

# Proposals to generalise Dynamic Syntax for wider application

Julian Hough,<sup>1</sup> Arash Eshghi,<sup>2</sup>  
Matthew Purver<sup>1</sup> and Graham White<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Queen Mary University of London  
<sup>2</sup>Heriot-Watt University

2nd DS Conference, April 2018

# The problem: academic sociology

- DS is fantastic!
- We deserve more recognition.

# The problem: academic sociology

- DS is fantastic!
- We deserve more recognition.
- We model interactive phenomena like no other 'grammar formalism'.
- We'd like more users!

# The problem: academic sociology

- DS is fantastic!
- We deserve more recognition.
- We model interactive phenomena like no other 'grammar formalism'.
- We'd like more users!
- 5 proposals!

- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!

- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!

## Dynamic Syntax (DS)

- DS is primarily about how a representation is built up over time, with at least a word-by-word granularity, by natural language utterances.
- DS grammar encodes the word-by-word incremental growth of semantic representations directly as *tree building actions*.
- No independent layer of syntactic processing.
- Grammaticality is defined in terms of *left-right parseability*.

## Dynamic Syntax (DS)

- *Monotonic* connected tree building- good for dialogue inference.
- DS is bidirectional, i.e. generation is parasitic on parsing. *Self-monitoring* comes for free.
- *Parsing actions* (lexical and computational actions) are first class citizens of the grammar.



- Recent DS variant uses TTR *record types* on the trees [Purver et al., 2011].
- Record type compilation for *partial trees* [Hough, 2011] allows *strong incremental interpretation* [Milward, 1991].
- Incrementally constructed structures can be compared to domain concepts and generation goals in word-by-word *subtype* relation checking. [Hough, 2011]

- Let's focus on the similarities between DS proper, DS-TTR, DS-Tensor etc.
- Let's look at the *parsing dynamics*.

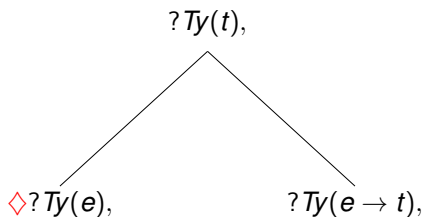
- Let's focus on the similarities between DS proper, DS-TTR, DS-Tensor etc.
- Let's look at the *parsing dynamics*.
- Spot the difference...

Parsing *Ruth arrives*:

Parsing *Ruth arrives*:

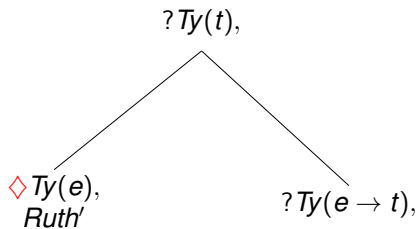
◇?Ty(t),

Parsing *Ruth arrives*:



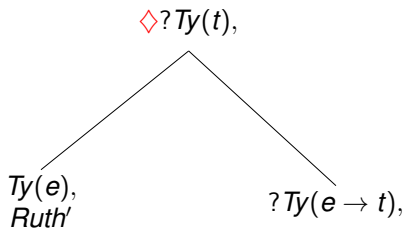
Parsing *Ruth* arrives:

Ruth



Parsing *Ruth* arrives:

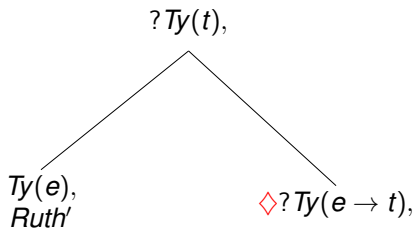
Ruth





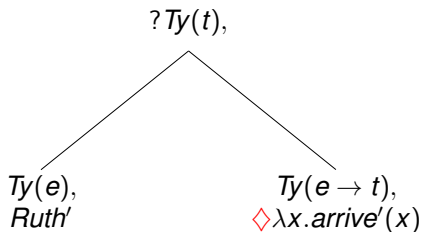
Parsing *Ruth* arrives:

Ruth



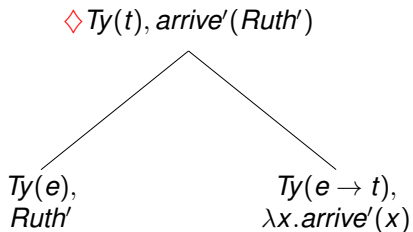
Parsing *Ruth arrives*:

**Ruth arrives**



Parsing *Ruth arrives*:

**Ruth arrives**



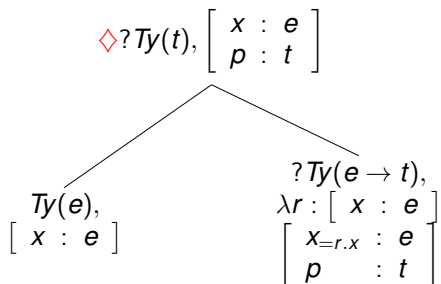
Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Parsing *Robin arrives*:

◇?Ty(*t*), [ *p* : *t* ]

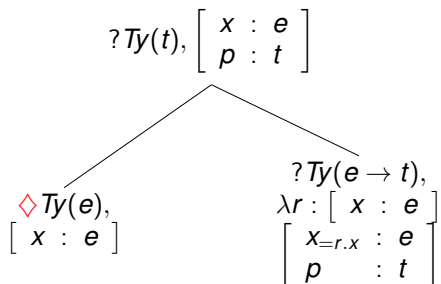
Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Robin



