

# Semantic Analysis

# Overview

- What is semantic analysis?
- Dynamic and static checks
- Attribute grammars
- Synthesize and inherited grammars
- Explicit AST construction

# Introduction

- Syntax: refers to form, structure
- Semantics: meaning
- Relevance:
  - Allows to enforce rules
  - Provides information to produce equivalent program
- Why we need it?
  - Example:  $\text{args} \rightarrow \text{args}, \text{one\_arg} \mid \text{one\_arg}$
  - Rule provides structure of list
  - Cannot determine length of list by rule alone
  - Function definition and calling requires specific number of parameters

# Introduction

- Rule of thumb:
  - Anything that needs counting
  - Accumulating
  - Nestedness
  - Putting together things that appear separated in time/space
- Semantic rules divided between:
  - Static rules: add code for checking, array bounds checking
  - Dynamic rules: a division by zero, accessing valid array positions
- Line between one and the other could be fuzzy (per language, per implementation)

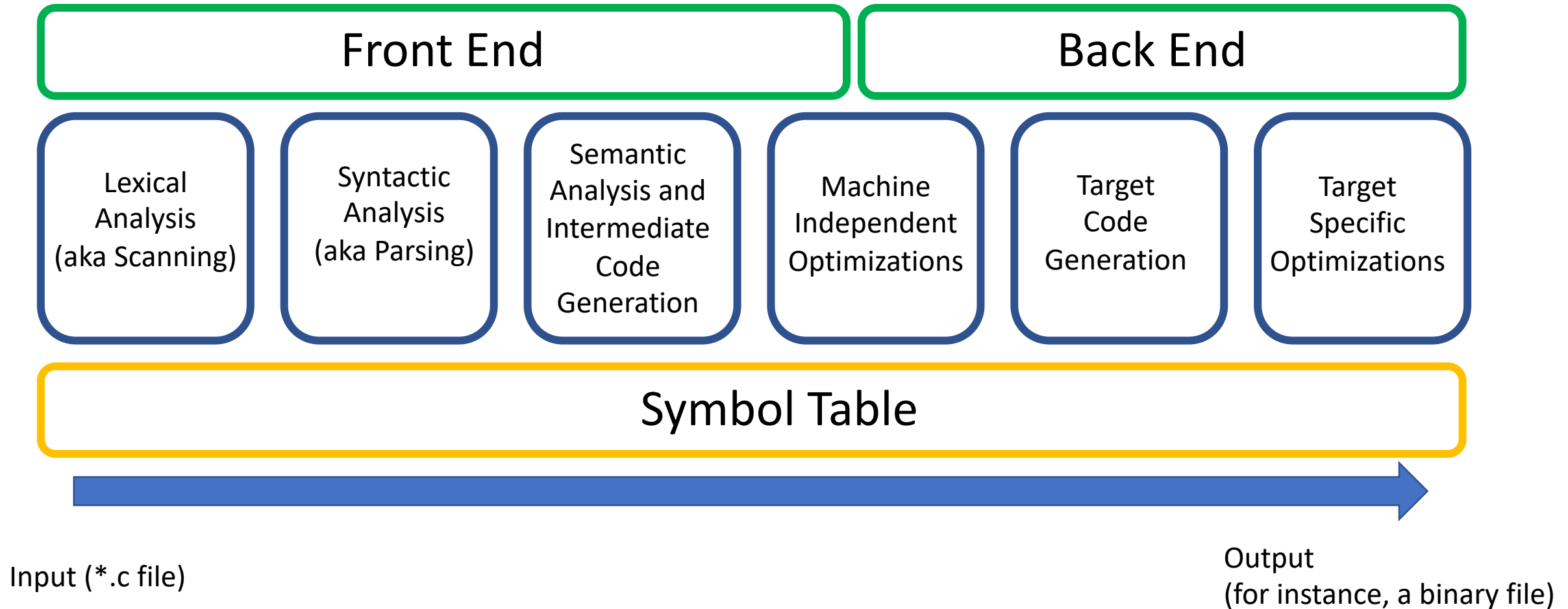
# Introduction

- Semantic analysis and code generation can be described in terms of annotations / decorations of the parse / syntax tree
- Ability to:
  - Gather information during parsing
  - Structure information (as in a data structure)
  - Associate information (the data structure) to specific part of the parse tree and other compiler parts
- Bits of information: attributes
- Here we cover attribute grammars and mechanisms to enforce static rules
- Heavily rely on the structure of the CFG
- Use grammar to pass information along

