

# **Introduction**

## **Intro to Linguistics**

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## Linguistics

- **Big Questions:**

- What do you "know" when you know a language?
- How does the child acquire this knowledge?
- How do we use this knowledge to communicate in real-time?
- What is a possible language? What is an impossible language?

- **Other Questions:**

- How did the ability to use language evolve in the species?
- How do we use language to form social identity?
- How is language represented in the brain?
- How do languages change over time, and why?

# What is This Class Not About?

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- In-depth discussion of the formal tools used in linguistic analysis
  - **Syntactic Theory 1, Phonological Theory 1, Semantics**
- Which language patterns are “correct”
- Learning how to improve your grammar or someone else's
- Studying a lot of languages, or learning language trivia

# How will this class work?

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- Seminar-based, participation-based
- Bring two questions to class each week
- 8–10 page paper at the end of the class
- 2 paper "summaries"
- Monday & Wednesday – mandatory classes

## Generative grammar

(1) Colorless green ideas sleep furiously

(2) \*The cat am hungry

- Each individual has a **grammar**, a set of mental procedures that allow them to understand novel utterances
- **Grammar**: a formal specification of possible sound-meaning pairs. Connected to – but distinct from – our ability to use that knowledge (**competence vs. performance**)
- Only humans have the capacity to acquire these grammar
  - **Universal Grammar**: whatever humans have (that apes don't) that permits us to learn language



- Advocates of UG argue that it is **innate** and **domain-specific**
- Linguists study individual languages, make abstract generalizations, and postulate that these follow from UG
- Classically, linguists talk about UG having two components:
  - **Principles:** Immutable, universal properties of language
  - **Parameters:** Points of variation; "switches" that the learner must "flip"
- The "P&P" view unites language acquisition and language variation:
  - Language universals = "hard-wired" knowledge in children
  - Language variation = hypotheses that children entertain in learning

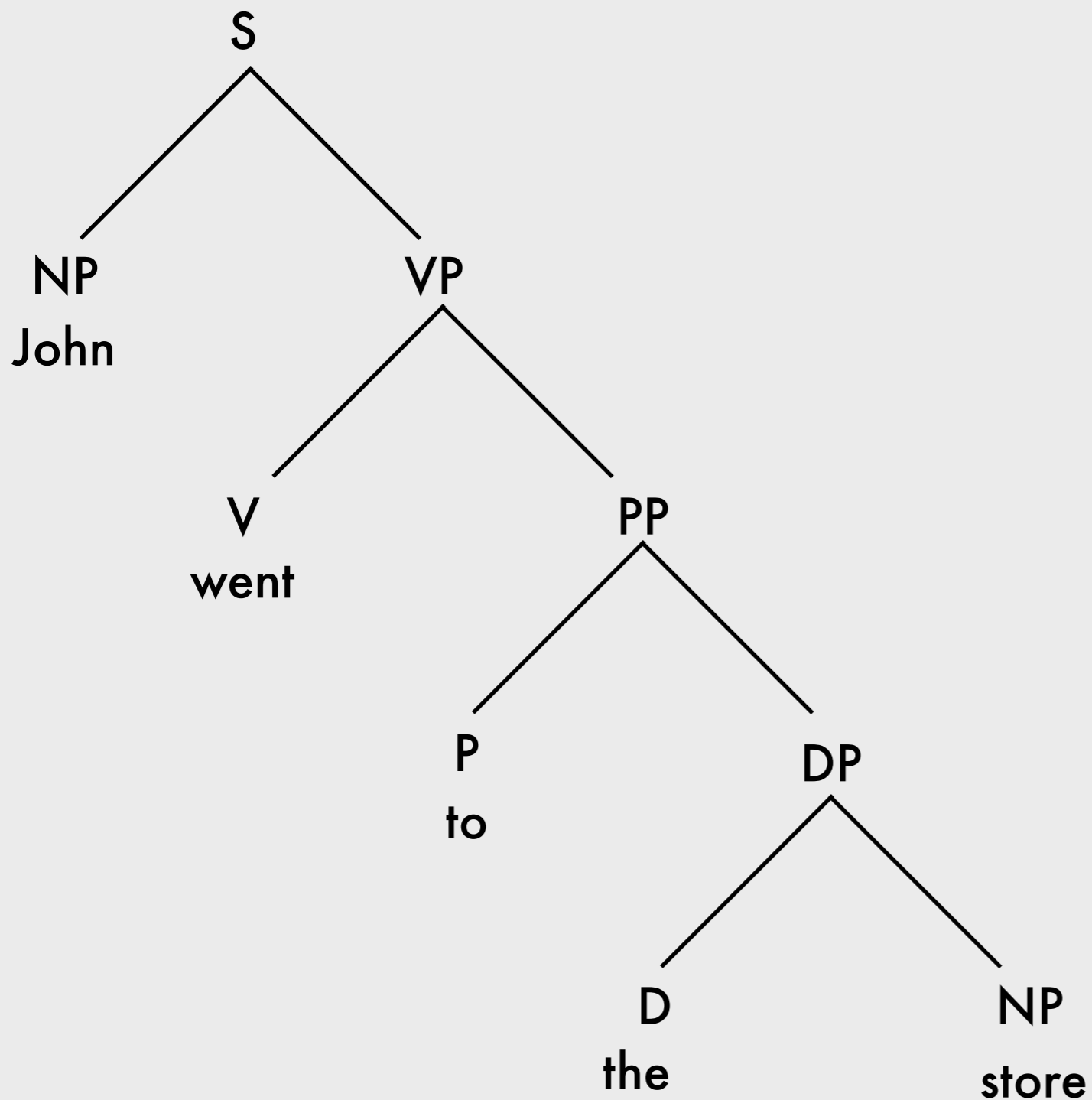
## Principles:

- Sentences are hierarchically organized into phrases
- Each phrase has a “head”: a word that determines the category of the phrase
- Each phrase has a “complement”: another phrase dependent on the head
- The head and the complement must be “linearized” with respect to one another

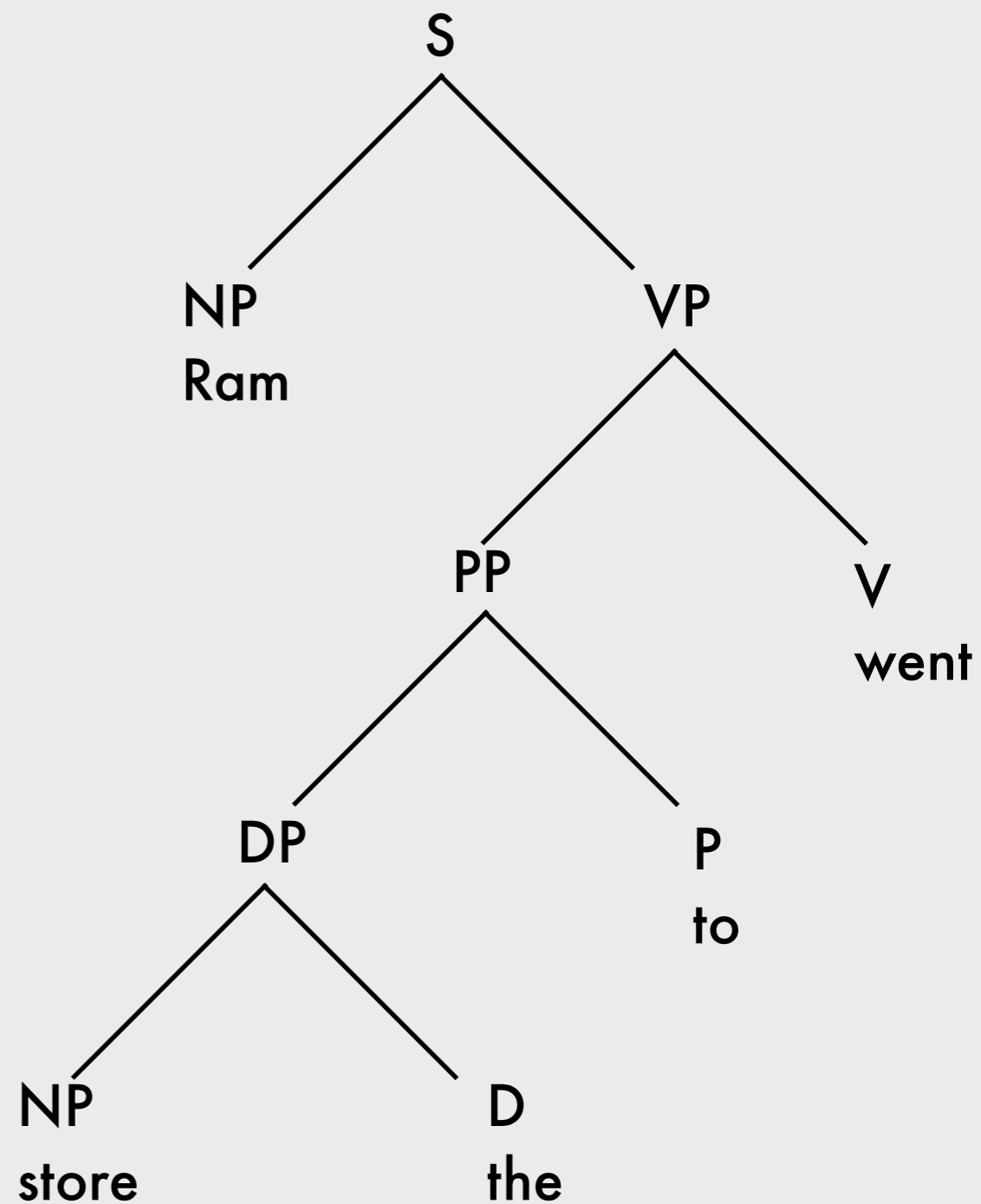
## Parameter:

- The head and the complement may be linearized:
  - Head < Complement
  - Complement < Head

*John went to the store*



*Ram dokan-Ta-te gæche*  
*Ram store-the-to went*





## Phonetics

- What are possible human language sounds? How do we perceive/produce them?
- **McGurk Effect:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFPtc8BVdJk>

## Phonology

- How do languages organize sounds? What rules do languages use to modify sounds?
- *slad*; \**srad*

## Morphology

- What is the structure of words, and how does this relate to their phonological and syntactic properties?
- *mouse-catcher*  
*mice-catcher*  
*rat-catcher*  
\**rats-catcher*

## Lexical Semantics/Lexicon

- What is the relation between a word's meaning and its morphological and syntactic properties?
- *John ate*  
*John ate the cake*  
*\*John devoured*  
*John devoured the cake*

## Syntax

- What are the (possible) structures of sentences and operations?
- *I saw someone with John at the party →*  
**Who** did you see John with \_\_\_ at the party?  
*I saw someone and John at the party →*  
**\*Who** did you see John and \_\_\_ at the party?

## Semantics

- What is the linguistic representation of meaning, and how does this relate to syntax and logic/human reasoning?
- If *I pounded the cutlet flat* is **true**, then *I pounded the cutlet* must be **true**  
If *I sang my throat hoarse* is **true**, then *I sang my throat* is not **true**

## Pragmatics

- How do we use language in context to conversational contexts?
- *Didn't you study linguistics in grad school?*  
*Yes, I did.*  
*#Yes, I didn't.*

## Discourse Analysis

- How do we structure a conversation?
- *Uh huh... yeah, and I was there, too.*

## Language Acquisition

- How do children develop language? What is innate? How do children learn from experience?
- *Don't giggle me!*

## Psycholinguistics/Neurolinguistics

- How do we use grammar & memory/attention to process sentences in real-time?
- *The horse raced past the barn fell*  
*The horse ridden past the barn fell*

## Historical Linguistics

- How do languages change over time, and why?
- [mu:s] → [maus] 'mouse'  
[mu:siz] → [mysiz] → [mys] → [mis] → [mais] 'mice'

## Sociolinguistics

- How do we use language to construct and communicate social identities?
- *Move that ass you better be outta the shower*