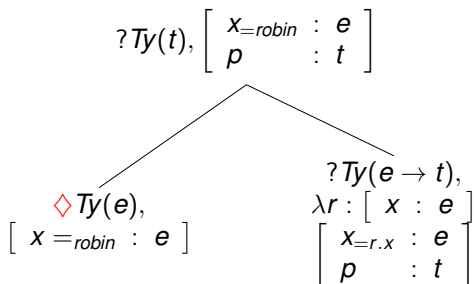
Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Robin



Parsing *Robin arrives*:

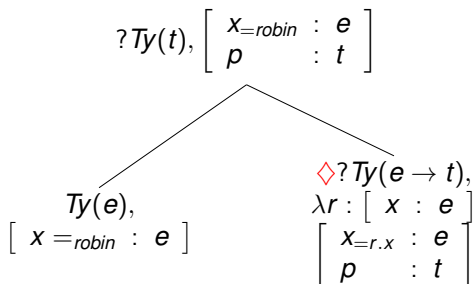
Robin





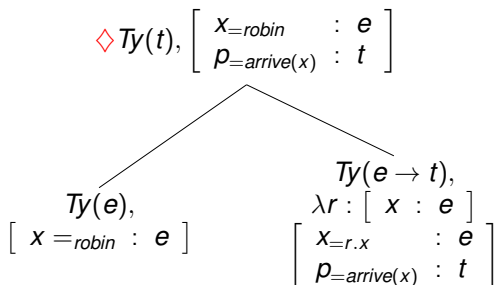
Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Robin



Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Robin arrives

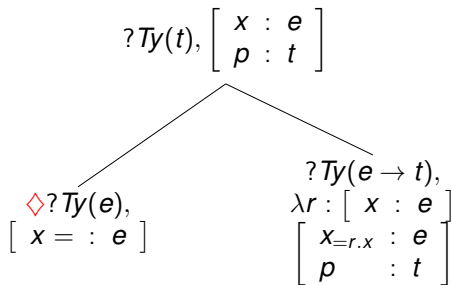


Generating *Robin arrives*:

# Incremental DS-TTR generation

Generating *Robin arrives*:

GOAL :  
 $\left[ \begin{array}{l} x_{=robin} : e \\ p_{=arrive(x)} : t \end{array} \right]$   
SUBTYPE



# Incremental DS-TTR generation

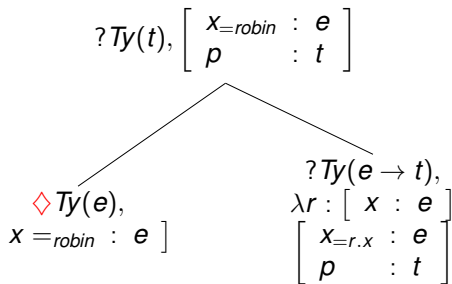
Generating *Robin arrives*:

Robin

GOAL :

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} x_{=robin} : e \\ p_{=arrive(x)} : t \end{array} \right]$$

SUBTYPE



# Incremental DS-TTR generation

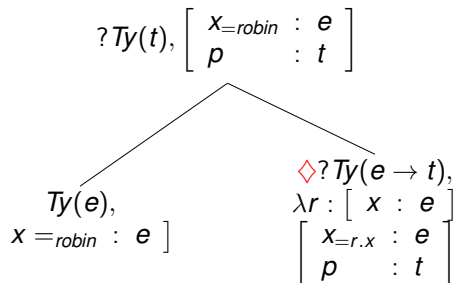
Generating *Robin arrives*:

Robin

GOAL :

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} x_{=robin} : e \\ p_{=arrive(x)} : t \end{array} \right]$$

SUBTYPE



# Incremental DS-TTR generation

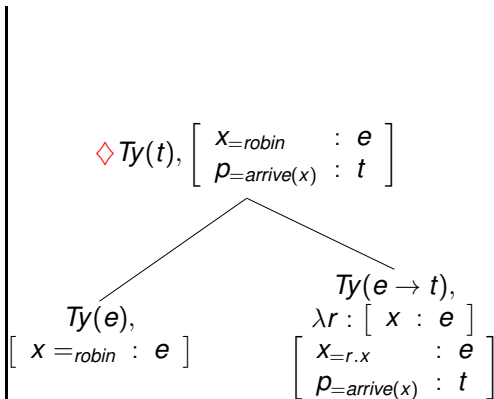
Generating *Robin arrives*:

**Robin arrives**

GOAL :

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} x_{=robin} : e \\ p_{=arrive(x)} : t \end{array} \right]$$

MATCHES!



Michael: 'Did you burn'

Ruth: 'myself?'

*myself*:

```
IF      ?Ty(e)  
THEN   put(Ty(e)),  
       put(Ruth)  
ELSE   abort
```



- Context dependent values can be formally defined now in DS lexical actions [Purver et al., 2010]

*myself:*

```

IF      ?Ty(e), r : [ ctxt : [ u      : utt
                          x      : e
                          p=spkr(u,x) : t ] ]
THEN    ↑0↑1*↓0 r1 : [ cont : [ x1=r.ctxt.x : e ] ]
      put(Ty(e)),
ELSE    put(r  $\hat{\wedge}$  [ cont : [ x=r.ctxt.x : e ] ])
      abort
  
```

- Use of dependent record types. Use of paths.

# What is important for DS?

- Is the difference between the representation language on the nodes important?

# What is important for DS?

- Is the difference between the representation language on the nodes important?
- It depends what you do with the representation language— nothing in the representation per se matters.

