Syntax

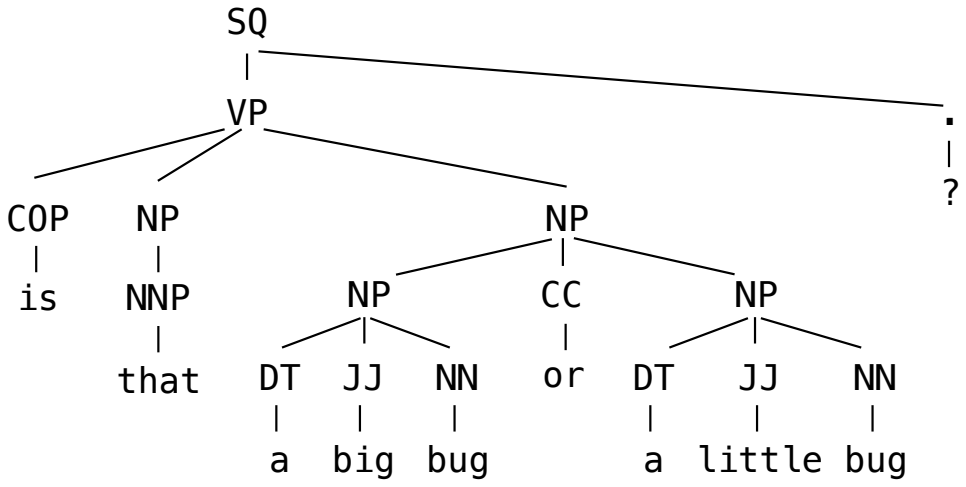
Announcements

Natural Language Syntax

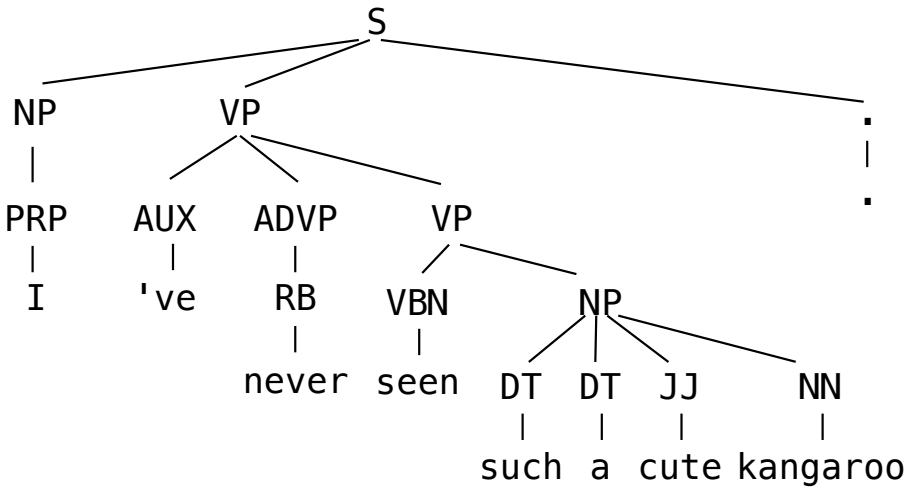
English Syntax

Programming languages and natural languages both have compositional syntax.

Is that a big bug or a little bug?



I've never seen such a cute kangaroo.



