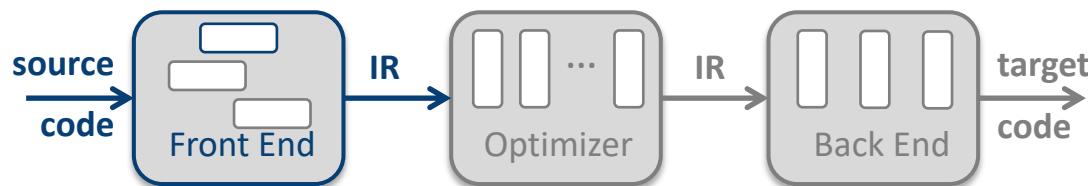




## Syntax Analysis, VII

*One more LR(1) example, plus some final thoughts*

Comp 412



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# Computing Closures

Review



**Closure(s)** adds all the *possibilities* for the items already in  $s$

- Any item  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet B\delta, \underline{a}]$  where  $B \in NT$  implies  $[B \rightarrow \bullet \tau, x]$  for each production that has  $B$  on the *lhs*, and each  $x \in \text{FIRST}(\delta\underline{a})$
- Since  $\beta B\delta$  is valid, any way to derive  $\beta B\delta$  is valid, too

## The Algorithm

**Closure(  $s$  )**

```
while (  $s$  is still changing )
     $\forall$  items  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet B\delta, \underline{a}] \in s$ 
        lookahead  $\leftarrow \text{FIRST}(\delta\underline{a})$  //  $\delta$  might be  $\varepsilon$ 
         $\forall$  productions  $B \rightarrow \tau \in P$ 
             $\forall \underline{b} \in \text{lookahead}$ 
                if  $[B \rightarrow \bullet \tau, \underline{b}] \notin s$ 
                    then  $s \leftarrow s \cup \{ [B \rightarrow \bullet \tau, \underline{b}] \}$ 
```

- Classic fixed-point method
- Halts because  $s \subset I$ , the set of all items (*finite*)
- Worklist version is faster
- **Closure** “fills out” a state  $s$

Generate new lookahead.  
See note on p. 128

# Computing Gotos

Review



**Goto(s,x)** computes the state that the parser would reach if it recognized an  $x$  while in state  $s$

- $\text{Goto}(\{[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet X\delta, a]\}, X)$  produces  $\{[A \rightarrow \beta X \bullet \delta, a]\}$  *(obviously)*
- It finds all such items & uses *Closure()* to fill out the state

## The Algorithm

```
Goto( s, X )  
    new  $\leftarrow \emptyset$   
     $\forall$  items  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet X\delta, a] \in s$   
        new  $\leftarrow$  new  $\cup \{[A \rightarrow \beta X \bullet \delta, a]\}$   
return Closure( new )
```

- $\text{Goto}( )$  models a transition in the automaton
- Straightforward computation
- $\text{Goto}()$  is not a fixed-point method (but it calls *Closure()*)

**Goto** in this construction is analogous to **Move** in the subset construction.

# Building the Canonical Collection

Review



Start from  $s_0 = \text{Closure}([S' \rightarrow \bullet S, \underline{\text{EOF}}])$

Repeatedly construct new states, until all are found

## The Algorithm

```
 $s_0 \leftarrow \text{Closure}(\{[S' \rightarrow \bullet S, \underline{\text{EOF}}]\})$ 
 $S \leftarrow \{s_0\}$ 
 $k \leftarrow 1$ 
while ( $S$  is still changing)
   $\forall s_j \in S \text{ and } \forall x \in (T \cup NT)$ 
     $s_k \leftarrow \text{Goto}(s_j, x)$ 
    record  $s_j \rightarrow s_k$  on  $x$ 
    if  $s_k \notin S$  then
       $S \leftarrow S \cup \{s_k\}$ 
       $k \leftarrow k + 1$ 
```

- Fixed-point computation
- Loop adds to  $S$  (*monotone*)
- $S \subseteq 2^{\text{ITEMS}}$ , so  $S$  is finite
- *Worklist version is faster because it avoids duplicated effort*

This membership / equality test requires careful and/or clever implementation.

