



Typologically Grounded Grammar Inference

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AGGREGATION Collaborators: Emily M. Bender (PI), Fei Xia, Olga Zamaraeva (and many others)

How can we generate linguistically rich grammars for typologically diverse, local* languages?

*small, primarily-oral languages, often Indigenous or endangered, including the original and emerging languages of Africa, Asia, Australia, the Americas, the Pacific, and the minority languages of Europe (Bird, 2022)

Outline of talk

- Precision grammars: what are they and what are they good for?
- Automatic grammar generation
- Grammar inference with BASIL
- Conclusion

Precision Grammars

Precision Grammars

... what are they?

- Machine readable
- Collection of syntactic rules
 - DELPH-IN JRF (Copestake, 2002)
- Can be loaded into software to parse sentences
- Output syntactic and semantic representations
 - HPSG (Pollard and Sag, 1994)
 - MRS (Copestake et al., 2005)

Syntactic rules

```
verb-pc5_lrt2-lex-rule := cont-change-only-lex-rule &
                        verb-pc5-lex-rule-super &
  [ C-CONT [ HOOK [ XARG #xarg,
                   LTOP #ltop,
                   INDEX #ind ],
            RELS <! event-relation & [ PRED "neg_rel",
                                       LBL #ltop,
                                       ARG1 #harg ] !>,
            HCONS <! qeq & [ HARG #harg,
                             LARG #larg ] !> ],
    SYNSEM.LKEYS #lkeys,
    DTR.SYNSEM [ LKEYS #lkeys,
                LOCAL [ CONT.HOOK [ XARG #xarg,
                                    INDEX #ind,
                                    LTOP #larg ],
                        CAT.HEAD verb ] ] ].

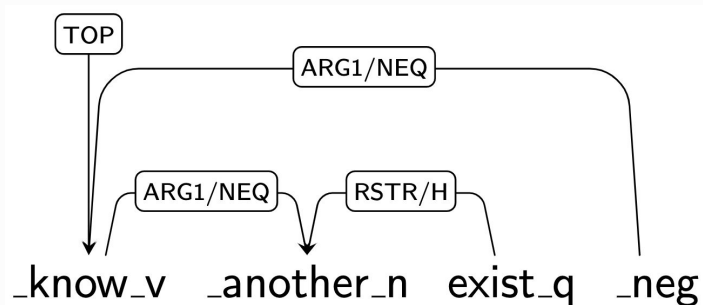
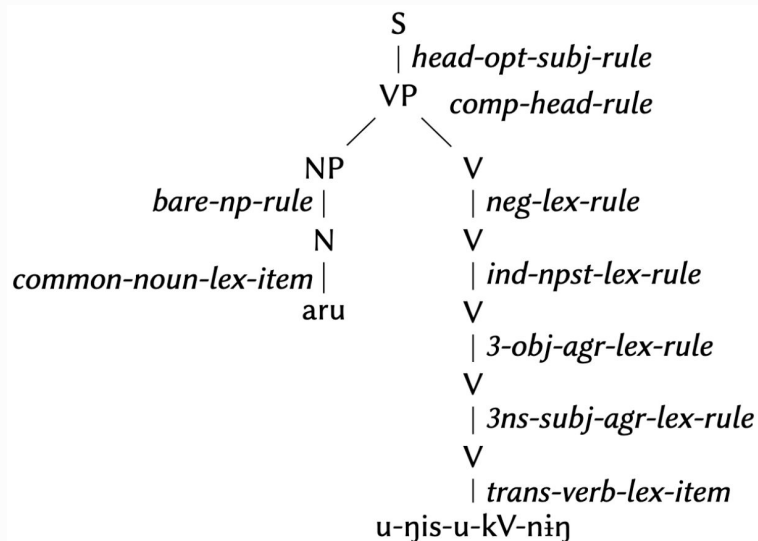
verb-pc14_lrt1-suffix :=
%suffix (* -nĭŋ)
verb-pc14_lrt1-lex-rule.
```

Parses

Aru unisokonin.

'They did not know another [language].'

(Chintang [ctn]; Bickel et al., 2013a)



_know_v (ARG0 {SF *prop*, tense *npst*, aspect *ind*}, ARG1 {per 3, num *ns*}, ARG2 {per 3})

Precision Grammars

... what are they good for?