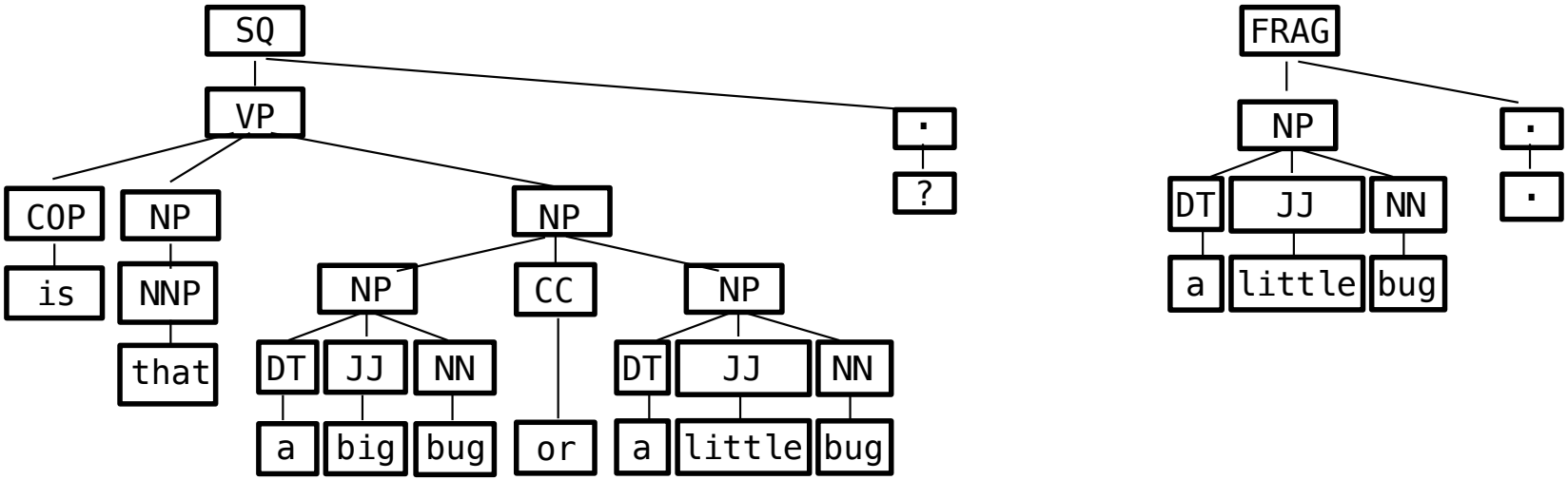
Utterances from the Suppes subject in the "Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES)" project

MacWhinney, B. (2000). The CHILDES Project: Tools for analyzing talk. Third Edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Representing Syntax

Representing English Syntax

The tree data abstraction can represent the structure of a sentence.



(Demo)

Reading Data

Files, Strings, and Lists

Some files are plain text and can be read into Python as either:

- One string containing the whole contents of the file: **open('/some/file.txt').read()**
- A list of strings, each containing one line: **open('/some/file.txt').readlines()**

Useful string methods for processing the contents of a file:

.strip() returns a string without whitespace (spaces, tabs, etc.) on the ends

```
>>> ' hello '.strip()
'hello'
```

.split() returns a list of strings that were separated by whitespace

```
>>> 'hi  there'.split()
['hi', 'there']
```

.replace(a, b) returns a string with all instances of string **a** replaced by string **b**

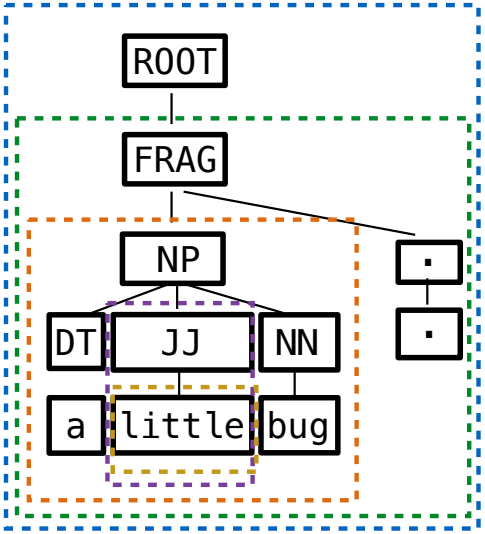
```
>>> '2+2'.replace('+', ' + ')
'2 + 2'
```

(Demo)

Tree Representation

A Tree Represented as a List of Tokens

```
['(', 'ROOT', '(', 'FRAG', '(', 'NP', '(', 'DT', 'a', ')',
                                '(', 'JJ', 'little', ')',
                                '(', 'NN', 'bug', ')', ')',
                  '(', '.', '.', ')',                    ')', ')']
```




```
def tree(label, branches=[]):
    if not branches:
        return [label]
    else:
        return ['(', label] + sum(branches, start=[]) + [')']
```

(Demo)

Finding Branches

```
['(', 'NP', '(', 'DT', 'a', ')', '(', 'JJ', 'little', ')',  '(', 'NN', 'bug', ')', ')']


current_branch: [  '(', 'DT', 'a', ')'    '(', 'JJ', 'little', ')'    '(', 'NN', 'bug', ')'  ]
all_branches:   [ ['(', 'DT', 'a', ')'], ['(', 'JJ', 'little', ')'], ['(', 'NN', 'bug', ')'] ]
```

(Demo)

Manipulating Language

(Demo)