# Role of Semantic Analyzer

- Semantics vary a lot with language
- Lisp dialects: mixed-mode arithmetic, automatic promotion from integer to rational to floating point or “bignum”
- Ada: assigns specific type to numeric variable
- C: no checks at all 😊
- Java: checks a lot (out of bounds, integer overflow, proper variable initialization)
- Semantic Analyzer and Intermediate Code Generator mark the end of the front-end of a typical compiler

# Compilation Overview



# Dynamic Checks

- The compiler will generate code to perform some checks
- Checks vary a lot per language
- Languages may also provide mechanisms for users to implement their own checks, which then can be disabled prior to production:
  - C/C++ assertions: `assert ( x > 0 && "This should not happen" );`
- Need for dynamic checks could also vary a lot across languages:
  - `3 + "four"` → Concatenate or Add?
  - `3 + "4.5"` → Concatenate or Add? If adding, as integer or float?
- Invariants: Logic conditions that should be met at runtime (e.g. a loop condition such as `i < N`)



# Static Analysis

- Compile-time algorithms that predict run-time behavior
- Example: pointer analysis attempts to find when are pointers safe, being used, not being used, initialized, etc
- Analysis is precise if it allows the compiler to determine when something follows the rule or not; eq. imprecise if there's a chance that the algorithm may fail
- Some languages (e.g. Ada, ML): will enforce variables are always appropriately used according to their type
- Lisp, Python, Ruby: type-safe, added dynamic overhead for various checks
- Example: definite assignments in Java and C# force variables to be initialized

# Static Analysis

- Escape analysis: references limited to context? If so, can be allocated in the stack
- Other:
  - out of order optimizations: is it safe/correct to re-arrange the order of computations?
  - thread safety: can some instructions be executed in parallel?
- Unsafe optimizations: may lead to incorrect results
- Speculative: sort of no guarantees of the result when doing something; can also refer to something that can be undone (e.g. data prefetching)
- Conservative: analysis or optimization guaranteeing minimum requirement of results in terms of safety and/or effectiveness
- Optimistic: like conservative but with a “maybe” flavor

# Attribute Grammars

1.  $E \rightarrow E + T$
2.  $E \rightarrow E - T$
3.  $E \rightarrow T$
4.  $T \rightarrow T * F$
5.  $T \rightarrow T / F$
6.  $T \rightarrow F$
7.  $F \rightarrow - F$
8.  $F \rightarrow ( E )$
9.  $F \rightarrow \text{const}$

- For every symbol  $S$ , we have some set of attributes:  $S.\text{attr1}$ ,  $S.\text{attr2}$  ...
- Attributes can vary depending on the symbol type
- Not all symbols need to have the same set of attributes
- Examples:
  - For a list we could associate a C++ `std::vector<sometype>`
  - For some arithmetic expressions we could have int or float field types

# Attribute Grammars

1.  $E_1 \rightarrow E_2 + T$
2.  $E_1 \rightarrow E_2 - T$
3.  $E \rightarrow T$
4.  $T_1 \rightarrow T_2 * F$
5.  $T_1 \rightarrow T_2 / F$
6.  $T \rightarrow F$
7.  $F_1 \rightarrow - F_2$
8.  $F \rightarrow ( E )$
9.  $F \rightarrow \text{const}$



1.  $\text{val}(E_1) := \text{val}(E_2) + \text{val}(T)$
2.  $\text{val}(E_1) := \text{val}(E_2) - \text{val}(T)$
3.  $\text{val}(E) := \text{val}(T)$
4.  $\text{val}(T_1) := \text{val}(T_2) * \text{val}(F)$
5.  $\text{val}(T_1) := \text{val}(T_2) / \text{val}(F)$
6.  $\text{val}(T) := \text{val}(F)$
7.  $\text{val}(F_1) := - \text{val}(F_2)$
8.  $\text{val}(F) := \text{val}(E)$
9.  $\text{val}(F) := \text{val}(\text{const})$