# What is important for DS?

- Is the difference between the representation language on the nodes important?
- It depends what you do with the representation language— nothing in the representation per se matters.
- Perhaps time to get back to the original:

*“The emphasis is on the process of establishing some structure as interpretation, rather than just specifying the RESULT, which is the structure itself.”*  
[Kempson et al., 2001]

# What is important for DS?

- If the result is not the object is of interest, then what is?

# What is important for DS?

- If the result is not the object is of interest, then what is?
- *How* we get there, word-by-word.

# What is important for DS?

- If the result is not the object is of interest, then what is?
- *How* we get there, word-by-word.
- Processing context characterized as an *action graph*.

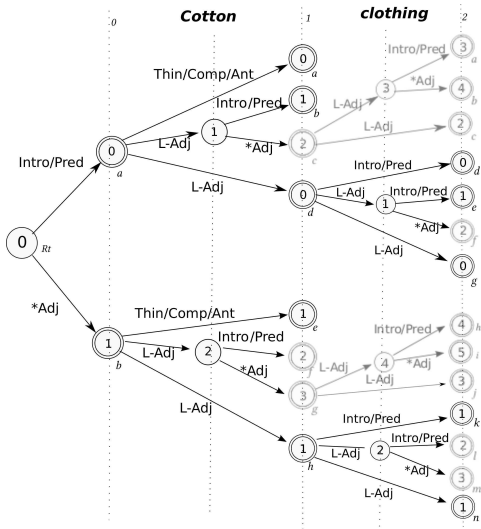
# What is important for DS?

- If the result is not the object is of interest, then what is?
- *How* we get there, word-by-word.
- Processing context characterized as an *action graph*.
- Inspired by the notion of context as a triple  $\langle T, W, A \rangle$ , [Sato, 2011] showed how this could be a Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG) with search.
- Models garden-path sentence processing. 'Cotton clothing is made of grows in Mississippi'



# Action graphs for dynamics

[Sato, 2011]



Examples:

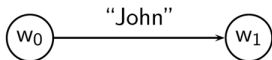
- 2a. Cotton clothing is made of grows in Mississippi.
- 2b. Cotton clothing shops buy is made of grows in Mississippi.

- 2h. Cotton clothing is made of the farmer grows in Mississippi.
- 2i. Cotton clothing shops buy is made of grows in Mississippi.

- [Purver et al., 2011] defined DyLan which modelled the process as two graphs
- Input *word graph* and the more fine-grained *action graph* grounded in the word graph.
- *Concept graph* [Hough, 2015]

John

WORD GRAPH  
(INPUT)

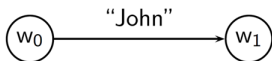


DS-TTR  
PARSE/GENERATION  
STATE GRAPH

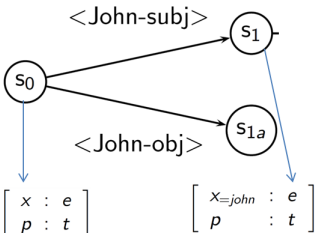
CONCEPT GRAPH  
(OUTPUT)

## John

WORD GRAPH  
(INPUT)



DS-TTR  
PARSE/GENERATION  
STATE GRAPH

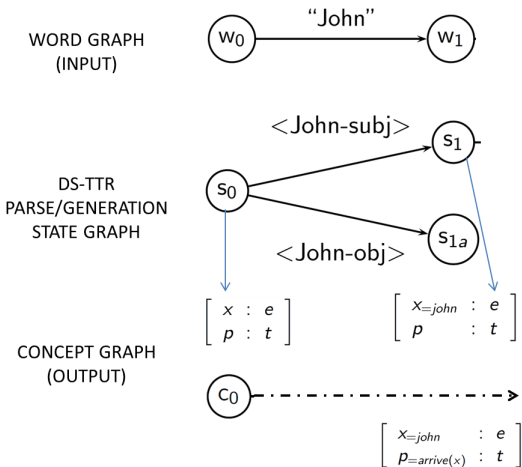


$$\begin{bmatrix} x : e \\ p : t \end{bmatrix}$$

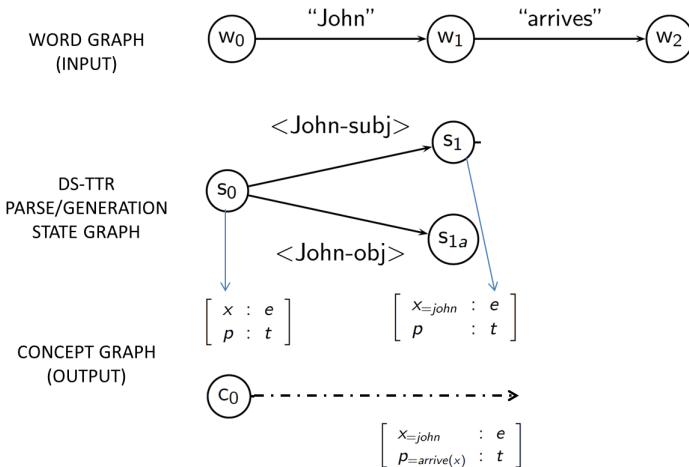
$$\begin{bmatrix} x=john : e \\ p : t \end{bmatrix}$$

CONCEPT GRAPH  
(OUTPUT)

