Milly <u>reached</u> the bowl
- Billy said Jilly <u>was</u> pregnant (sequence of tense)
- Billy said, "Jilly <u>is</u> pregnant."

• Generics (not quite the same as plurals)

- Typhoons arise in the Pacific
- Children must be carried

Presuppositions

- The king of France is bald. (if there is no such king is this true?)
- Have you stopped beating your wife? (what is presupposed?)

• Pronoun-Quantifier Interaction ("bound anaphora")

- Every farmer who owns a donkey beats it.
- If you have a dime, put it in the meter.
- The woman who every Englishman loves is his mother.
- I love my mother and <u>so</u> does Billy.