- a. Copy rules  
b. Semantic functions

# Attribute Grammars

- Usual type of rules:
  - Copy rules
  - Semantic rules
  - Small fragments of code to be executed in specific parts of the parsing process  $\rightarrow$  semantic actions

1.  $L \rightarrow \mathbf{id} \ LT$

2.  $LT \rightarrow , \ L$

3.  $LT \rightarrow \varepsilon$



1.  $c(L) := 1 + c(LT)$

2.  $c(LT) := c(L)$

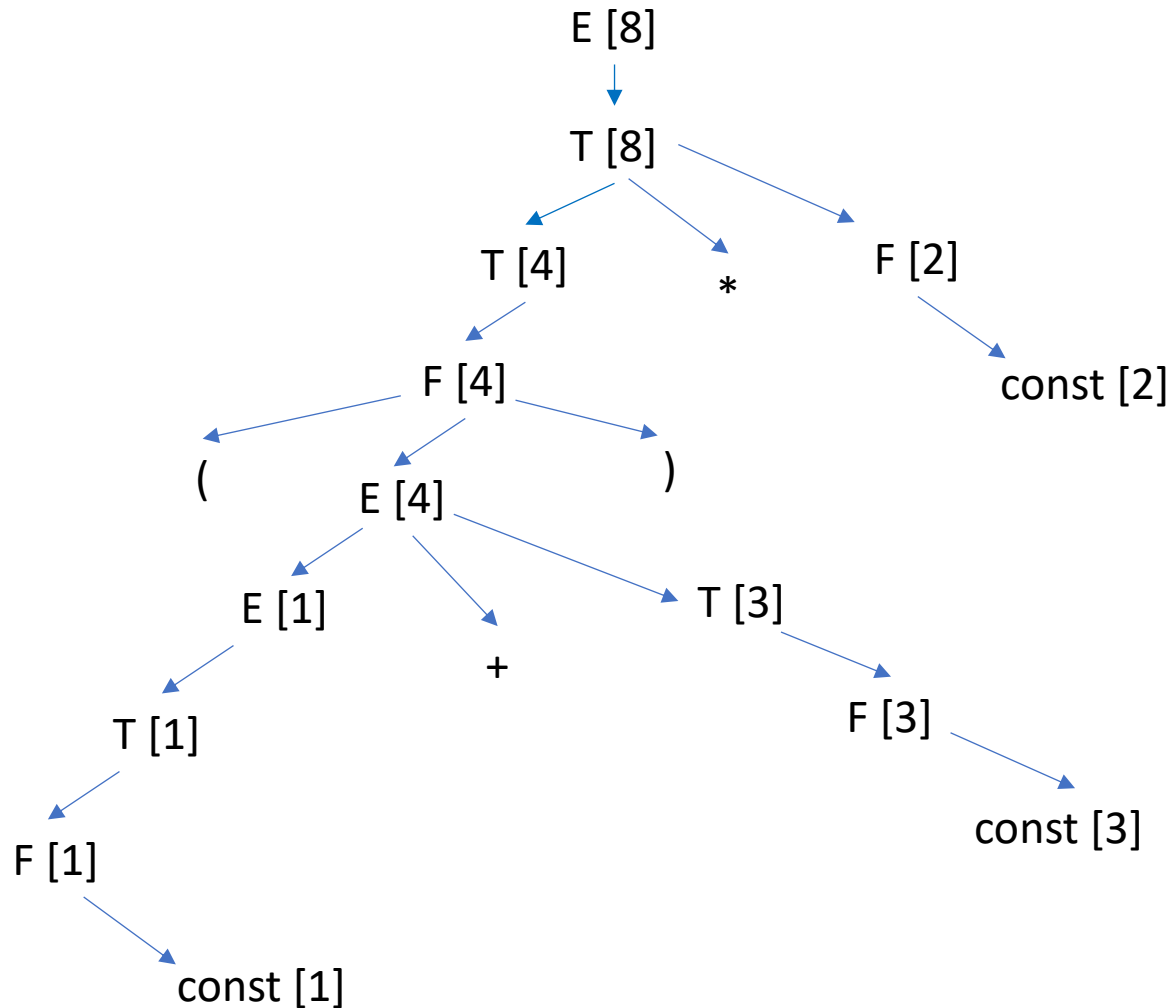
3.  $c(LT) := 0$

# Attribute Grammars

Attributes of tree nodes might include

- for an identifier: a reference to its symbol table entry (maybe)
- for an expression, it's type
- for a statement or expression, a reference to the code in the compilers intermediate form
- for practically all constructs, information relating to file name, line, column, source code position
- internal code, list of semantic errors in the subtree below

# Evaluating Attributes



Information flow with  
attribute grammar  
for string: ( 1 + 3 ) \* 2

# Synthesized Attributes

- Values are calculated along the way