- Treebanking
 - Oepen et al. (2002)
- Data exploration
 - Letcher and Baldwin (2013)
 - Bouma et al. (2015)
- Developing grammar checkers
 - da Costa et al. (2016)
- Developing automatic tutors
 - Hellan et al. (2013)

So why don't we see more of these grammars?

- They are very time consuming to write by hand
- Grammar engineering toolkits streamline this a lot, but there is still a lot of manual work
 - Grammar Matrix (Bender et al., 2002, 2010; Zamaraeva et al., forth)
 - CoreGram (Müller, 2015)
 - ParGram (Butt and King, 2002)

Grammar customization with the Grammar Matrix

Bender et al. (2002, 2010), Zamaraeva et al. (forth)

Web-based questionnaire



Grammar Specification



Grammar

- What's the morphosyntactic exponence of the negation construction you'd like to model?
- Is the negation morpheme bound or free?

```
section=general
  language=Chintang
  iso-code=ctn

section=sentential-negation
  neg-exp=1
  infl-neg=on
  neg-aux=on

section=morphology
  verb-pc14_name=verb-pc14
  verb-pc14_order=suffix
  verb-pc14_inputs=verb-pc1, verb-pc3, ...,
  verb-pc14_lrt1_feat1_name=negation
  verb-pc14_lrt1_feat1_value=plus
  verb-pc14_lrt1_feat1_head=verb
  verb-pc14_lrt1_lrt1_inflecting=yes
  verb-pc14_lrt1_lrt1_orth=-nɨŋ
```

```
verb-pc5_lrt2-lex-rule := cont-change-only-lex-rule &
  verb-pc5-lex-rule-super &
  [ C-CONT [ HOOK [ XARG #xarg,
    LTOP #ltop,
    INDEX #ind ],
    RELS <! event-relation & [ PRED "neg_re1",
      LBL #ltop,
      ARG1 #harg ] !>,
    HCONS <! qeq & [ HARG #harg,
      LARG #larg ] !> ],
    SYNSEM.LKEYS #lkeys,
    DTR.SYNSEM [ LKEYS #lkeys,
      LOCAL [ CONT.HOOK [ XARG #xarg,
        INDEX #ind,
        LTOP #ltop ],
        CAT.HEAD verb ] ] ].

verb-pc14_lrt1-suffix :=
  %suffix (* -nɨŋ)
  verb-pc14_lrt1-lex-rule.
```

Can we automate more of this process?

Automatic Grammar Generation

Grammar Induction from strings

- Based on text alone
- Produces noisy representations
- Only partially align with trees created by linguists
- Identifying constituents and their categories
 - Klein and Manning (2001, 2002)
 - Bod (2009)
- Using neural nets
 - Hewitt and Manning (2019)
- Paired with an image
 - Shi et al. (2019)
 - Zhao and Titov (2020)

Grammar Induction from strings paired with meaning representations

- Based on text and some semantic representation
 - logical form (Kate et al., 2005; Kate and Mooney, 2006)
 - semantic dependency parse (Buys and Blunsom, 2017; Chen et al., 2018)
- Will produce semantic representations similar to those included in the input

Grammar Extraction

- Based on treebanks
- Will produce parse trees and/or semantic representations with roughly the same level of expressivity as those in the input
- Walk the trees, collect rules, prune
 - Krotov et al. (1994, 1998)
- May convert from one formalism to another
 - Xia (1999)
 - Hockenmaier and Steedman (2007)



KERMIT (Zanzoto et al., 2020) uses BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) to generate syntactic parses of the same form as those in training data, but does not generate a human readable grammar

Grammar Inference

- Can generate formal linguistic grammars without a treebank
- Based on text with partial grammatical information
 - Interlinear Glossed Text (Hellan, 2010; Bender et al. 2014)
 - POS, agreement, predicate-argument structure, clause type (Indurkha, 2020)
- And some external source of linguistic knowledge
 - Grammar Matrix (Bender et al. 2014)
 - TypeGram (Hellan 2010)
 - Minimalist axioms, merge (Indurkha, 2020)