# Filling in the ACTION and GOTO Tables

Review



## The Table Construction Algorithm

$x$  is the state number

```
forall set  $S_x \in S$ 
  forall item  $i \in S_x$ 
    if  $i$  is  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet a\delta, b]$  and  $\text{goto}(S_x, a) = S_k$ ,  $a \in T$ 
      then  $\text{ACTION}[x, a] \leftarrow \text{"shift } k"$ 
    else if  $i$  is  $[S' \rightarrow S \bullet, \text{EOF}]$ 
      then  $\text{ACTION}[x, \text{EOF}] \leftarrow \text{"accept"}$ 
    else if  $i$  is  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet, a]$ 
      then  $\text{ACTION}[x, a] \leftarrow \text{"reduce } A \rightarrow \beta"$ 
  forall  $n \in NT$ 
    if  $\text{goto}(S_x, n) = S_k$ 
      then  $\text{GOTO}[x, n] \leftarrow k$ 
```

- before  $T \Rightarrow \text{shift}$
- have  $\text{Goal} \Rightarrow \text{accept}$
- at end  $\Rightarrow \text{reduce}$

Many items generate no table entry

- Placeholder before a  $NT$  does not generate an **ACTION** table entry
- **Closure( )** instantiates  $\text{FIRST}(X)$  directly for  $[A \rightarrow \beta \bullet X\delta, a]$

# Another Example

(grammar & sets)



## Simplified, right recursive expression grammar

0	<i>Goal</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Expr</i>
1	<i>Expr</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Term - Expr</i>
2			<i>Term</i>
3	<i>Term</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Factor * Term</i>
4			<i>Factor</i>
5	<i>Factor</i>	$\rightarrow$	<u><i>id</i></u>

SYMBOL	FIRST
<i>Goal</i>	{ <u>id</u> }
<i>Expr</i>	{ <u>id</u> }
<i>Term</i>	{ <u>id</u> }
<i>Factor</i>	{ <u>id</u> }
-	{ - }
*	{ * }
<u>id</u>	{ <u>id</u> }

# Simplified Expression Grammar

Building the  
Collection



## Initialization Step

$$s_0 \leftarrow \text{closure}(\{ [Goal \rightarrow \bullet Expr, EOF] \})$$
$$\{ [Goal \rightarrow \bullet Expr, EOF],$$
$$[Expr \rightarrow \bullet Term - Expr, EOF], [Expr \rightarrow \bullet Term, EOF],$$
$$[Term \rightarrow \bullet Factor * Term, EOF], [Term \rightarrow \bullet Factor * Term, -],$$
$$[Term \rightarrow \bullet Factor, EOF], [Term \rightarrow \bullet Factor, -],$$
$$[Factor \rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}, EOF], [Factor \rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}, -], [Factor \rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}, *] \}$$
$$S \leftarrow \{s_0\}$$

Item in **black** is the initial item.  
Items in **gray** are added by *closure()*.

0	Goal	$\rightarrow$	Expr
1	Expr	$\rightarrow$	Term - Expr
2			Term
3	Term	$\rightarrow$	Factor * Term
4			Factor
5	Factor	$\rightarrow$	<u>id</u>

# Simplified Expression Grammar

Building the  
Collection



## Iteration 1

$s_1 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, \text{Expr})$

$s_2 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, \text{Term})$

$s_3 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, \text{Factor})$

$s_4 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, \underline{\text{id}})$

*Goal, \*, & - generate  
empty sets*

## Iteration 2

$s_5 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_2, -)$

$s_6 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_3, *)$

*Goal, Expr, Term, Factor, &  
id generate empty sets*

## Iteration 3

$s_7 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_5, \text{Expr})$

$s_8 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_6, \text{Term})$

*Goal, \*, & - generate empty  
sets. Term, Factor, & id start  
to re-create existing sets.*

# Simplified Expression Grammar

The Details



$s_0 \leftarrow \text{closure}(\{[Goal \rightarrow \bullet Expr, EOF]\})$   
{ [Goal  $\rightarrow \bullet Expr$ , EOF],  
[Expr  $\rightarrow \bullet Term - Expr$ , EOF], [Expr  $\rightarrow \bullet Term$ , EOF],  
[Term  $\rightarrow \bullet Factor * Term$ , EOF], [Term  $\rightarrow \bullet Factor * Term$ , -],  
[Term  $\rightarrow \bullet Factor$ , EOF], [Term  $\rightarrow \bullet Factor$ , -],  
[Factor  $\rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}$ , EOF], [Factor  $\rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}$ , -], [Factor  $\rightarrow \bullet \underline{id}$ , \*] }

$s_1 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, Expr)$   
{ [Goal  $\rightarrow Expr \bullet$ , EOF] }

$s_2 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, Term)$   
{ [Expr  $\rightarrow Term \bullet - Expr$ , EOF], [Expr  $\rightarrow Term \bullet$ , EOF] }

$s_3 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, Factor)$   
{ [Term  $\rightarrow Factor \bullet * Term$ , EOF], [Term  $\rightarrow Factor \bullet * Term$ , -],  
[Term  $\rightarrow Factor \bullet$ , EOF], [Term  $\rightarrow Factor \bullet$ , -] }

Items in **black** are core items, generated by moving the placeholder.