- Only in productions when the symbol appears on the left-hand side
- Attribute flow: boils down to information boiling up, from leaves to root
- Attribute grammars where all attributes are synthesized are S-attributed
- In S-attributed grammars:
  - Arguments to semantic functions can only be from the right-hand side
  - Result always goes to attribute on left-hand side symbol
- Attributes of tokens can only be initialized by information coming from scanner

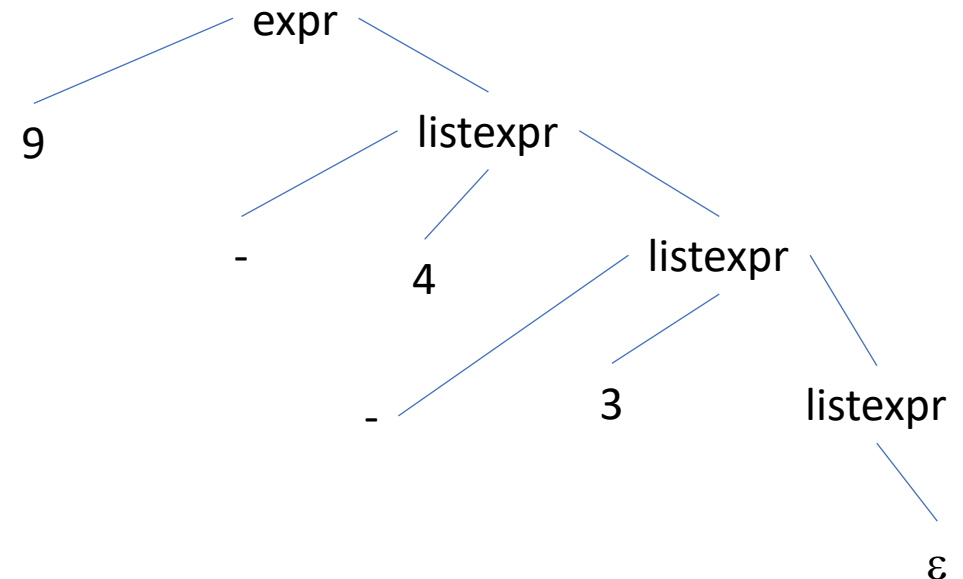


# Inherited Attributes

- Inherited attributes are attributes whose values are calculated when their symbol appears on the right-hand side of the current production
- Key difference: Information flows from parent to child or among siblings; synthesized attributes from children to parents
- In some compilers, symbol table information passed via inherited attributes

LL(1) grammar:

- $\text{expr} \rightarrow \text{const listexpr}$
- $\text{listexpr} \rightarrow - \text{const listexpr} \mid \varepsilon$

