FACULTY
OF ARTS
Masaryk University

# Roots unrooted

Pavel Caha

# The morphologist’s view: Roots vs. affixes

# Roots: the morphologist's view

Aronoff (1994): A root is what is left when all morphological structure has been wrung out of a form.

(1) Czech conjugation

| | sg. | pl. |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | prosím | prosíme |
| 2nd | prosíš | prosíte |
| 3rd | prosí | prosí |

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| 3rd | prosí | prosí |
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| inf | prosit | prosit |

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| | sg. | pl. |
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| 1st | **pros**-í-m | **pros**-í-me |
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# The M-Root

In a lot of words, one can distinguish the root and the affixes

(2) Czech demonstratives

| | fem. | neut. | masc. |
|---|---|---|---|
| nom | ta | to | ten |
| acc | tu | to | toho |
| gen | té | toho | toho |
| loc | té | to | toho |
| dat | té | to | toho |
| ins | tou | tím | tím |

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(2) Czech demonstratives

| | fem. | neut. | masc. |
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| nom | **t**-a | **t**-o | **t**-en |
| acc | **t**-u | **t**-o | **t**-oho |
| gen | **t**-é | **t**-oho | **t**-oho |
| loc | **t**-é | **t**-o | **t**-oho |
| dat | **t**-é | **t**-o | **t**-oho |
| ins | **t**-ou | **t**-ím | **t**-ím |

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| | fem. | neut. | masc. | wh, anim. |
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| acc | **t**-u | **t**-o | **t**-oho | k-oho |
| gen | **t**-é | **t**-oho | **t**-oho | k-oho |
| loc | **t**-é | **t**-o | **t**-oho | k-om |
| dat | **t**-é | **t**-o | **t**-oho | k-omu |
| ins | **t**-ou | **t**-ím | **t**-ím | |

# The syntactician’s view: Lexical categories vs. Functional catgories

# Lexical categories

- In syntax, people used to have a related distinction, namely that between LEXICAL CATEGORIES and FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES.

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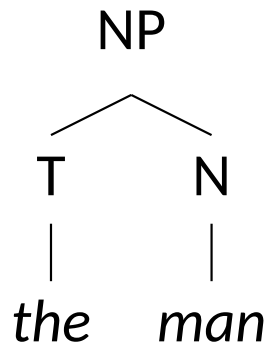
a. NP → T + N

b. T → *the*

c. N → *man*, *ball*, ...

(4)



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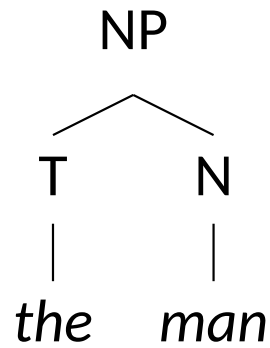
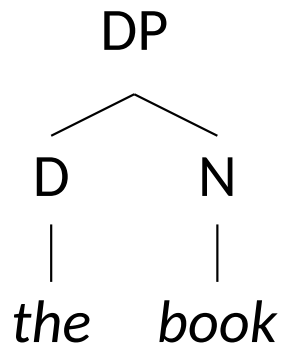



- One distinction is obvious from the notation: open vs. closed class items.

# The DP hypothesis

(5) Abney (1987)



# Affixes can be functional heads

(6) Danish

a. en bog
   a book

b. bog-en
   book-def
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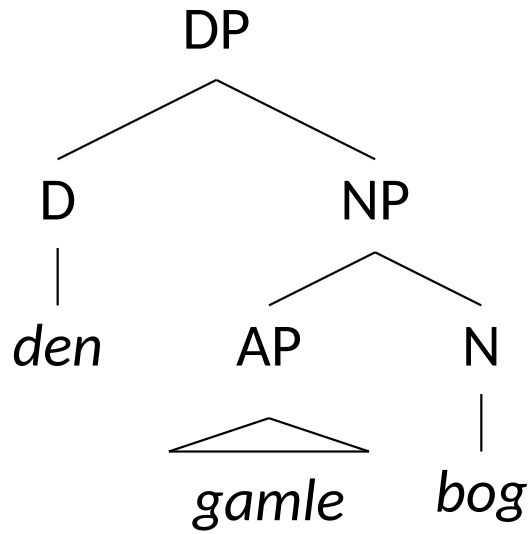