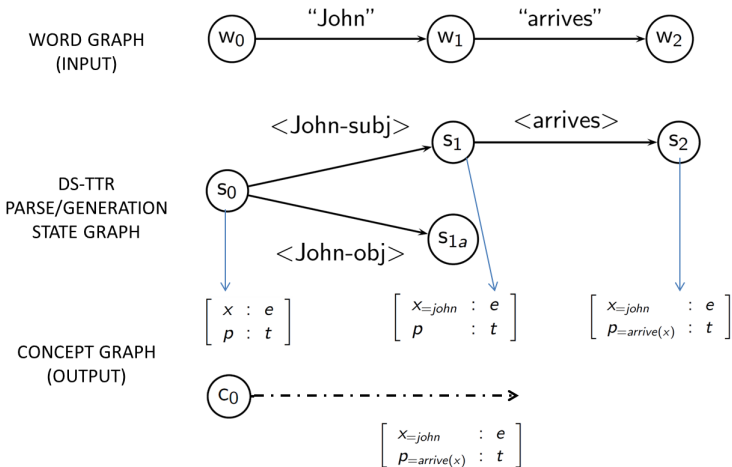
## John



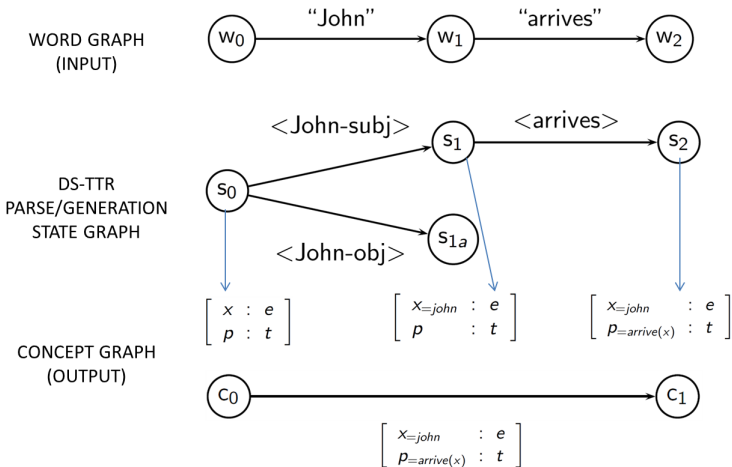
## John arrives



## John arrives

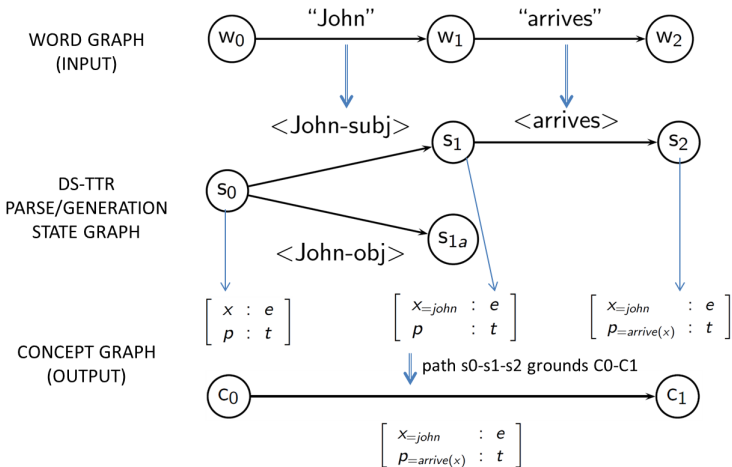


## John arrives





## John arrives



- [Hough, 2011] modelled *self-repair* in DyLan in terms of backwards-search and re-constructing the right-frontier of the word graph.

## Phenomena DS/DyLan can cover

- [Hough, 2011] modelled *self-repair* in DyLan in terms of backwards-search and re-constructing the right-frontier of the word graph.
- [Purver et al., 2014] on compound *contributions/split utterances*.

- [Hough, 2011] modelled *self-repair* in DyLan in terms of backwards-search and re-constructing the right-frontier of the word graph.
- [Purver et al., 2014] on compound *contributions/split utterances*.
- [Eshghi et al., 2015] modelled *clarification* interaction and *other-repair*, and *backchannels* on this graph but with two graph pointers.

## Phenomena DS/DyLan can cover

- [Hough, 2011] modelled *self-repair* in DyLan in terms of backwards-search and re-constructing the right-frontier of the word graph.
- [Purver et al., 2014] on compound *contributions/split utterances*.
- [Eshghi et al., 2015] modelled *clarification* interaction and *other-repair*, and *backchannels* on this graph but with two graph pointers.
- [Kempson et al., 2018] model ellipsis by re-running (copying edges) from the action graph.

- Given we have a graph with a counter  $n$  as an ID for the last node added, a pointed node *current*, and incoming word  $W$ :

## **ParseWithSelfRepair( $W$ ):**

IF parse( $W$ ) from *current* successful  
THEN

    add a new edge with new sink node  $S_n$   
    *current* :=  $S_n$

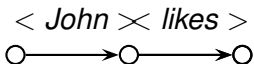
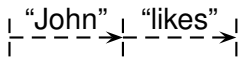
ELSE:

*current* := *parent*(*current*)  
    ParseWithSelfRepair( $W$ )

| "John" |

< John >  
○ → ○

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{cont} = \left[ \begin{array}{ll} x1 & : e \\ x_{=John} & : e \\ e & : e_s \\ p_{=subj(e,x)} & : t \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ctxt} = [\text{Assert}(\text{User}, \text{cont})] \end{array} \right]$$

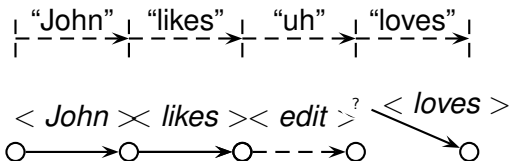


$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{cont} = \left[ \begin{array}{l} x1 \quad \quad \quad : e \\ x_{=John} \quad \quad : e \\ e_{=likes} \quad \quad : e_s \\ p1_{=obj(e,x1)} : t \\ p_{=subj(e,x)} \quad : t \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ctxt} = [\text{Assert}(\text{User}, \text{cont})] \end{array} \right]$$

