

## Approaches to Reflexive Pronouns and Reflexivity

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### Semantics of anaphora: coreference vs. bound variable readings

Coreference: a pronoun ‘picks up the reference of’ its antecedent (Barbara Partee, 2014 lectures).

BUT: compare

(0) John<sub>i</sub> didn’t want to admit that he<sub>i</sub> might be wrong.

(1) No one<sub>i</sub> wanted to admit that he<sub>i</sub> might be wrong. ← *Quantified Noun Phrase*

← bound variable reading

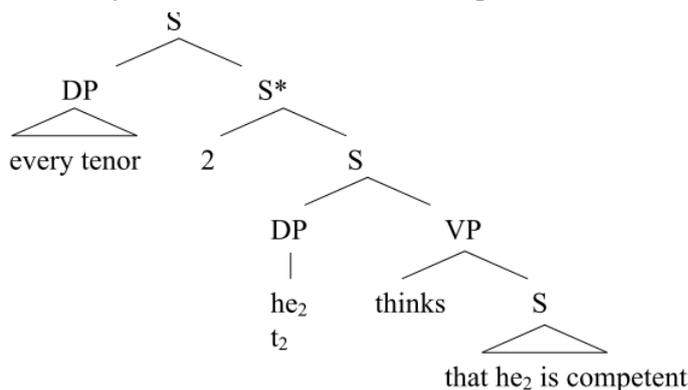
Montague (1973): All pronouns treated as bound variables. ← No? Strict vs. sloppy readings

(2) John loves his wife and so does Bill.

!NB: semantic binding vs. syntactic binding

**Semantic binding:** lambda-abstract

(3) Every tenor thinks that he is competent.



2 =  $\beta$  = binder prefix (adjunct)

**Semantic binding:** A binder prefix  $\beta$  semantically binds a DP if and only if:

- $\beta$  and DP are coindexed
- $\beta$  c-commands DP
- there is no binder prefix  $\beta'$  which is c-commanded by  $\beta$  which meets (a) and (b).

If a DP is not bound by any binder prefix  $\beta$  in a structure P, we say that DP is semantically free in P.

Semantic binding requires c-command; coreference does not require it.

(4) a. The secretary he<sub>8</sub> hired thinks that Siegfried<sub>8</sub> is despotic. (Büring, 2005)

b. \*The secretary he<sub>8</sub> hired thinks that each of the tenors<sub>8</sub> is despotic.

→ Semantic binding requires syntactic binding (i.e. that the binder be coindexed with and c-command the pronoun.)

Semantic binding is sentential. Coreference can be intersentential.

(5) a. No boy [left because he felt dejected].

b. \*No boy [left]. He felt dejected.

c. Susan went to sleep. She was exhausted.

Variable binding must be local, but can involve nonreferential NPs (*no boy*, etc.). Coreference can be nonlocal, but must involve referential NPs.

### More examples of coreference vs. semantic binding

(6) I said that only Tatiana should stay in her room.

Coreference is often ‘pragmatic’. How can we prohibit it in cases like this:

(7) \*John<sub>i</sub> admires him<sub>i</sub>.

... and allow it in cases like these:

(8) a. Everyone hates Lucifer. Only he himself pities him.

b. He is Colonel Weisskopf.

c. I dreamt that I was Brigitte Bardot and I kissed me.

Principles B and C are apparently suspended, if the two NPs in question refer to the same individual under different guises. → If the same relations cannot be represented with NP1 a variable bound by NP2.

*Rule I:*

NP A cannot corefer with NP B if replacing A with C, C a variable A-(semantically) bound by B, yields an indistinguishable interpretation (Grodzinsky and Reinhart, 1993).

Coreference is allowed:

(9) [[Problems with his visa] mean [that John cannot come on tour]].

Rule I also helps to get rid of ambiguity:

(10) John thinks he is sick.

(a) John<sub>1</sub> thinks he<sub>1</sub> is sick

(b) John β 1 thinks he<sub>1</sub> is sick