Where does typology fit in

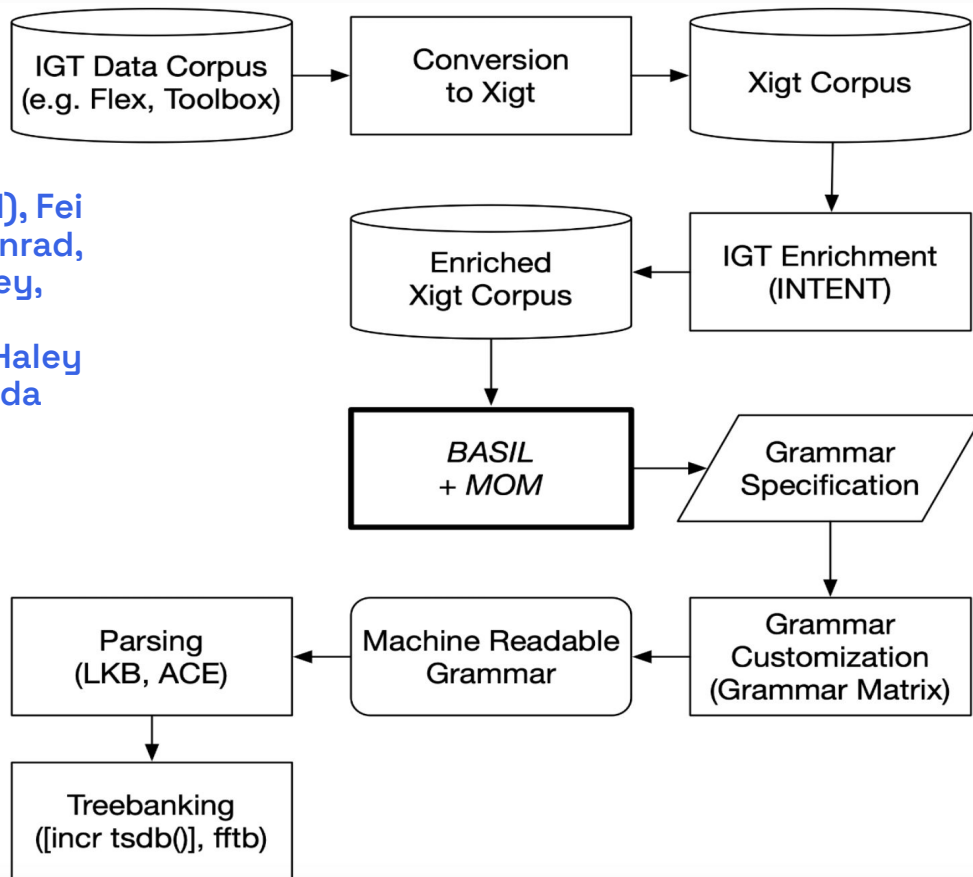
- The external source of linguistic knowledge used in grammar inference should be cross-linguistically robust
- Inferring typological features is useful for defining grammar specifications
- A cross-linguistically generalizable inference system should be developed with typological diversity in mind

The AGGREGATION Project

Grammar Inference with BASIL

AGGREGATION

Collaborators: Emily M. Bender (PI), Fei Xia, Olga Zamaraeva, Elizabeth Conrad, Michael Goodman, Joshua Crowgey, David Wax, Ryan Georgi, Michael Lockwood, Swetha Ramaswamy, Haley Lepp, Claude Zhang, Tifa de Almeida



Grammar Inference with BASIL

Building Analyses from Syntactic Inference in Local Languages

Howell (2020), Howell and Bender (2022)

Lexicon

- Intransitive and transitive verbs*
- Common Nouns*
- Auxiliaries
- Pronouns
- Determiners
- Coordinating conjunctions
- Negation words
- Case-marking adpositions

Morphology

- Noun and verb lexical classes*

Syntax

- Word order
- Case system and case frame
- Argument optionality and argument marking on verbs
- Sentential negation
- Coordination

Syntactico-semantic Features

- Person, Number, Gender
- Tense, Aspect, Mood



*Using the MOM morphotactic inference system (Wax, 2014; Zamaraeva 2016; Zamaraeva et al. 2017)