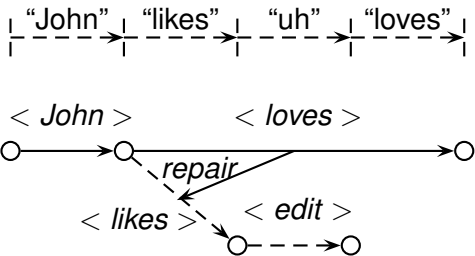




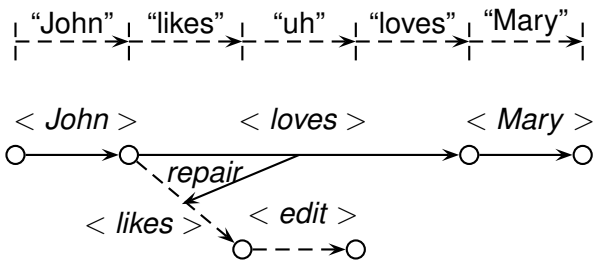
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{cont} = \\ \text{ctxt} = \end{array} \left[ \begin{array}{ll} x1 & : e \\ x_{=John} & : e \\ e_{=likes} & : e_s \\ p1_{=obj(e,x1)} & : t \\ p_{=subj(e,x)} & : t \end{array} \right] \right] \\
 \left[ \text{Assert}(\text{User}, \text{cont}), \right. \\
 \left. \text{FwdProblem}(\text{User}, \text{cont}) \right]$$



$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{cont} = \\ \text{ctxt} = \end{array} \left[ \begin{array}{ll} x1 & : e \\ x_{=John} & : e \\ e_{=likes} & : e_s \\ p1_{=obj(e,x1)} & : t \\ p_{=subj(e,x)} & : t \end{array} \right] \right] \\
 \left[ \text{Assert}(User, \text{cont}), \right. \\
 \left. \text{FwdProblem}(User, \text{cont}) \right]$$

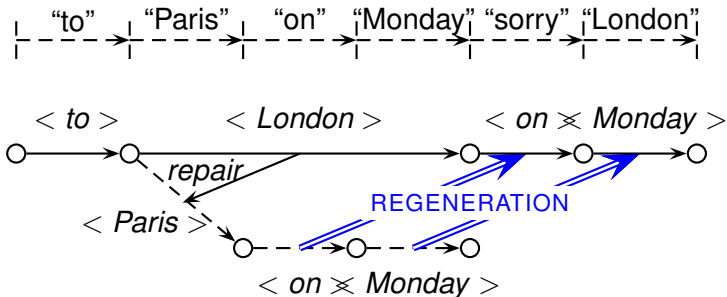


$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{cont} = \\ \text{ctxt} = \end{array} \left[ \begin{array}{l} x_1 \quad : \quad e \\ x_{=John} \quad : \quad e \\ e_{=loves} \quad : \quad e_s \\ \rho_{=obj}(e, x_1) \quad : \quad t \\ \rho_{=subj}(e, x) \quad : \quad t \\ \text{[Assert(User, cont),} \\ \text{Revoke(User, [e_{=likes} : e_s]} \\ \wedge \neg [e_{=loves} : e_s]) \end{array} \right] \right]$$



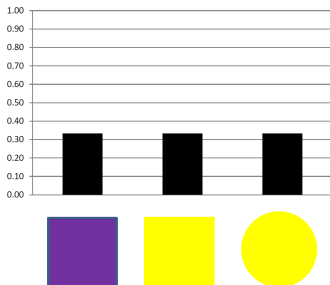
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l}
 \text{cont} = \left[ \begin{array}{l}
 x1 = \text{Mary} \quad : \quad e \\
 x = \text{John} \quad : \quad e \\
 e = \text{loves} \quad : \quad e_s \\
 p = \text{obj}(e, x1) : \quad t \\
 p = \text{subj}(e, x) : \quad t
 \end{array} \right] \\
 \text{ctxt} = \left[ \begin{array}{l}
 \text{Assert}(\text{User}, \text{cont}), \\
 \text{Revoke}(\text{User}, [e = \text{likes} : e_s]) \\
 \wedge \neg [e = \text{loves} : e_s]
 \end{array} \right]
 \end{array} \right]$$

# Ellipsis in repair though action re-running

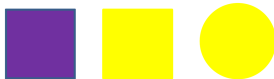
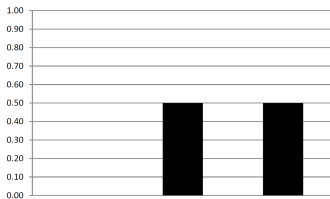
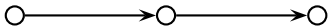
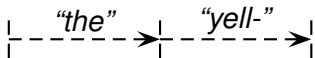


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

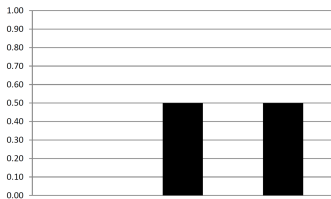
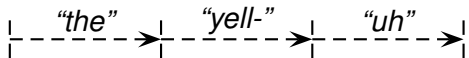
|---"the"--->|