Items in **gray** are added by *closure()*.

# Simplified Expression Grammar

The Details



$s_4 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_0, \underline{\text{id}})$

{  $[\text{Factor} \rightarrow \underline{\text{id}} \bullet, \text{EOF}], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \underline{\text{id}} \bullet, -], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \underline{\text{id}} \bullet, *]$  }

$s_5 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_2, -)$

{  $[\text{Expr} \rightarrow \text{Term} - \bullet \text{Expr}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Expr} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Term} - \text{Expr}, \text{EOF}],$   
 $[\text{Expr} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Term}, \text{EOF}],$   
 $[\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor} * \text{Term}, -], [\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor}, -],$   
 $[\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor} * \text{Term}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor}, \text{EOF}],$   
 $[\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, *], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, -], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, \text{EOF}]$  }

$s_6 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_3, *)$

{  $[\text{Term} \rightarrow \text{Factor} * \bullet \text{Term}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Term} \rightarrow \text{Factor} * \bullet \text{Term}, -],$   
 $[\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor} * \text{Term}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor} * \text{Term}, -],$   
 $[\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Term} \rightarrow \bullet \text{Factor}, -],$   
 $[\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, \text{EOF}], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, -], [\text{Factor} \rightarrow \bullet \underline{\text{id}}, *]$  }

Items in **black** are core items, generated by moving the placeholder.

Items in **gray** are added by *closure()*.

# Simplified Expression Grammar

The Details



$s_7 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_5, \text{Expr})$   
{ [Expr → Term – Expr •, EOF] }

$\text{goto}(s_5, \text{Term})$  recreates  $s_2$

$\text{goto}(s_5, \text{Factor})$  recreates  $s_3$

$\text{goto}(s_5, \text{id})$  recreates  $s_4$

$s_8 \leftarrow \text{goto}(s_6, \text{Term})$   
{ [Term → Factor \* Term •, EOF], [Term → Factor \* Term •, –] }

$\text{goto}(s_6, \text{Term})$  recreates  $s_3$

$\text{goto}(s_6, \text{id})$  recreates  $s_4$

*The next iteration creates no new sets.*

Items in **black** are core items, generated by moving the placeholder.

Items in **gray** are added by *closure()*.

# Simplified Expression Grammar

Recorded  
Transitions



The Goto Relationship

(recorded during the construction)

State	-	*	<u>id</u>	Expr	Term	Factor
$s_0$			4	1	2	3
$s_1$						
$s_2$	5					
$s_3$		6				
$s_4$						
$s_5$			4	7	2	3
$s_6$			4		8	3
$s_7$						
$s_8$						

Below the table, two horizontal arrows point to the right, indicating the flow of information:

- The first arrow points from the bottom of the table to the text "Into shifts in the ACTION Table".
- The second arrow points from the bottom of the table to the text "Into the GOTO Table".

# Simplified Expression Grammar

Filling in the  
Tables



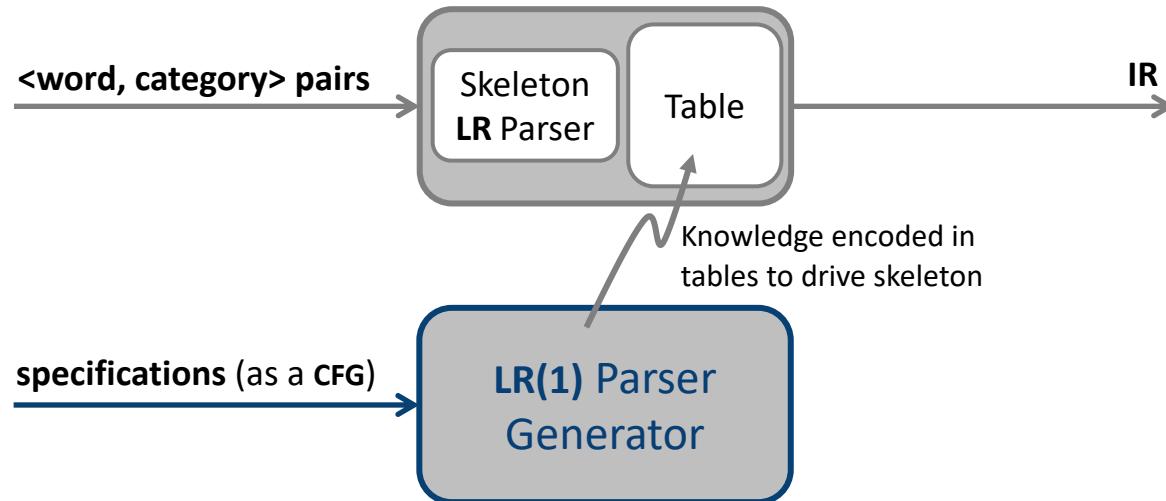
The algorithm produces the following tables