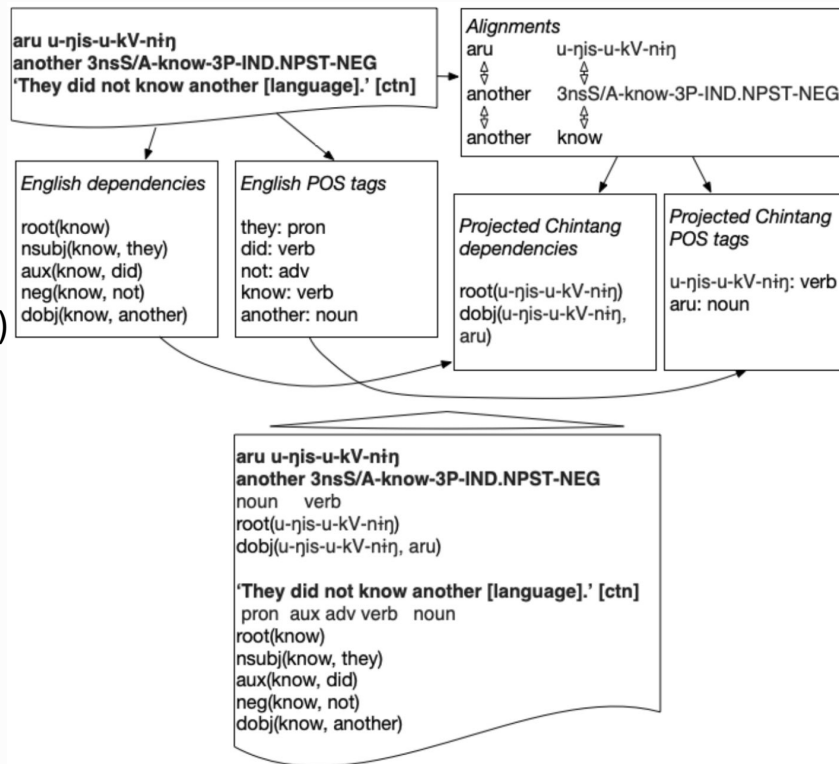
Mapping Features from WALS

- The WALS feature database is sparse, but the SIGTYP 2020 shared task (Bjerva et al. 2020) is a step towards increasing the available information
- de Almeida et al. (2019) found that 20 WALS features can be mapped directly to Grammar Matrix features
 - This accounts for 8.5% of the Grammar Matrix's specifications
- Zhang et al. (2019) did preliminary work to incorporate WALS features into inference

Grammar Inference with BASIL

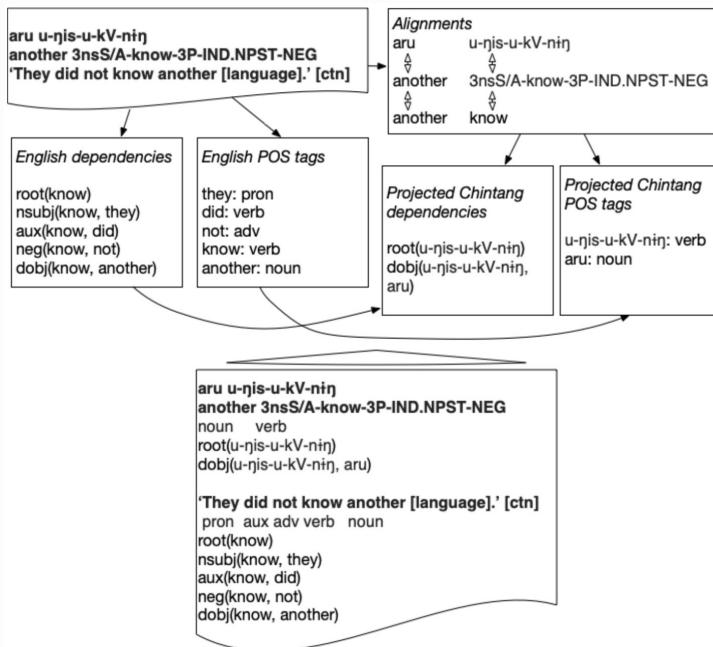
Building Analyses from Syntactic Inference in Local Languages