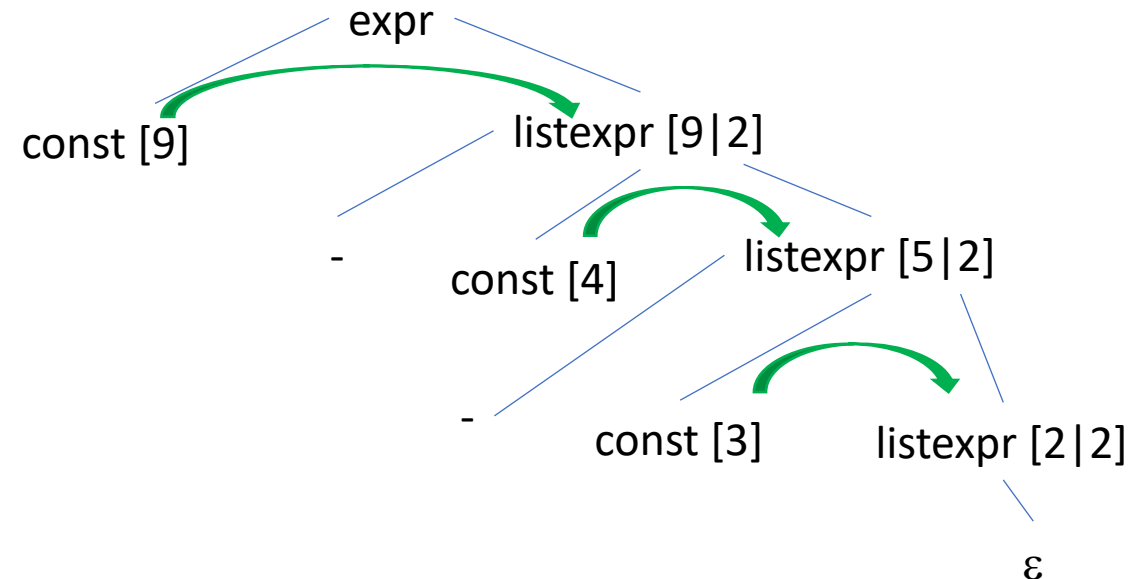


# Inherited Attributes

- An LL(1) grammar (top-down, left-left) is natural for inherited attributes
- Synthesized attributes do not match the order in which the tree is discovered
- To support an s-attribute grammar, we would need the ability to store an explicit representation of listexpr (a right-hand subtree)  $\rightarrow$  defeats the purpose

LL(1) grammar:

- $\text{expr} \rightarrow \text{const listexpr}$
- $\text{listexpr} \rightarrow - \text{const listexpr} \mid \varepsilon$



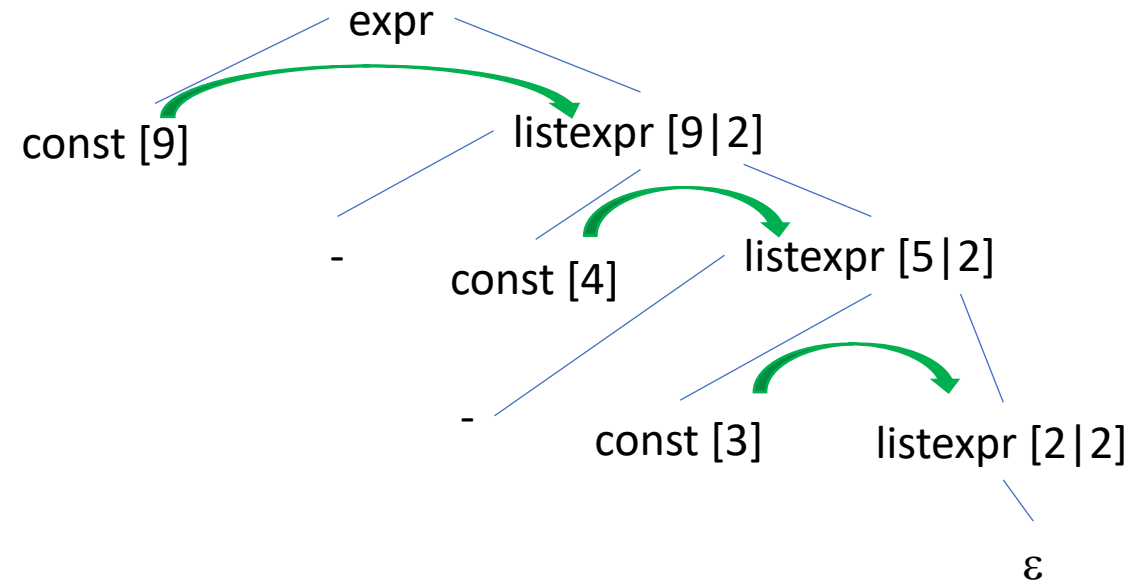
# Inherited Attributes

Attribute rules:

- $\text{expr} \rightarrow \text{const listexpr}$ 
  - $\text{subtot}(\text{listexpr}) := \text{val}(\text{expr})$
  - $\text{val}(\text{expr}) := \text{val}(\text{listexpr})$
- $\text{listexpr} \rightarrow - \text{const listexpr}$ 
  - $\text{subtot}(\text{listexpr}_1) := \text{subtot}(\text{listexpr}_2)$   
–  $\text{val}(\text{const})$
  - $\text{val}(\text{listexpr}_1) := \text{val}(\text{listexpr}_2)$
- $\text{listexpr} \rightarrow \varepsilon$ 
  - $\text{val}(\text{listexpr}) := \text{subtot}(\text{listexpr})$

LL(1) grammar:

- $\text{expr} \rightarrow \text{const listexpr}$
- $\text{listexpr} \rightarrow - \text{const listexpr} \mid \varepsilon$



# Inherited Attributes

LL(1) grammar  
with inherit  
attributes:

Main source of  
problem: left  
associative  
operators

Left and right  
operands  
appear in  
separate  
productions

1.  $E \rightarrow T \ TT$ 
  - $st(TT) := val(TT)$
  - $val(E) := val(TT)$
2.  $TT_1 \rightarrow + \ T \ TT_2$ 
  - $st(TT_2) := st(TT_1) + val(T)$
  - $val(TT_1) := val(TT_2)$
3.  $TT_1 \rightarrow - \ T \ TT_2$ 
  - $st(TT_2) := st(TT_1) - val(T)$
  - $val(TT_1) := val(TT_2)$
4.  $TT \rightarrow \varepsilon$ 
  - $val(TT) := st(TT)$
5.  $T \rightarrow F \ FT$ 
  - $st(FT) := val(F)$
  - $val(T) := val(FT)$
6.  $FT_1 \rightarrow * \ F \ FT_2$ 
  - $st(FT_2) := st(FT_1) * val(F)$
  - $val(FT_1) := val(FT_2)$

7.  $FT_1 \rightarrow / \ F \ FT_2$ 
  - $st(FT_2) := st(FT_1) / val(F)$
  - $val(FT_1) := val(FT_2)$
8.  $FT \rightarrow \varepsilon$ 
  - $val(FT) := st(FT)$
9.  $F_1 \rightarrow - \ F_2$ 
  - $val(F_1) := - val(F_2)$
10.  $F \rightarrow ( \ E \ )$ 
  - $val(F) := val(E)$
11.  $F \rightarrow const$ 
  - $val(F) := val(const)$

# Attribute Flow

- Attribute grammars do not specify the order in which attribute rules are or should be invoked
- Annotations are declarative: define set of trees, but not how to annotate them
- S-attribute grammars:
  - Strictly bottom-up
  - Evaluation of attributes follows visiting order of parse tree (of an LR-parser)
  - Attributes can be evaluated on the fly, interleaving semantic and syntactic analysis (and lexical analysis)

# Attribute Flow

L-attribute (Left—tttributed) grammars (formally):


- a. Synthesized attributes of left-hand side (lhs) symbols depend only on: i) symbol's own inherited attributes or ii) on attributes (synthesized or inherited) of symbols on the right-hand side (rhs) of the production
- b. Inherited attributes of rhs symbols depend only on inherited attributes of the lhs or on attributes (any kind) of symbols to its left in the rhs of the production

$$\begin{aligned} \text{syn}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}) &:= f_{\text{inh}}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}) \\ \text{syn}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}) &:= f_{\text{syn}}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}) \\ \text{syn}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}) &:= f(\{\text{inh}(\text{rhs}_1, \text{rhs}_2, \dots, \text{rhs}_M), \\ &\quad \text{syn}(\text{inh}(\text{rhs}_1, \text{rhs}_2, \dots, \text{rhs}_M))\}) \end{aligned}$$
$$\begin{aligned} \text{inh}(\text{rhs}_i) &:= f(\{\text{inh}(\text{sym}_{\text{lhs}}), \\ &\quad \text{syn}(\text{rhs}_{j < i}), \text{inh}(\text{rhs}_{j < i})\}) \end{aligned}$$