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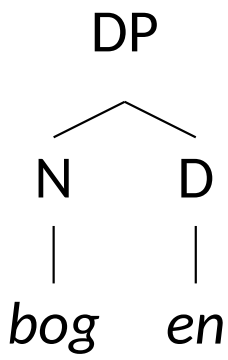

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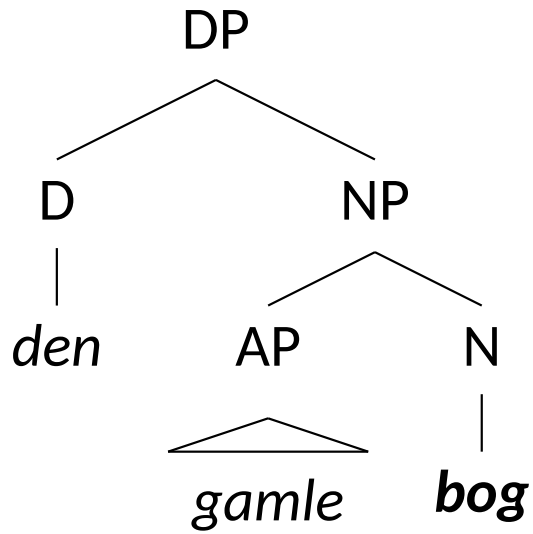


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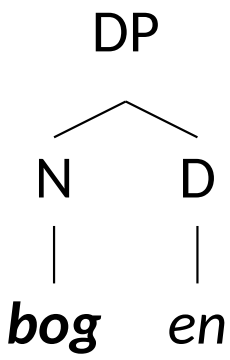


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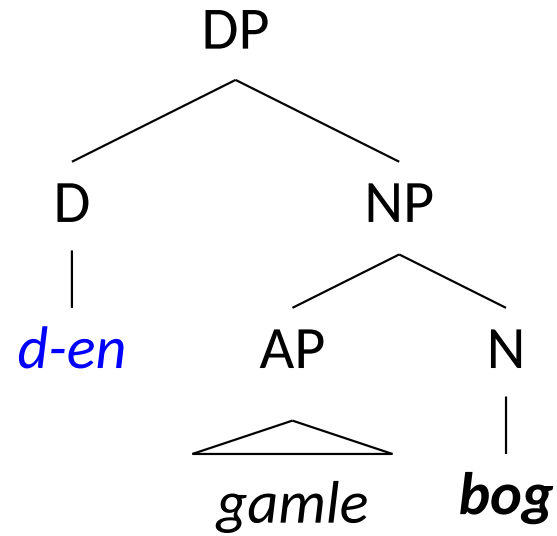


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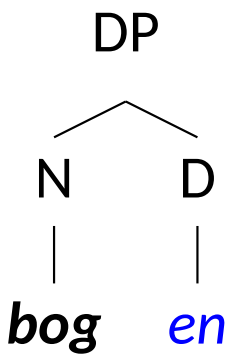


Lexical categories are M-roots.

Functional categories may be affixal (but do not have to be).

# How lexical categories became empty

# Plural

(9) the books

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(10) Chomsky (1957)

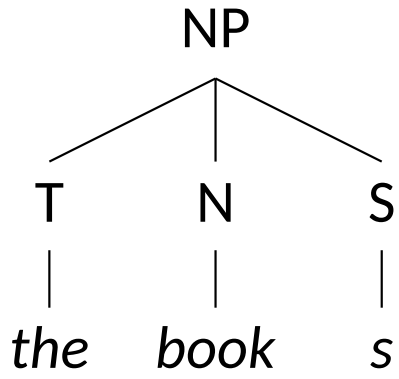
a. $NP \longrightarrow NP_{sing}$

b. $NP \longrightarrow NP_{pl}$

c. $NP_{sing} \longrightarrow T + N + \emptyset$

d. $NP_{pl} \longrightarrow T + N + S$

(11)



