

June 5, 2003

CLASS 5: C-Command and Binding

An important structural relationship

Consider again the homework involving **negative polarity items** (NPIs), where the task was to figure out the appropriate structural relationship between an NPI and the negative element, which must obligatorily occur in sentences containing NPIs, as the NPI-licenser.

- (1) a. I **didn't** have a **red cent**.
- b. * I **had** a **red cent**.
- c. I **did not** have a **red cent**.
- d. * **A red cent** was **not** found in the box.

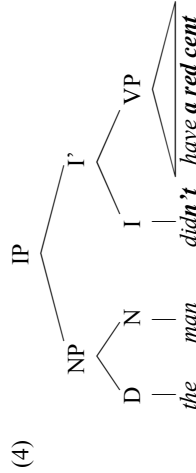
As Carnie (2001: 85) says, “[t]here are *two possible answers* consistent with this data” (my emphasis, — KKG). One is **precedence**: the negative element has to precede the NPI. However, this relationship is a bit vague, or not very exact: it would also apply to negative expressions deeper embedded inside a constituent, thus preceding the NPI, but still lead to ungrammaticality:

- (2) a. The man **didn't** have a **red cent**.
- b. * The man that **didn't** sleep did have a **red cent**.

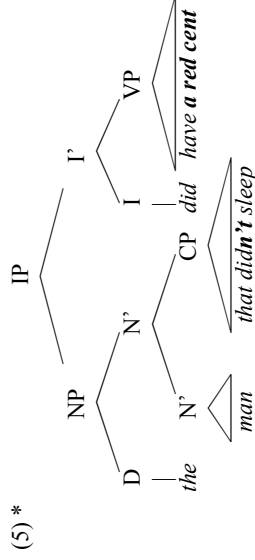
Just looking at the *string of words* that make up a sentence is thus not enough (though, as Carnie suggests, it works with the data in (1)). We must look at the *finer structure of the sentence*.

- (3) a. [_{IP} [_{NP} The man] [_r **didn't**] [_{VP} have a **red cent**]]]]
- b. * [_{IP} [_{NP} The man that **didn't** sleep] [_r did] [_{VP} have a **red cent**]]]]

The other possibility is a bit stricter than precedence by taking structural relations into account: **c(onstituent)-command**. A c-command relation between one element α (“antecedent”) in the phrase marker and another element β (“dependant”) holds if α 's **command path** contains β . For our purposes, a command path of α is everything dominated by the first node that dominates α (i.e. the node that **immediately dominates** α), except α itself and its descendants.



- n' (the negative expression) is α , the antecedent
- *a red cent* (the NPI) is β , the dependant
- in (4), α c-commands β : the NPI is licensed
- in (5), α doesn't c-command β : the NPI is not licensed



In other words:
 Go one node up and consider everything that is contained on the path down the other side.
 (Can you see the benefits of **binary branching**?)

One property of this more restricted licensing condition for NPIs (where an NPI is a dependant and a negative element the antecedent) is that it occurs elsewhere in the grammar. Consider:

- (6) a. **John** likes **himself**.
 - b. John_i likes himself_i.
 - c. * John_i likes himself_j.
 - d. John_i likes himself_{j/k}.
- NB: Familiarize yourself with this notation!

First, just like NPIs, an **anaphor** needs an **antecedent**, an element that identifies them:

- (7) a. **Him** read the book?! No way! (He's blind.)
- b. * **Himself** read the book?! No way! (He's blind.)

This antecedent **binds** the **anaphor** **locally** and **must agree in phi-features**:

- (8) a. **Mary_i** likes herself_i / *himself_j.
- b. **They_i** like themselves_i / *himself_j.
- c. **I_i** like myself_i / *yourself_j.
- (9) a. **You_i** like yourself_i.
- b. **You_j** like yourselves_j.

Finally, **precedence** is **clearly not enough** to bind an anaphor:

- (10) a. **Linguists_i** feel good about themselves_i.
- b. [**Students of linguistics_i**]_j feel good about themselves_i.
- c. * [Friends of [**students of linguistics_i**]_j] feel good about themselves_i.
- (11) a. [**Friends of [students of linguistics]]_i] feel good about themselves_i.**
- b. [_{IP} [_{NP} ...]_k ...]_i [_r I [_{VP} ... anaphor_{j/k} ...]]]

Homework: Exercise 5

- A. Prepare next class by thoroughly reading **chapter 4**.
- B. **Exercise VIII** in Radford: pp. 102f.
- C. Given what we said about reflexive anaphors, how reciprocal anaphors like *each other* fit into the picture? Try to find relevant data that show that *each other* behaves just like *-self* or very differently (consider possible antecedents and local binding relations as above).