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

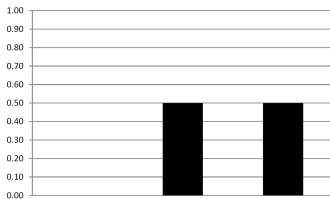
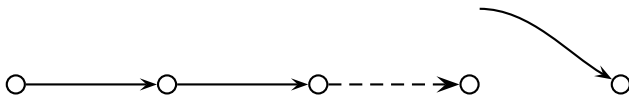
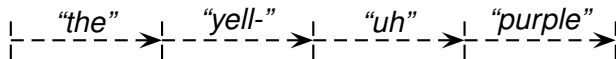


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally



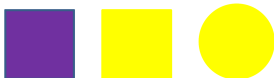
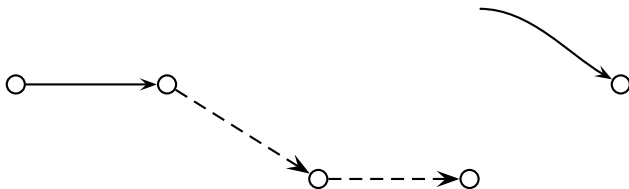


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

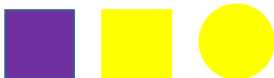
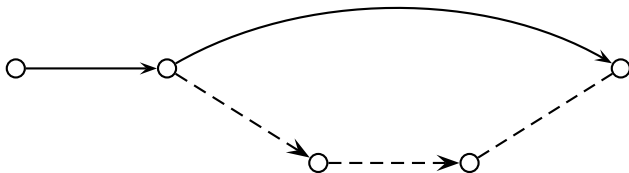
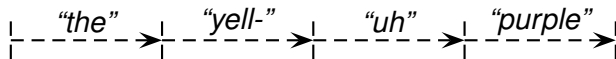


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

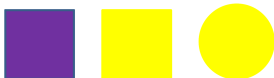
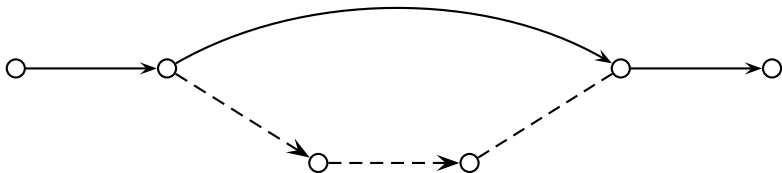
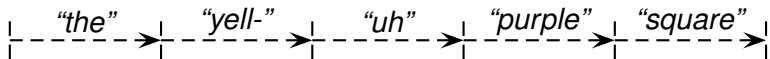
| *“the”* | *“yell-”* | *“uh”* | *“purple”* |



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

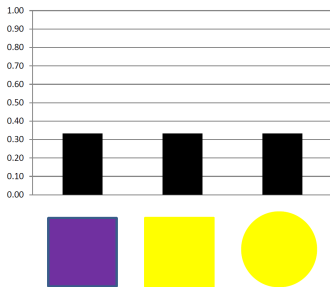
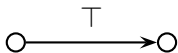


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

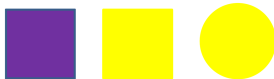
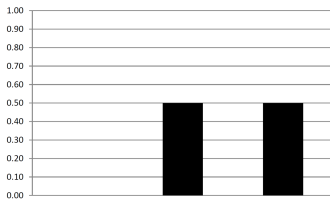
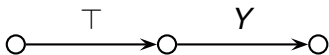
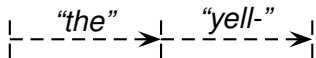


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

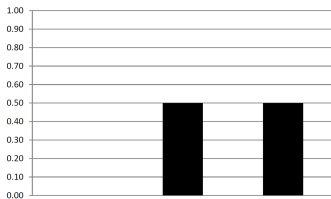
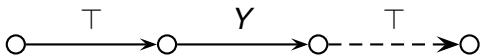
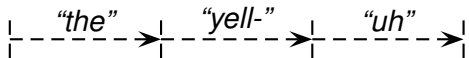
|---"the"--->|



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

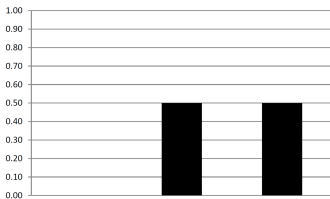
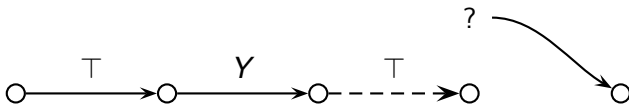


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

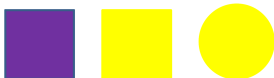
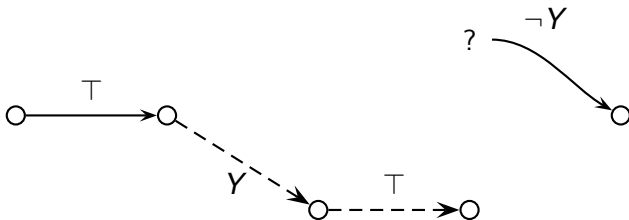
|---*the*--->|---*yell-*--->|---*uh*--->|---*purple*--->|



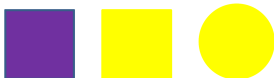
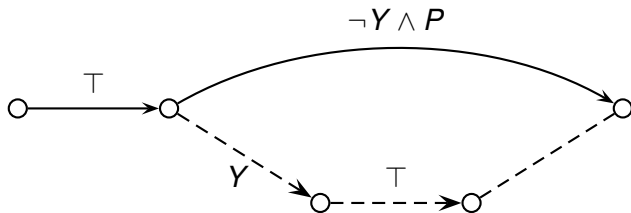
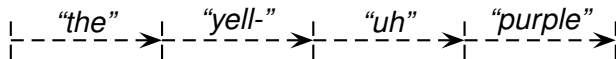


# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally

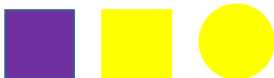
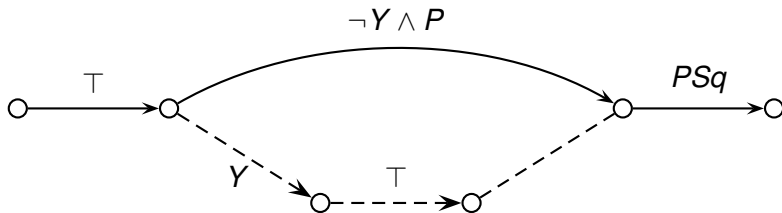
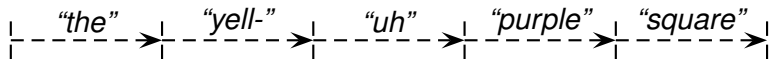
|-----*“the”*----->|-----*“yell-”*----->|-----*“uh”*----->|-----*“purple”*----->|



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally



# Interpreting disfluencies incrementally



# What is important for DS?

- Actions- lexical and computational, the words that triggered them, and their graphs.

# What is important for DS?

- Actions- lexical and computational, the words that triggered them, and their graphs.
- Typed trees with under-specification through requirements.
- Functional application and variable renaming in application ( $\beta$ -reduction,  $\alpha$ -conversion.)
- The pointer  $\diamond$ .
- Subsumption  $\sqsubseteq$ .

- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda**
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!

# What should we compose with?

- $\lambda$ -calculus is fairly general.
- Functional application through  $\beta$ -reduction a general.
- Variable re-naming with  $\alpha$ -conversion gives more flexibility.

# What should we compose with?

- $\lambda$ -calculus is fairly general.
- Functional application through  $\beta$ -reduction a general.
- Variable re-naming with  $\alpha$ -conversion gives more flexibility.
  
- Do we need the  $\epsilon$ -calculus?
- In DS-TTR we don't really need it as we restrict terms within record types.



- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types**
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!

- The usual suspects:  $e$ ,  $t$ ,  $cn$ ,  $e_s$

# Go beyond...

- The usual suspects:  $e$ ,  $t$ ,  $cn$ ,  $e_s$
- To all and any types.

## Go beyond...

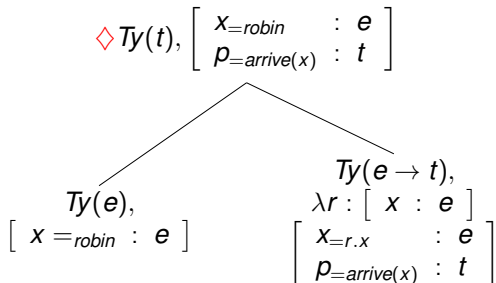
- The usual suspects:  $e$ ,  $t$ ,  $cn$ ,  $e_s$
- To all and any types.
- *RecordType*, *Tensor*, *Integer*, *Python* program, *banana* etc.

- The usual suspects:  $e$ ,  $t$ ,  $cn$ ,  $e_s$
- To all and any types.
- *RecordType*, *Tensor*, *Integer*, *Python* program, *banana* etc.
- In DS (standard) we are building propositions (type  $t$ ).  
In DS-TTR we are building record types (not really type  $t!$ ).
- We should try to be consistent with our typing.

# Have we been getting node types right?

Parsing *Robin arrives*:

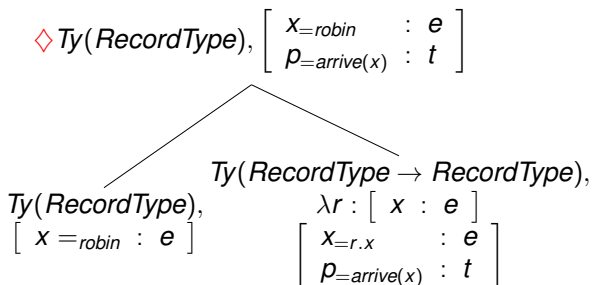
Robin arrives



# Have we been getting node types right?

Parsing *Robin arrives*:

Robin arrives



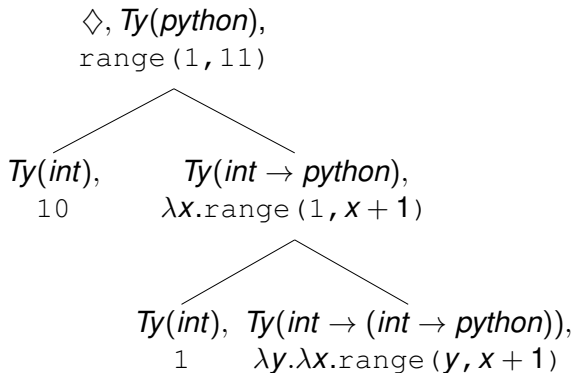
- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages**
- 5 Use it!