- Every S-attribute grammar is also an L-attribute grammar
- Compiler that interleaves semantic analysis and code generation is a one-pass compiler (not too common nowadays)
- Avoids the need for explicit construction and representation of the parse tree

# Explicit Syntax Tree Construction

- Often, we want to construct an explicit representation of the syntax tree
- Useful in multi-pass compilers
- Example of bottom-up parsing →



1.  $E_1 \rightarrow E_2 + T$
2.  $E_1 \rightarrow E_2 - T$
3.  $E \rightarrow T$
4.  $T_1 \rightarrow T_2 * F$
5.  $T_1 \rightarrow T_2 / F$
6.  $T \rightarrow F$
7.  $F_1 \rightarrow - F_2$
8.  $F \rightarrow ( E )$
9.  $F \rightarrow \text{const}$

1. `ptr(E1) := make_bin_op("+", ptr(E2), ptr(T))`
2. `ptr(E1) := make_bin_op("-", ptr(E2), ptr(T))`
3. `ptr(E) := ptr(T)`
4. `ptr(T1) := make_bin_op("*", ptr(T2), ptr(F))`
5. `ptr(T1) := make_bin_op("/", ptr(T2), ptr(F))`
6. `ptr(T) := ptr(F)`
7. `ptr(F1) := make_un_op(ptr(F2))`
8. `ptr(F) := ptr(E)`
9. `ptr(F) := make_leaf(val(const))`

# Inherited Attributes

```
1.  $E \rightarrow T \ TT$ 
•  $st(TT) := ptr(T)$ 
•  $ptr(E) := ptr(TT)$ 
2.  $TT_1 \rightarrow + \ T \ TT_2$ 
•  $st(TT_2) := make\_bin\_op("+", st(TT_1), ptr(T))$ 
•  $ptr(TT_1) := ptr(TT_2)$ 
3.  $TT_1 \rightarrow - \ T \ TT_2$ 
•  $st(TT_2) := make\_bin\_op("-", st(TT_1), ptr(T))$ 
•  $ptr(TT_1) := ptr(TT_2)$ 
4.  $TT \rightarrow \varepsilon$ 
•  $val(TT) := st(TT)$ 
5.  $T \rightarrow F \ FT$ 
•  $st(FT) := val(F)$ 
•  $val(T) := val(FT)$ 
6.  $FT_1 \rightarrow * \ F \ FT_2$ 
•  $st(FT_2) := make\_bin\_op("*", st(FT_1), ptr(F))$ 
•  $ptr(FT_1) := ptr(FT_2)$ 
```

```
7.  $FT_1 \rightarrow / \ F \ FT_2$ 
•  $st(FT_2) := make\_bin\_op("/", st(FT_1), ptr(F))$ 
•  $ptr(FT_1) := ptr(FT_2)$ 
8.  $FT \rightarrow \varepsilon$ 
•  $ptr(FT) := st(FT)$ 
9.  $F_1 \rightarrow - \ F_2$ 
•  $ptr(F_1) := make\_un\_op("-", ptr(F_2))$ 
10.  $F \rightarrow ( \ E \ )$ 
•  $ptr(F) := ptr(E)$ 
11.  $F \rightarrow const$ 
•  $ptr(F) := make\_leaf(val(const))$ 
```



# Action Routines

- Commonly used in parsing-driven translation
- An action is a semantic function invoked during specific points of the parsing process
- Compiler designer decided what to call when, for instance, adding new variables to the symbol table
- We will normally have several semantic actions in each production
- During the compiler design and implementation process, we might notice that we want to change the structure of the productions / grammar