- Largely heuristic
- Leverages linguistic annotations
 - Morpheme segmentation
 - POS tags
 - Morphosyntactic features
- Leverages enriched IGT data (Georgi 2016)
 - Projected dependency parses
 - Projected POS tags

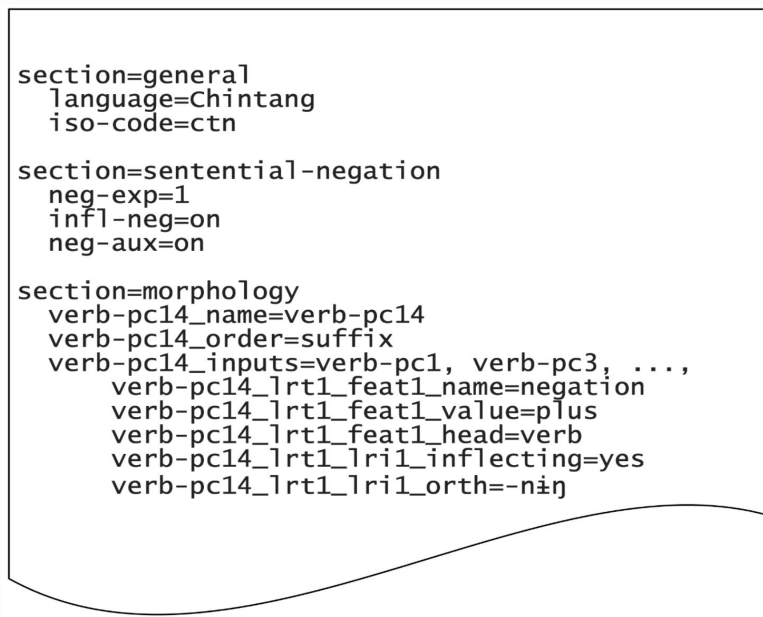


Generating a Grammar Specification

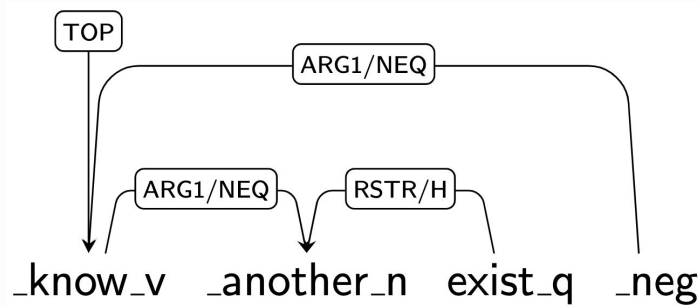
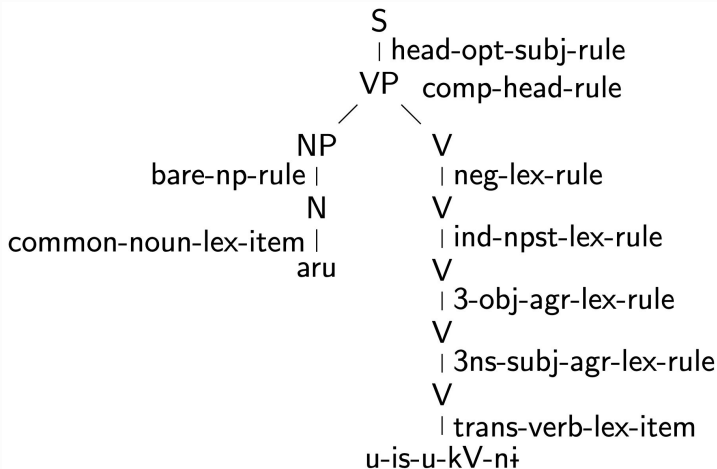
Enriched IGT