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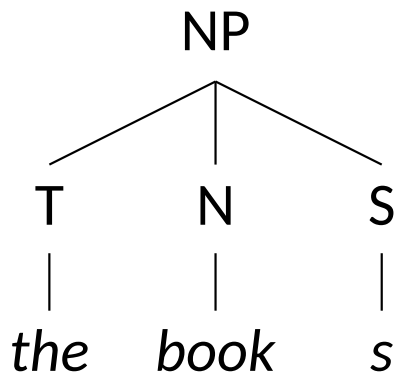


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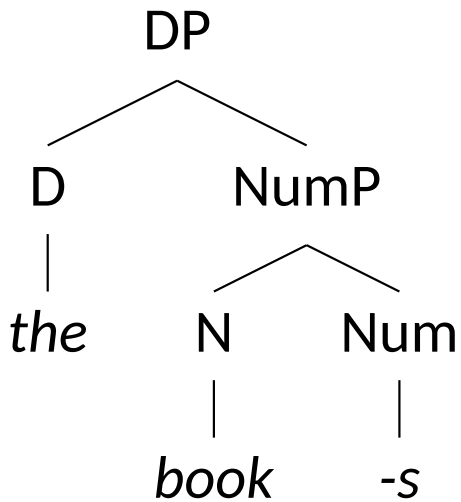

# Gender

(13) Spanish

a. l-a-s
the-fem-pl
muchach-a-s
child-fem-pl
'the girls'

b. l-o-s
the-masc-pl
muchach-o-s
child-masc-pl
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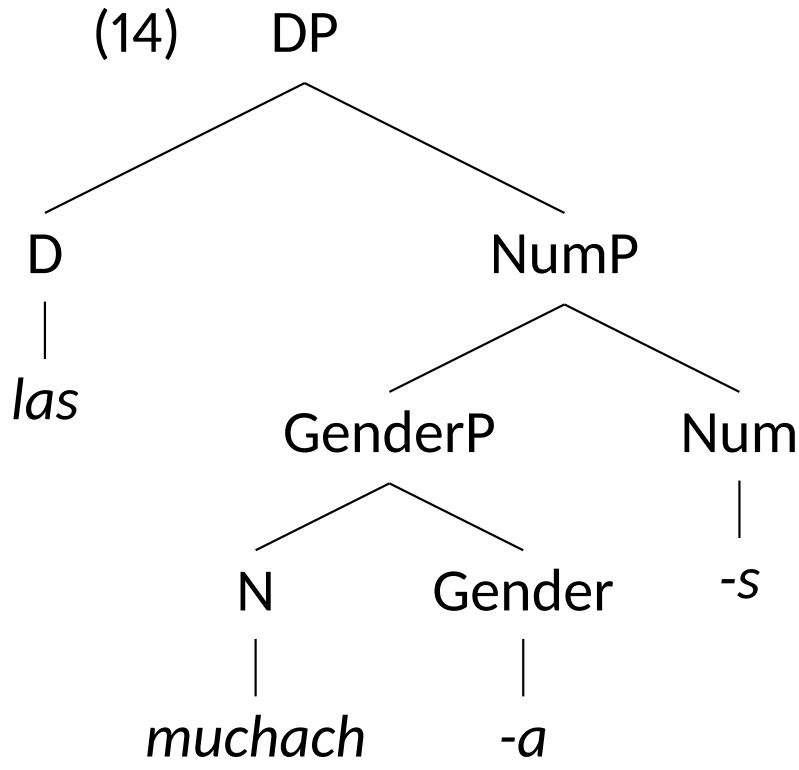

# Portmanteau

(15) Luganda

a. omu-ntu ‘person’ (class 1)

b. aba-ntu ‘people’ (class 2)

c. eki-ntu ‘thing’ (class 7)

d. ebi-ntu ‘things’ (class 8)

e. awa-ntu ‘place’ (class 16)

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(16) a. ss-a-yas-izza ki-kopo
neg.1-past-break-perf 7-cup
‘I didn’t break any cup.’