- We've already got:
  - DS- $\epsilon$
  - DS-FOL
  - DS-TTR
  - DS-Tensor

- We've already got:
  - DS- $\epsilon$
  - DS-FOL
  - DS-TTR
  - DS-Tensor
- Why not DS-Python, DS-G-code, DS-etc.?

```
'ten' | IF      ?Ty(int)  
      | THEN   put(Ty(int))  
      |        put(10)  
      | ELSE   abort
```

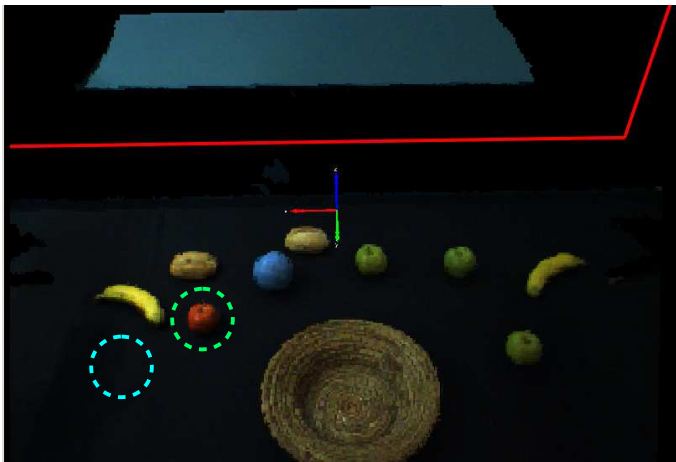


- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!**

- No excuse not to do great stuff!

- No excuse not to do great stuff!
- Linguistic analysis!
- Formulae for theorem proving!
- Dialogue systems!
- Human-Robot Interaction systems (embodied)!

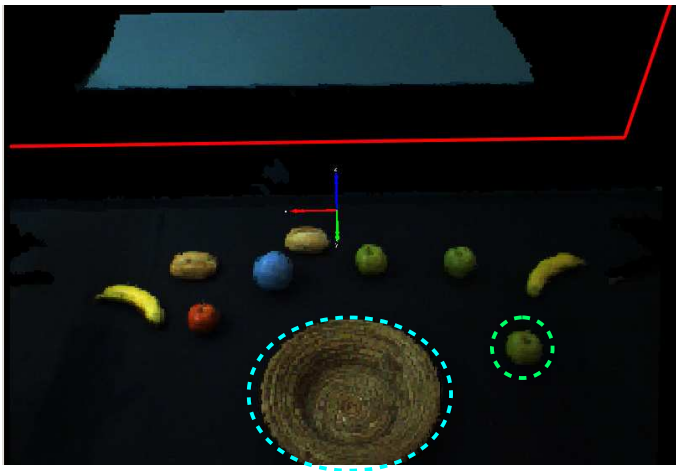
# Human-Robot interaction live ambiguity resolution



put the apple in front of the banana



# Human-Robot interaction live ambiguity resolution



... in the basket

- We can define arbitrary  $\langle \textit{utterance}, \textit{formula} \rangle$  pairs.
- Induce an incremental grammar in the style of [Eshghi et al., 2013].

- We can define arbitrary  $\langle \textit{utterance}, \textit{formula} \rangle$  pairs.
- Induce an incremental grammar in the style of [Eshghi et al., 2013].
- We could learn useful regularities across domains.
- We could learn *'put'* as a distributional lexical action across different putting situations.
- *'red'* may have a perceptual lexical action grounded in machine vision.
- Otherwise we will always have to go through a pipeline from DS  $\rightarrow$  X- why not be more direct?

- 1 Make it clear what DS is all about: Dynamics
- 2 Generalize the composition calculus: lambda
- 3 Liberalise permissible node types
- 4 Liberalise permissible semantic representation languages
- 5 Use it!

# Thanks!

especially to:

- DUEL project (Bielefeld University and Paris 7, DFG and ANR)



Eshghi, A., Howes, C., Gregoromichelaki, E., Hough, J., and Purver, M. (2015).

Feedback in conversation as incremental semantic update.

In *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Computational Semantics*, pages 261–271, London, UK. ACL.



Eshghi, A., Purver, M., and Hough, J. (2013).

Probabilistic induction for an incremental semantic grammar.

In *10th International Conference on Computational Semantics (IWCS)*, Potsdam, Germany.



Hough, J. (2011).

Incremental semantics driven natural language generation with self-repairing capability.

In *Proceedings of the Student Research Workshop associated with RANLP 2011*, pages 79–84, Hissar, Bulgaria.



Hough, J. (2015).

*Modelling Incremental Self-Repair Processing in Dialogue.*

PhD thesis, Queen Mary University of London.



Kempson, R., Gregoromichelaki, E., Edhghi, A., and Hough, J. (2018).

Ellipsis in dynamic syntax.

In *Oxford Handbook of Ellipsis*. OUP.



Kempson, R., Meyer-Viol, W., and Gabbay, D. (2001).

*Dynamic Syntax: The Flow of Language Understanding.*

Blackwell, Oxford.



Milward, D. (1991).

*Axiomatic Grammar, Non-Constituent Coordination and Incremental Interpretation.*

PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.



Purver, M., Eshghi, A., and Hough, J. (2011).

Incremental semantic construction in a dialogue system.

In Bos, J. and Pulman, S., editors, *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Computational Semantics*, pages 365–369, Oxford, UK.



Purver, M., Gregoromichelaki, E., Meyer-Viol, W., and Cann, R. (2010).

Splitting the 'I's and crossing the 'You's: Context, speech acts and grammar.

In Łupkowski, P. and Purver, M., editors, *Aspects of Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue. SemDial 2010, 14th Workshop on the Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue*, pages 43–50, Poznań. Polish Society for Cognitive Science.



Purver, M., Hough, J., and Gregoromichelaki, E. (2014).

Dialogue and compound contributions.

In Stent, A. and Bangalore, S., editors, *Natural Language Generation in Interactive Systems*, pages 63–92. Cambridge University Press.



Sato, Y. (2011).

Local ambiguity, search strategies and parsing in Dynamic Syntax.

In Gregoromichelaki, E., Kempson, R., and Howes, C., editors, *The Dynamics of Lexical Interfaces*, pages 205–233. CSLI.