State	ACTION				GOTO		
	<u>id</u>	-	*	EOF	<i>Expr</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Factor</i>
$s_0$	s 4				1	2	3
$s_1$				acc			
$s_2$		s 5		r 3			
$s_3$		r 5	s 6	r 5			
$s_4$		r 6	r 6	r 6			
$s_5$	s 4				7	2	3
$s_6$	s 4					8	3
$s_7$				r 2			
$s_8$		r 4		r 4			



Notice that none of these  
are shift actions, obviously

# Brief Commercial: Why Are We Doing This?



The goal of this exercise is to automate construction of parsers

- Compiler writer provides a **CFG** written in modified **BNF**
- Tools provide an efficient and correct parser
  - *One that works well with an automatically generated scanner*
- **LR** parser generators accept the largest class of grammars that are deterministically parsable, and they are highly efficient
  - *Generated parsers are preferable to hand-coded ones for large grammars*

## Shrinking the ACTION and GOTO Tables

---



### Three classic options:

- Combine terminals such as number & identifier, + & -, \* & /
  - Directly removes a column, may remove a row
  - For expression grammar, 198 (vs. 384) table entries
- Combine rows or columns
  - Implement identical rows once & remap states
  - Requires extra indirection on each lookup
  - Use separate mappings for ACTION & GOTO
- Use another construction algorithm
  - Both **LALR(1)** and **SLR(1)** produce smaller tables
    - *LALR(1) represents each state with its “core” items*
    - *SLR(1) uses LR(0) items and the FOLLOW set*
  - Implementations are readily available

# Shrinking the Grammar



## The Classic Expression Grammar

0	<i>Goal</i>	$\rightarrow Expr$
1	<i>Expr</i>	$\rightarrow Expr + Term$
2		$  Expr - Term$
3		$  Term$
4	<i>Term</i>	$\rightarrow Term * Factor$
5		$  Term / Factor$
6		$  Factor$
7	<i>Factor</i>	$\rightarrow ( Expr )$
8		$  \underline{number}$
9		$  \underline{id}$

Canonical construction produces 32 states

- $32 \times (9 + 3) = 384$  ACTION/GOTO entries
- Large table, but still just 1.5kb

State	Action Table								
	eof	+	-	$\times$	$\div$	(	)	num	name
0						s 4		s 5	s 6
1	acc	s 7	s 8						
2	r 4	r 4	r 4	s 9	s 10				
3	r 7	r 7	r 7	r 7	r 7				
4						s 14		s 15	s 16
5	r 9	r 9	r 9	r 9	r 9				
6	r 10	r 10	r 10	r 10	r 10				
7						s 4		s 5	s 6
8						s 4		s 5	s 6
9						s 4		s 5	s 6
10						s 4		s 5	s 6
11		s 21	s 22				s 23		
12		r 4	r 4	s 24	s 25		r 4		
13		r 7	r 7	r 7	r 7		r 7		
14						s 14		s 15	s 16
15		r 9	r 9	r 9	r 9		r 9		
16		r 10	r 10	r 10	r 10		r 10		
17	r 2	r 2	r 2	s 9	s 10				
18	r 3	r 3	r 3	s 9	s 10				
19	r 5	r 5	r 5	r 5	r 5				
20	r 6	r 6	r 6	r 6	r 6				
21						s 14		s 15	s 16
22						s 14		s 15	s 16
23	r 8	r 8	r 8	r 8	r 8				
24						s 14		s 15	s 16
25						s 14		s 15	s 16
26		s 21	s 22				s 31		
27		r 2	r 2	s 24	s 25		r 2		
28		r 3	r 3	s 24	s 25		r 3		
29		r 5	r 5	r 5	r 5		r 5		
30		r 6	r 6	r 6	r 6		r 6		
31		r 8	r 8	r 8	r 8		r 8		

■ FIGURE 3.31 Action Table for the Classic Expression Grammar.