b. ss-a-ky-as-izza e-ki-kopo
neg.1sg-past-7oc-break-perf 7-7-cup
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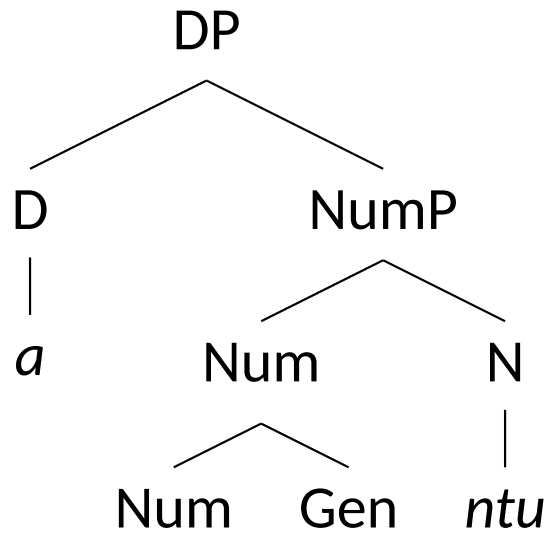

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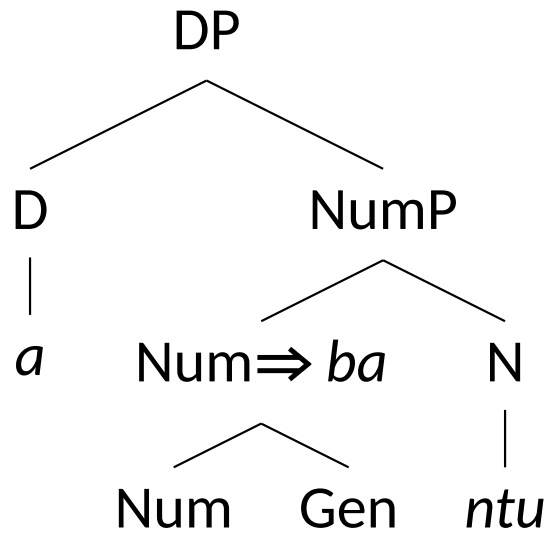

# Once you factor functional structure away, there is nothing left

- Borer: Thus far, the investigation of e.g. *the table* or *walked the dog* proceeded from the assumption that formal properties of such expressions can be fully accommodated without availing ourselves, at any point, of information that is uniquely connected to *table*, *walk* and *dog* respectively. Rather, both syntax and the crucial aspects of the semantics can be computed on the basis of functors and the semantic formulas which such functors denote.

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- A lot of people in Generative Grammar now entertain this position.

# The birth of S-roots

# A-categorial categories

dance: N / V

dog: N / V (to cause trouble for someone over a long period of time)

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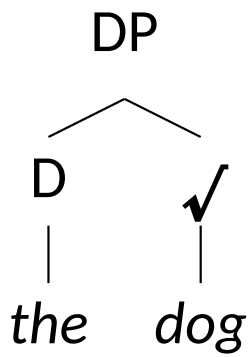

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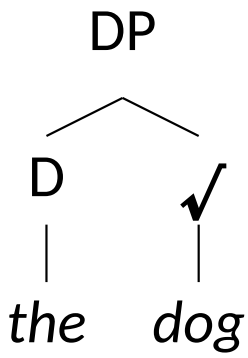


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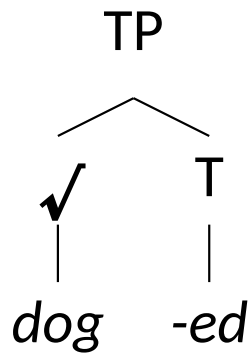

## “A novel syntactic term”

Borer, Structuring Sense III, 347: by virtue of being syntactic objects without a category, roots represent a novel syntactic term.

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b. M-roots: Whatever is left when all morphological structure has been wrung out of a form.

