

# LIN 311 Syntax Recitation

Feb. 1, 2019

- Language is about sound and meaning.
- **Why study Syntax** – something which is neither sound or meaning?
- **What is Syntax?**
- What is your definition of Syntax?

- **Syntax**

- studies the structure and formation of sentences.
- explains how words and phrases are arranged to form correct sentences.

# Have fun with Syntactic Ambiguity



- What are the possible meanings of each sentence?
  - If a sentence below is ambiguous, is it structural ambiguity or lexical ambiguity?
1. The professor said on Monday he would give an exam.
  2. The boy saw a man with a telescope.
  3. Visiting relatives can be boring.

# Have fun with Syntactic Ambiguity

- **What are the possible meanings of each sentence?**
  - **If a sentence below is ambiguous, is it structural ambiguity or lexical ambiguity?**
1. This morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas.
  2. old men and women
  3. The mother of the boy and the girl will arrive soon.

# Syntax as Science

1. Gather and observe data
2. Make generalizations
3. Develop hypotheses

- $(1) \rightarrow (2) \rightarrow (3) \rightarrow (1)$
- Q: where do you get the data?
- Q: what is the differences between a generalization and a hypothesis? How to verify your hypothesis?

# Anaphors

1. Consider the data below. Can you make some conclusions about anaphors?
  - a) Bill kissed himself.
  - b) \*Bill kissed herself.
  - c) \*Sally kissed himself.
  - d) Sally kissed herself.
  - e) \*Kiss himself.
  - f) \*Kiss herself.
  - g) John kissed himself.
  - h) \*John kissed themselves.

# Anaphors

2. Consider the data below. Can you make an addition to the statement you just made about the distribution of anaphors?

- a) Geordi sang to himself.
- b) \*Himself sang to Geordi.
- c) Betsy loves herself in blue leather.
- d) \*Blue leather shows herself that Betsy is pretty.



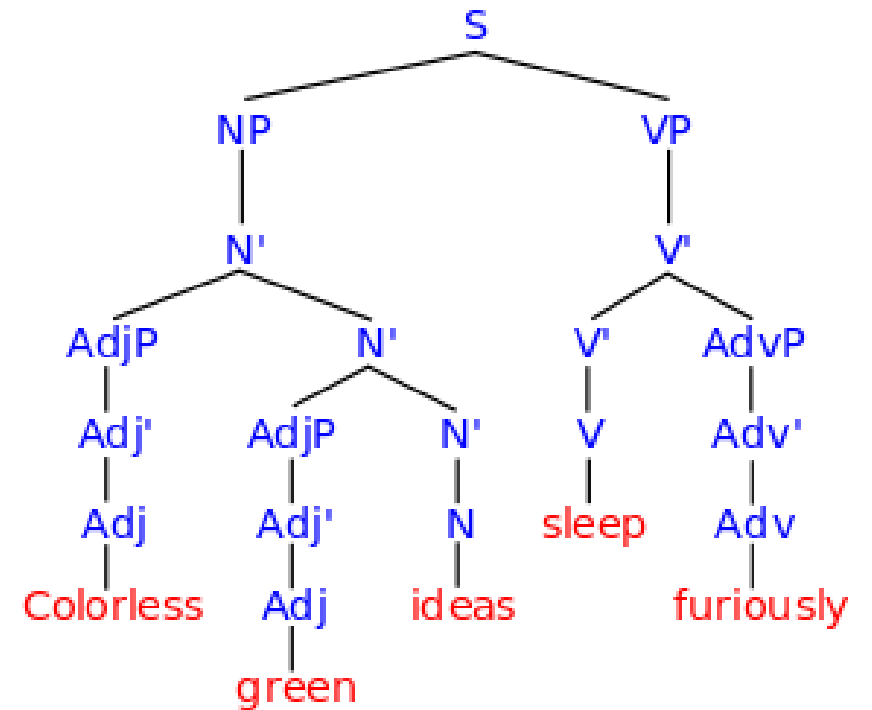
# Anaphors

3. Consider the data below. Can you make an addition to the statement you just made about the distribution of anaphors?

- a) Everyone should be able to defend himself/herself/themselves.
- b) Don't hurt yourself/ \*himself /\*herself/ \*themselves!

# What does this famous Chomskyan sentence tell you about Syntax?

- Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.



# Grammaticality Judgment

- Semantic judgment #
- Syntax judgment \*
  
- Q: Can you think of an example which is semantically ill-formed but syntactically well-formed?
- Q: Can you think of an example which is syntactically ill-formed but semantically well-formed?

# Grammaticality Judgment

How can you check the judgment on the sentences you just provided in a more scientific way?

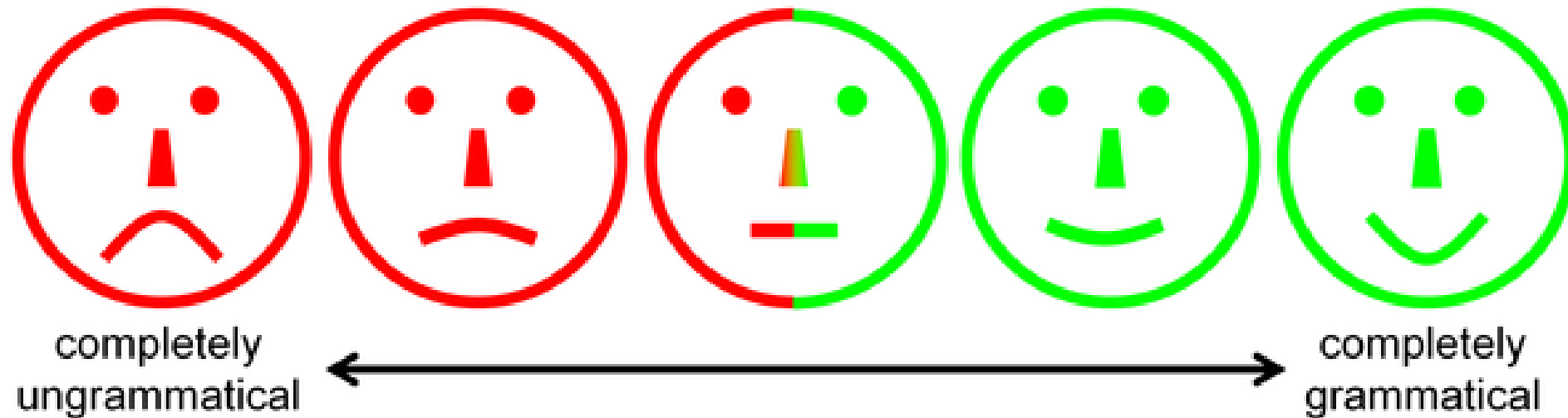


Figure out what the chunks might be for each sentence

- (1) Cheese mice love stinks.
- (2) The house Bill built leans to the left.
- (3) The man the boy the woman saw heard left.
- (4) The woman saw the boy that heard the man that left.

These sentences are sometimes judged as unacceptable by English native speakers. Why?

Are these sentences syntactically ill-formed or semantically ill-formed?

# Competence versus Performance