# Shrinking the Grammar



We can combine some of the syntactically equivalent symbols

- Combine + and – into AddSub
- Combine \* and / into MulDiv
- Combine identifier and number into Val

0	<i>Goal</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Expr</i>
1	<i>Expr</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Expr</i> <u>AddSub</u> <i>Term</i>
2			<i>Term</i>
3	<i>Term</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Term</i> <u>MulDiv</u> <i>Factor</i>
4			<i>Factor</i>
5	<i>Factor</i>	$\rightarrow$	( <i>Expr</i> )
6			<u>Val</u>

This grammar has

- Fewer terminals
- Fewer productions

Which leads to

- Fewer columns in ACTION
- Fewer states, which leads to fewer rows in both tables

The “Reduced” Expression Grammar

# Shrinking the Grammar



## The Resulting Tables

0	<i>Goal</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Expr</i>
1	<i>Expr</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Expr</i> <u>AddSub</u> <i>Term</i>
2			<i>Term</i>
3	<i>Term</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>Term</i> <u>MulDiv</u> <i>Factor</i>
4			<i>Factor</i>
5	<i>Factor</i>	$\rightarrow$	( <i>Expr</i> )
6			<u>Val</u>

- 22 states
- $22 * (6 + 3) = 198$  ACTION/GOTO entries
- 48.4% reduction  $(384 - 198) / 384$
- Builds (essentially) the same parse tree

	Action Table							Goto Table		
	eof	addsub	muldiv	(	)	val	Expr	Term	Factor	
0					s 4	s 5	1	2	3	
1	acc	s 6								
2	r 3	r 3	s 7							
3	r 5	r 5	r 5							
4				s 11		s 12	8	9	10	
5	r 7	r 7	r 7							
6				s 4		s 5	13	3		
7				s 4		s 5			14	
8		s 15			s 16					
9		r 3	s 17		r 3					
10		r 5	r 5		r 5					
11				s 11		s 12	18	9	10	
12		r 7	r 7		r 7					
13	r 2	r 2	s 7							
14	r 4	r 4	r 4							
15				s 11		s 12		19	10	
16	r 6	r 6	r 6							
17				s 11		s 12			20	
18		s 15			s 21					
19		r 2	s 17		r 2					
20		r 4	r 4		r 4					
21		r 6	r 6		r 6					

(b) Action and Goto Tables for the Reduced Expression Grammar

■ FIGURE 3.33 The Reduced Expression Grammar and its Tables.

## Shrinking the ACTION and GOTO Tables

---



### Three classic options:

- Combine terminals such as number & identifier, + & -, \* & /
  - Directly removes a column, may remove a row
  - For expression grammar, 198 (vs. 384) table entries
- Combine rows or columns
  - Implement identical rows once & remap states
  - Requires extra indirection on each lookup
  - Use separate mappings for ACTION & GOTO
- Use another construction algorithm
  - Both **LALR(1)** and **SLR(1)** produce smaller tables
    - *LALR(1) represents each state with its “core” items*
    - *SLR(1) uses LR(0) items and the FOLLOW set*
  - Implementations are readily available

# Shrinking The Action and Goto Tables



The parser generator can combine identical columns & identical rows

```
for i ← 0 to MaxCol  
    MapTo[i] ← i  
  
for i ← 0 to MaxCol  
    if MapTo[i] = i then  
        for j ← i to MaxCol  
            if MapTo[j] = j then  
                same ← true  
                for k ← 0 to MaxRow  
                    if Table[i,k] = Table[j,k] then  
                        same ← false  
                        break  
                if same = true then  
                    MapTo[j] ← i
```

**Basic Table Compression Algorithm**

- Same algorithm applies to **ACTION & GOTO**
  - Also columns in **DFA** transition tables
- Adds a level of indirection, as in a **DFA**'s character classifier
  - More complex table encoding
  - Tradeoff loads vs. table size
- Significant table-size reductions without grammar changes
- Can improve efficiency by using a quick inequality test
  - pop count of non-error states
  - more complex signatures (hash)

## Shrinking the ACTION and GOTO Tables

---



### Three classic options:

- Combine terminals such as number & identifier, + & -, \* & /
  - Directly removes a column, may remove a row
  - For expression grammar, 198 (vs. 384) table entries
- Combine rows or columns
  - Implement identical rows once & remap states
  - Requires extra indirection on each lookup
  - Use separate mappings for ACTION & GOTO
- Use another construction algorithm
  - Both **LALR(1)** and **SLR(1)** produce smaller tables
    - *LALR(1) represents each state with its “core” items*
    - *SLR(1) uses LR(0) items in construction and the FOLLOW set in table-filling algorithm*
  - Implementations are readily available