Grammar Specification

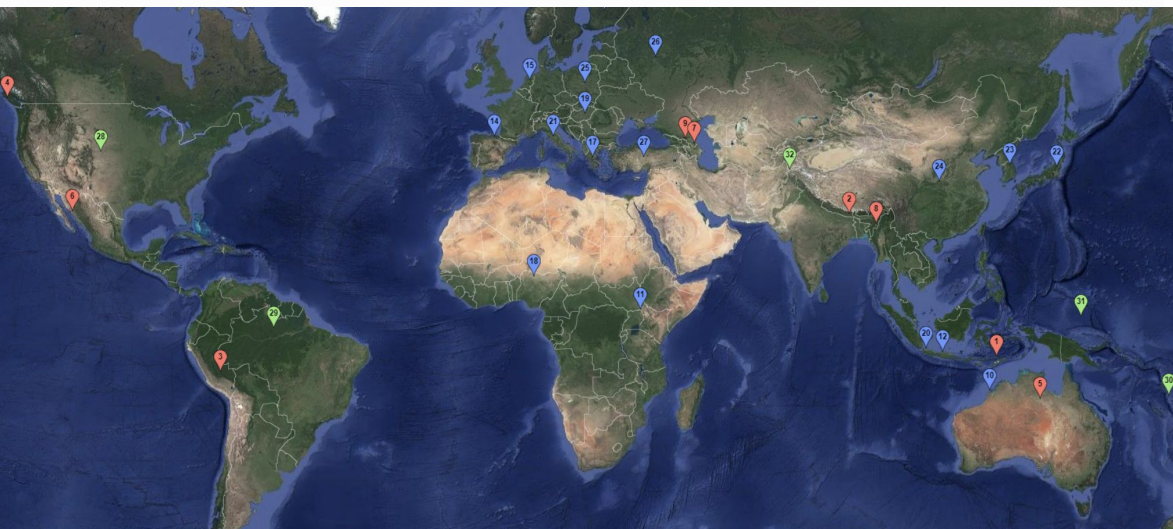


The Grammar Matrix generates a custom grammar, which produces rich syntactic and semantic representations



_know_v (ARG0 {SF *prop*, tense *npst*, aspect *ind*}, ARG1 {per 3, num *ns* }, ARG2 {per 3})

Languages for Development and Evaluation



red = development, **blue** = consulted, **green** = held out

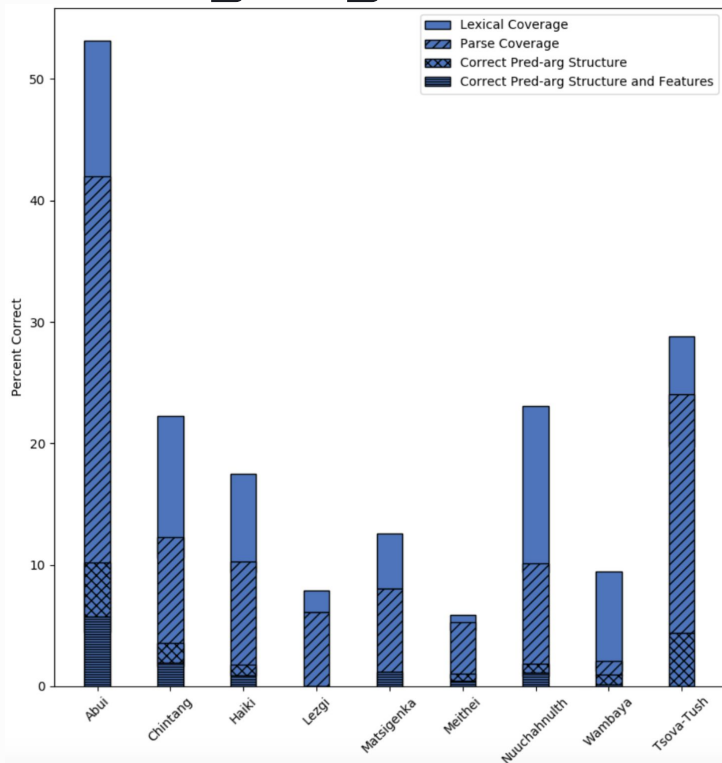
	Language	iso	Corpus	Resource
Development				
1	Abui	abz	Kratochvíl 2019	Kratochvíl 2007
2	Chintang	ctn	Bickel et al. 2013b	Schikowski 2013
3	Matsigenka	mcb	Michael et al. 2013	Michael 2008
4	Nuuchahnulth	nuk	Inman 2019b	Inman 2019a
5	Wambaya	wmb	Nordlinger 1998	Nordlinger 1998
6	Haiki	yaq	Harley 2019	Sanchez et al. 2015 Dedrick and Casad 1999
7	Lezgi	lez	Donet 2014b	Donet 2014a
8	Meithei	mni	Chelliah 2019	Chelliah 2011
9	Tsova-Tush	bbl	Hauk 2016–2019	Hauk and Harris forthcoming Hauk 2020
Consulted				
10	Bardi	bcj	Bowern 2012	Bowern 2012
11	Ik	ikx	Schrock 2014	Schrock 2014
12	Old Javanese	jav	Acri 2018	
13	Yup'ik	esu	Miyaoka 2012	Miyaoka 2012
14	Basque	eus	Xia et al. 2016	de Urbina 1989
15	Dutch	nld	Xia et al. 2016	Booij 2002
16	Finnish	fin	Xia et al. 2016	Sulkala and Karjalainen 1992
17	Greek	ell	Xia et al. 2016	Holton et al. 2012
18	Hausa	hau	Xia et al. 2016	Newman 2000
19	Hungarian	hun	Xia et al. 2016	Kenesei et al. 2002
20	Indonesian	ind	Xia et al. 2016	Sneddon et al. 2012
21	Italian	ita	Xia et al. 2016	Monachesi 1996
22	Japanese	jpn	Siegel et al. 2016 Xia et al. 2016	Siegel et al. 2016 Hinds 1986
23	Korean	kor	Xia et al. 2016	Sohn 1994
24	Mandarin	cmn	Xia et al. 2016	Li and Thompson 1989
25	Polish	pol	Xia et al. 2016	
26	Russian	rus	Xia et al. 2016	
27	Turkish	tur	Xia et al. 2016	Kornfilt 1997
Held Out				
28	Arapaho	arp	Cowell 2018	Cowell and Moss Sr 2011
29	Hixkaryana	hix	Meira 2020	
30	South Efate	erk	Thieberger 2006a	Thieberger 2006b
31	Titan	tiv	Bowern 2019	Bowern 2011
32	Wakhi	wbl	Kaufman et al. 2020	