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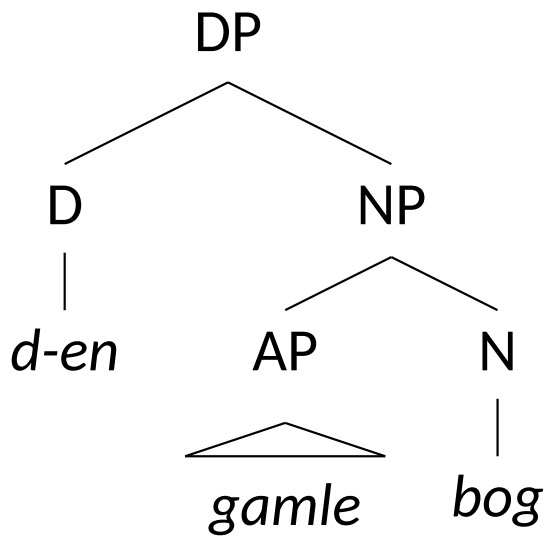

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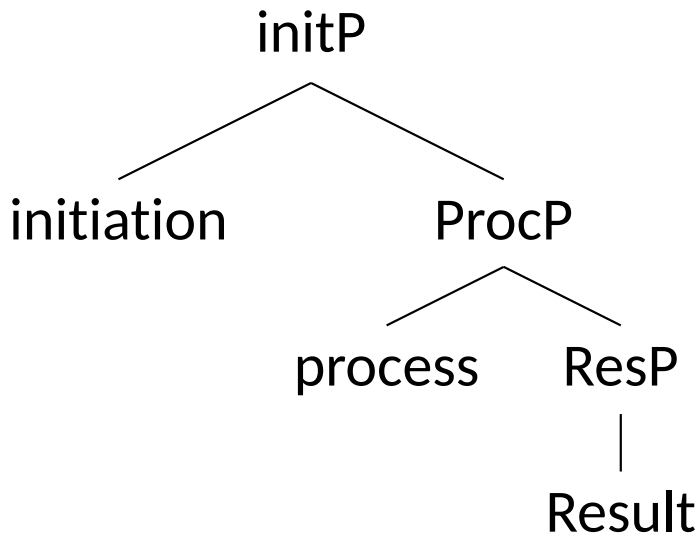
# Predecessors

(21) Ramchand (2008)



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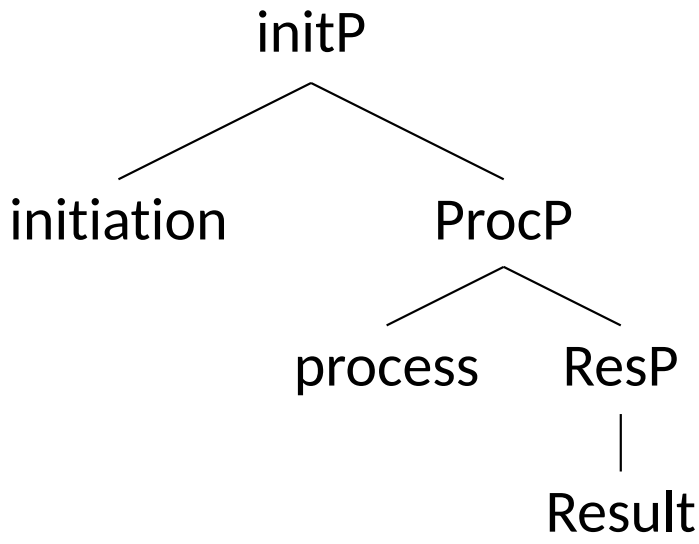


- enter = init+proc+res
- walk = init+proc
- melt = proc

# Nanosyntax and adjectives

# The framework

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- Phrasal spell-out (and the Superset Principle)

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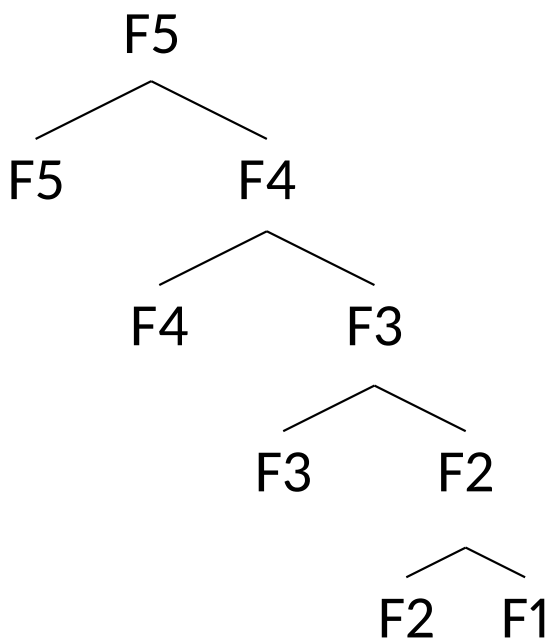