## Shrinking the ACTION and GOTO Tables

### Three classic options:

- Combine terminals such as number & identifier, + & -, \* & /
  - Directly removes a column, may remove a row
  - For expression grammar, 198 (vs. 384) table entries
- Combine rows or columns
  - Implement identical rows once & remap states
  - Requires extra indirection on each lookup
  - Use separate mappings for ACTION & GOTO
- Use another construction algorithm
  - Both **LALR(1)** and **SLR(1)** produce smaller tables
    - *LALR(1) represents each state with its “core” items*
    - *SLR(1) uses LR(0) items and the FOLLOW set*
  - Implementations are readily available

left-recursive expression grammar with precedence, see § 3.6.2 in EAC

classic space-time tradeoff

Fewer grammars, same languages



## LR(1) versus LL(1)

The following **LR(1)** grammar has no **LL(1)** counterpart

- The Canonical Collection has 18 sets of LR(1) Items
  - It is not a simple grammar
  - It is, however, LR(1)

0	<i>Goal</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>S</i>
1	<i>S</i>	$\rightarrow$	<i>A</i>
2			<i>B</i>
3	<i>A</i>	$\rightarrow$	( <i>A</i> )
4			<u>a</u>
5	<i>B</i>	$\rightarrow$	( <i>B</i> ]
6			<u>b</u>

- It requires an arbitrary lookahead to choose between *A* & *B*
- An **LR(1)** parser can carry the left context (the '(` s) until it sees a or b)
- The table construction will handle it
- In contrast, an **LL(1)** parser cannot decide whether to expand *Goal* by *A* or *B*
  - *No amount of massaging the grammar and no amount of lookahead will resolve this problem*

More precisely, the language described by this **LR(1)** grammar cannot be described with an **LL(1)** grammar. In fact, the language has no **LL(*k*)** grammar, for finite *k*.

# ACTION & GOTO Tables for Waite's Example



	EOF	(	)	<u>a</u>	]
$s_0$		s 4		s 5	
$s_1$	acc				
$s_2$	r 2				
$s_3$	r 3				
$s_4$		s 8		s 9	
$s_5$	r 5				
$s_6$			s 10		
$s_7$					s 11
$s_8$		s 8		s 9	
$s_9$			r 5		r 7
$s_{10}$	r 4				
$s_{11}$	r 6				
$s_{12}$			s 14		
$s_{13}$					s 15
$s_{14}$			r 4		
$s_{15}$					r 6

	S	A	B
$s_0$	1	2	3
$s_1$			
$s_2$			
$s_3$			
$s_4$		6	7
$s_5$			
$s_6$			
$s_7$			
$s_8$		12	13
$s_9$			
$s_{10}$			
$s_{11}$			
$s_{12}$			
$s_{13}$			
$s_{14}$			
$s_{15}$			

0	$Start \rightarrow A$
1	B
2	$A \rightarrow (A)$
3	a
4	$B \rightarrow (B)$
5	a

# LR( $k$ ) versus LL( $k$ )

---



## The Bottom Line

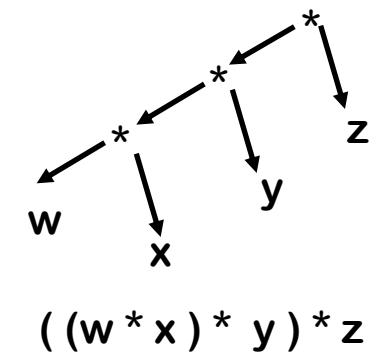
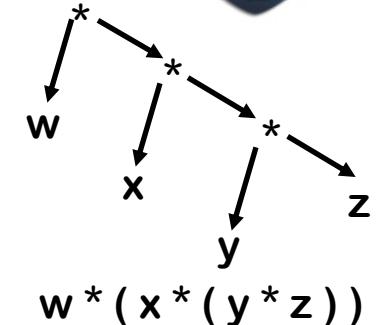
*“... in practice, programming languages do not actually seem to fall in the gap between LL(1) languages and deterministic languages”*

*J.J. Horning, “LR Grammars and Analysers”,  
in Compiler Construction, An Advanced Course, Springer-Verlag, 1976*

# Left Recursion versus Right Recursion



- Right recursion
  - Required for termination in top-down parsers
  - Uses (on average) more stack space
  - Naïve right recursion produces right-associativity
- Left recursion
  - Works fine in bottom-up parsers
  - Limits required stack space
  - Naïve left recursion produces left-associativity
- Rule of thumb
  - Left recursion for bottom-up parsers
  - Right recursion for top-down parsers



# Left Recursion versus Right Recursion

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## A real example, from the front end of the lab 2 ILOC simulator

The simulator was built by two of my successful Ph.D.s

- It is actually a more complex piece of software than you might guess
- The front end is an LR(1) parser, generated by Bison
- The grammar contained the following productions:

```
instruction_list  :  instruction
                  |  label_def instruction
                  |  instruction  instruction_list
                  |  label_def  instruction instruction_list
```

When my colleague first ran the timing blocks through the simulator, it exploded with the error message “memory exhausted”.