Development Corpora

- Iterative development with 9 languages from 7 language families
 - Primarily from FLEx and Toolbox corpora
- Consulted an additional 18 languages to total 19 families

	Language	ISO 639-3	Family	Source Type	Number of IGT
Development					
1	Abui	abz	Trans-New Guinea	Toolbox	1568
2	Chintang	ctn	Sino-Tibetan	Toolbox	9785
3	Matsigenka	mcb	Arawakan	FLEx	349
4	Nuuchahnulth	nuk	Wakashan	FLEx	641
5	Wambaya	wmb	Mirndi	Book	818
6	Haiki	yaq	Uto-Aztecan	FLEx	2235
7	Lezgi	lez	Nakh-Daghestanian	FLEx	1168
8	Meithei	mni	Sino-Tibetan	FLEx	955
9	Tsova-Tush	bbf	Nakh-Daghestanian	FLEx	1601
Consulted					
10	Bardi	bcj	Nyulnyulan	Book	178
11	Ik	ikx	Eastern Sudanic	Book	201
12	Old Javanese	jav	Austronesian	Toolbox	308
13	Yup'ik	esu	Eskimo-Aleut	Book	217
14	Basque	eus	Basque	ODIN	1033
15	Dutch	nld	Indo-European	ODIN	3543
16	Finnish	fin	Uralic	ODIN	3123
17	Greek	ell	Indo-European	ODIN	2065
18	Hausa	hau	Afro-Asiatic	ODIN	2504
19	Hungarian	hun	Uralic	ODIN	2077
20	Indonesian	ind	Austronesian	ODIN	1699
21	Italian	ita	Indo-European	ODIN	3513
22	Japanese	jpn	Japonic	ODIN	6655
				Book	116
23	Korean	kor	Korean	ODIN	5383
24	Mandarin	cmn	Sino-Tibetan	ODIN	5045
25	Polish	pol	Indo-European	ODIN	2691
26	Russian	rus	Indo-European	ODIN	4161
27	Turkish	tur	Altaic	ODIN	2617