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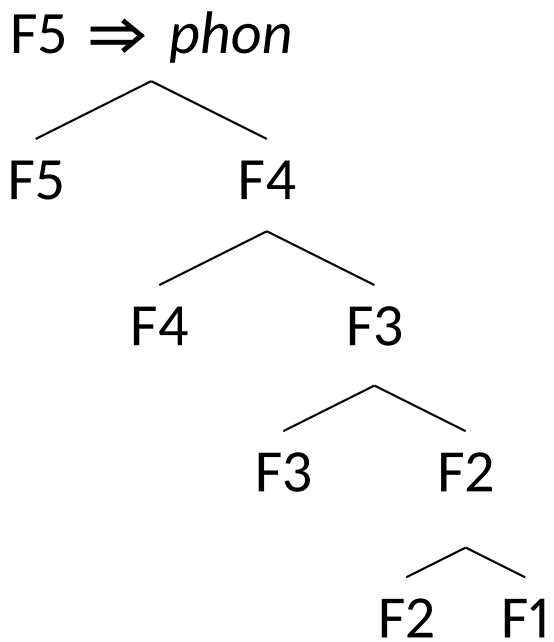

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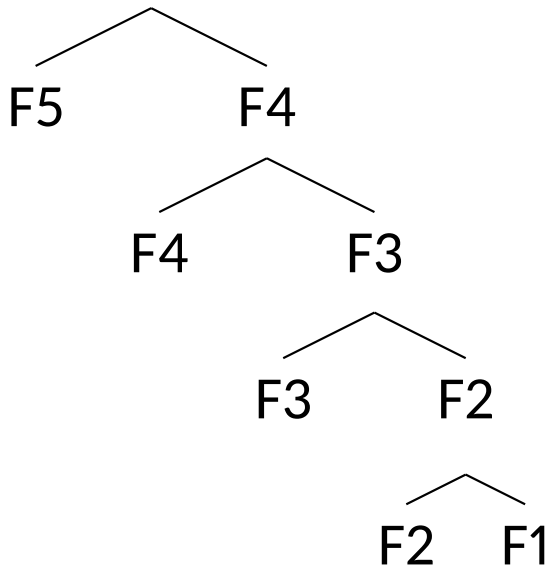


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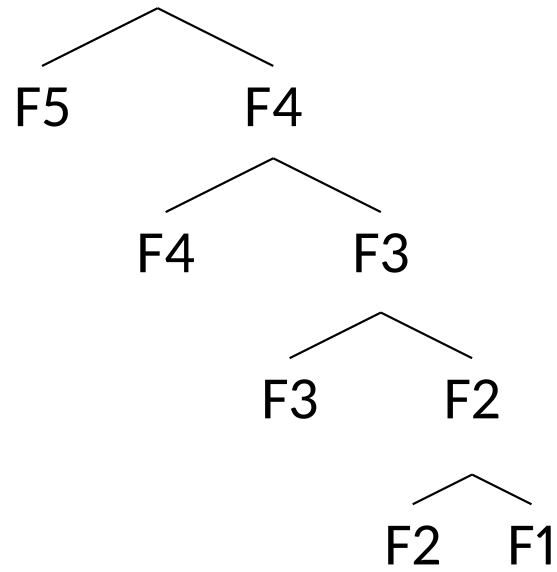

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(NB: I came up with the examples myself on the basis of descriptions and the negative examples seem not to be correct, as pointed out by Jeff)

(28) Gradable adjectives are based on scales, non-gradable adjectives have no such scale. A non-gradable adjective can be turned into a gradable adjective by associating a scale to it.