⇒ What happened?

# Left Recursion versus Right Recursion



A real example, from the lab 1 simulator's front end

```
instruction_list   : instruction
                  | label_def instruction
                  | instruction instruction_list
                  | label_def instruction instruction_list
```

right recursion

- The parse stack overflowed as it tried to instantiate the `instruction_list`

# Left Recursion versus Right Recursion



A real example, from the lab 1 simulator's front end

```
instruction_list : instruction
                  | label_def instruction
                  | instruction instruction_list
                  | label_def instruction instruction_list
```

right recursion

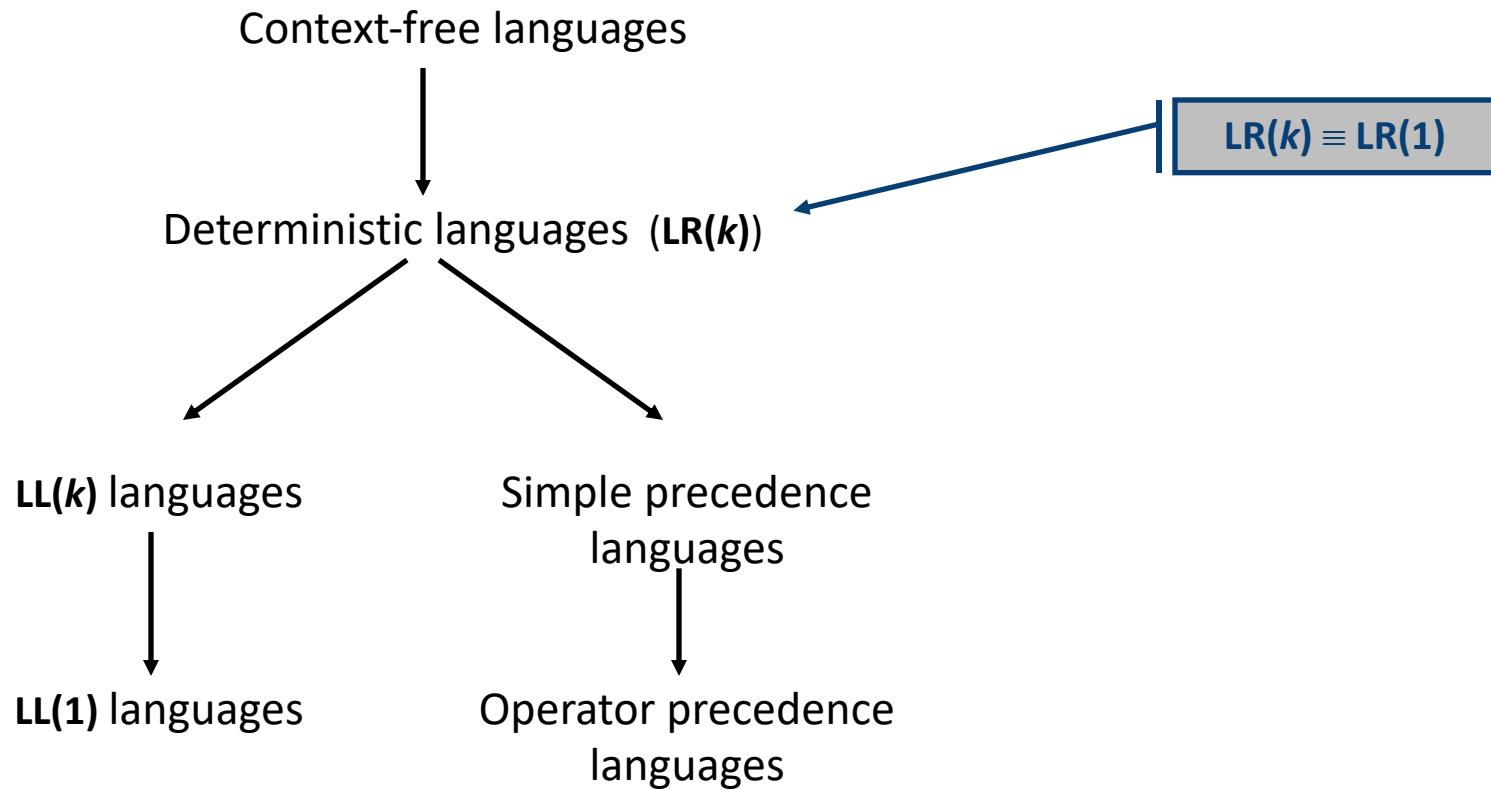
- The parse stack overflowed as it tried to instantiate the instruction\_list
- The fix was easy

```
instruction_list : instruction
                  | label_def instruction
                  | instruction_list instruction
                  | instruction_list label_def instruction
```