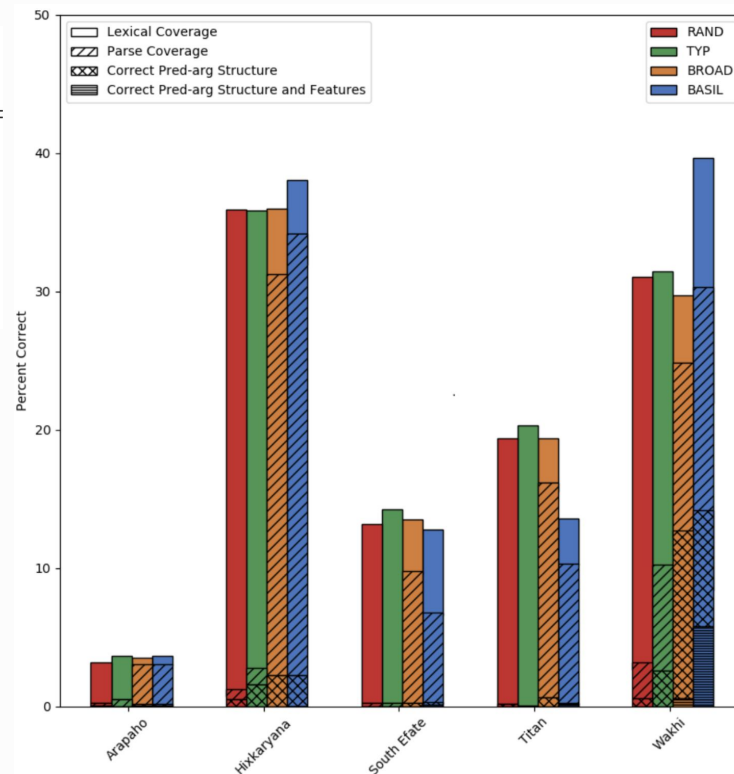
Iterative evaluation on development languages



Language [iso]	Lexical Coverage (%)	Parse Coverage (%)	Correct Pred-Arg Structure (%)	Correct Pred-Arg Strugure and Features (%)	Ambiguity
Abui [abz]	53.19	41.96	10.19*	5.73*	2195
Chintang [ctn]	22.29	12.24	3.58*	1.94*	5562
Haiki [yaq]	17.49	10.29	1.79*	0.89*	161
Lezgi [lez]	7.88	6.08	0.00*	0.00*	10419
Matsigenka [mcb]	12.61	8.02	1.15	1.15	2333
Meithei [mni]	5.86	5.24	1.05	0.42	3722
Nuuchahnulth [nuk]	23.09	10.14	1.87	1.09	265
Wambaya [wmb]	9.41	2.08	0.98	0.12	4
Tsova-Tush [bbl]	28.79	24.05	4.35*	0.00*	3418

Evaluation on Held-out Language Families

	Language	ISO 639-3	Family	Source Type	Number of IGT
1	Arapaho	arp	Algic	Toolbox	5000
2	Hixkaryana	hix	Cariban	Toolbox	5749
3	South Efate	erk	Austronesian	Toolbox	1875
4	Titan	ttv	Austronesian	Toolbox	1799
5	Wakhi	wbl	Indo-European	FLEx	683



Use in grammar engineering class

- Inferred grammars have been used as a starting point for students in a grammar engineering class at the University of Washington for 4 years
- Gives them parse coverage from the start
 - This makes some illustrative examples more discoverable
- Allows bigger lexicons with less work
 - Enables using corpora from linguists
- Saves time so they can get more out of the customization system
- Correcting the inferred morphology can be tedious

Current work in the AGGREGATION Project

- Reduce ambiguity in inferred grammars (Conrad, 2021)
- Improving root detection for morphological inference (Tara Wueger)
- New inference for adnominal possession (Allison Dods)
- New inference for valence-changing morphology (Yi-Chien Lin)
- Processing more data and fixing Matrix bugs (Tom Liu)

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Precision grammars are useful for treebanking, data exploration, language learning
- They are difficult to build
- Grammar inference leverages typological knowledge to generate these grammars automatically
- Grammars inferred with BASIL are small, but the parses they produce are linguistically rich

Thank you!

Thank you to all former and current contributors to the AGGREGATION Project, on whose work this research is built.

We are deeply indebted to speaker communities who provided linguistic data for documentation and the field linguists who shared it with us.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. BCS-1561833 (PI Bender).

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