# Two classes of gradable adjectives

(29) Gradable adjectives form pairs belonging to an identical scale

a. *happy — sad*

b. *friendly — hostile*

c. *healthy — sick*

# Two classes of gradable adjectives

(29) Gradable adjectives form pairs belonging to an identical scale

a. *happy — sad*

b. *friendly — hostile*

c. *healthy — sick*

(30) Positive vs. negative adjectives

# Two classes of gradable adjectives

(29) Gradable adjectives form pairs belonging to an identical scale

a. *happy — sad*
b. *friendly — hostile*
c. *healthy — sick*

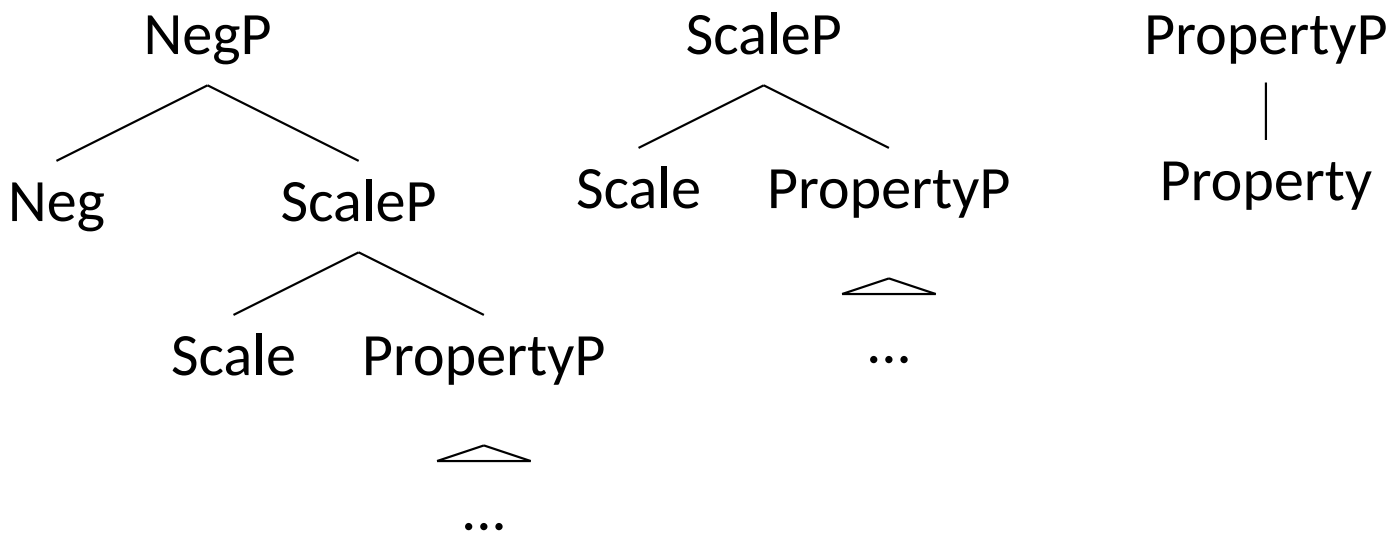
(30) Positive vs. negative adjectives

a. *unhappy — *unsad*
b. *unfriendly — *unhostile*
c. *unhealthy — *unsick*

# The three classes of adjectives

Ongoing work by Guido Vanden Wyngaerd and Karen de Clercq

(31) a. *sad* b. *happy* c. *nuclear*



# No difference between roots/affixes

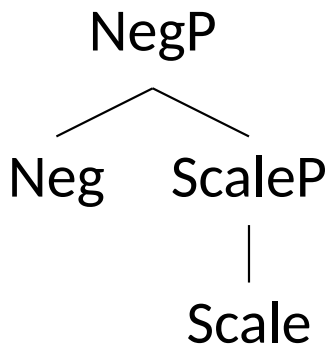
(32) Deriving adjectives

a. positive adjectives: (un-)event-ful, (un-)faith-ful, (un-)help-ful, (un-)law-ful, (un-)success-ful

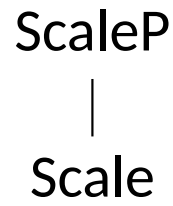
b. negative adjectives: (*un-)use-less, (*un-)breath-less, (*un-)sense-less, (*un-)merci-less, (*un-)cheer-less

# In tree structure

(33) a. *-less*




b. *-ful*



# In tree structure

- ‘Lexical categories’ (like adjectives, verbs) fall into various classes that can be described by various degrees of functional structure
- Functional structure all the way down
- No “roots” in syntax
- Root makes sense as a morphological term — the base to which affixes attach

To be continued...

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