left recursion

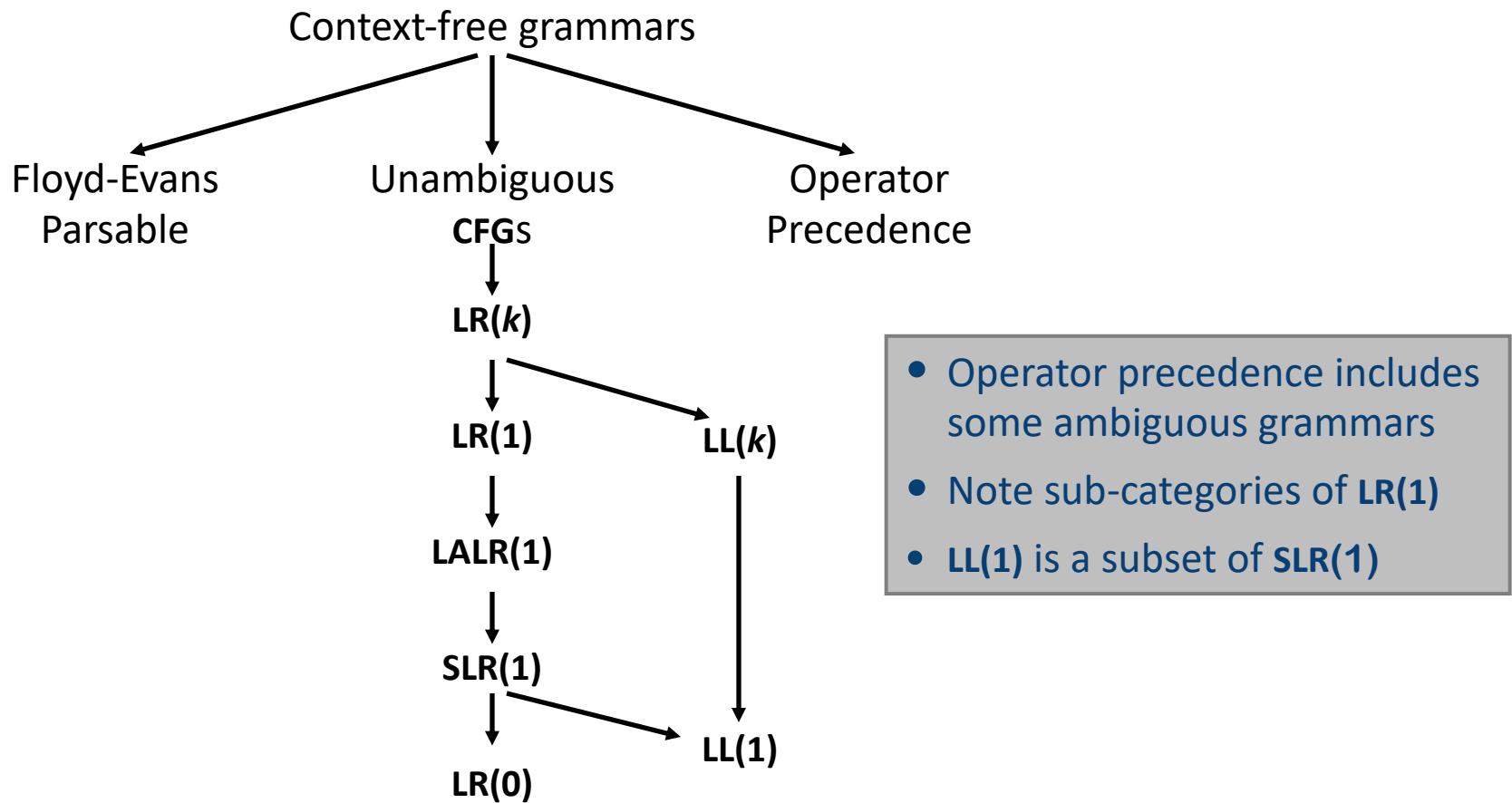
- This grammar has (small) bounded stack space & (thus) scales well

# Hierarchy of Context-Free Languages



*The inclusion hierarchy for  
context-free languages*

# Hierarchy of Context-Free Grammars



*The inclusion hierarchy for context-free grammars*