



An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Binding (syntactic)



Definition

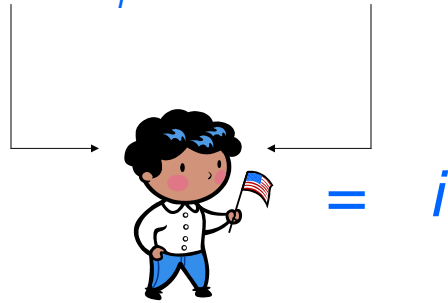
A node α **binds** a node β if

- i. α and β are **co-indexed**,
- ii. α **c-commands** β .



Co-indexation

- The boy_{*i*} pinched himself_{*i*}.



Coindexation indicates co-reference.

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C-command

A node α **c-commands** a node β iff:

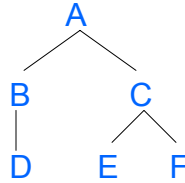
- the first branching node that dominates α also dominates β ; and
- α does not dominate β and β does not dominate α

For details, see entry on [c-command](#).

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C-command



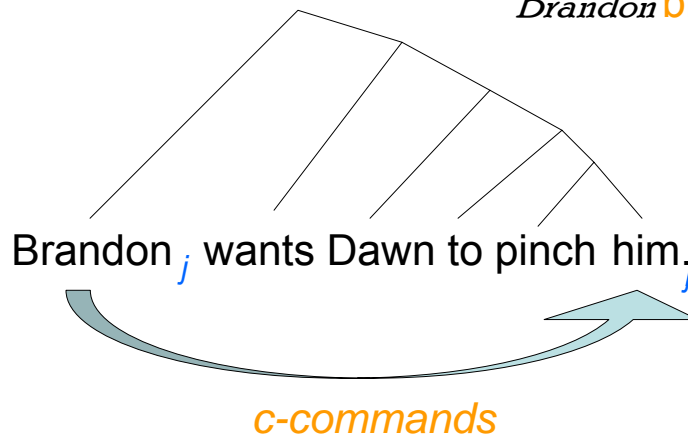
- B c-commands C, E and F.
- C c-commands B and D.
- D c-commands C, E and F.
- E c-commands F only.
- F c-commands E only.

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Example of Binding

Brandon binds him



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A Different Definition

A node α **syntactically binds** a node β if

- i. α and β are **co-indexed**,
- ii. α **c-commands** β ,
- iii. α is in an **A-position**, and
- iv. α does not c-command any other node which is also co-indexed with β , c-commands β , and is in an A-position (i.e. nothing between α and β that fulfills (i-iii)).

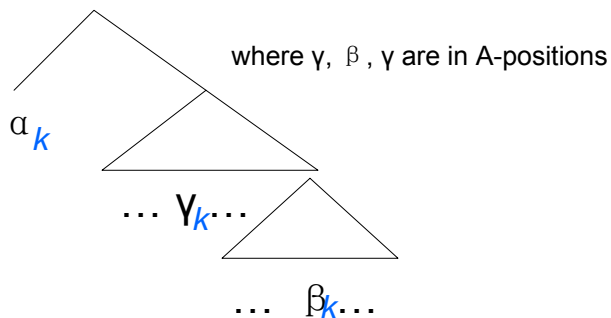
Heim & Kratzer (1988:261)

Also, see entry on **A-position**.

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Schematic Representation



By H&K's definition,

γ **binds** β

but

α **does not bind** β

We leave it to you to explore the motivations behind H&K's definition.

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Why 'binding'?

- Binding is useful for stating anaphoric relations.
- Words like *him, her, herself, itself, each other*, etc often require antecedents.
- Binding allows us to state the syntactic conditions for identifying appropriate antecedents.

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Further reading

- Aronoff, Mark and Janie Rees-Miller (eds.) (2001) *The Handbook of Linguistics* pp. 276-277, 306-307. Blackwell Publishers.
- Baltin, Mark and Chris Collins (eds.) (2001) *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Haegeman, Liliane (1995) *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*, 2nd edition, Chapter 4, pp.201-250. Blackwell Publishers.
- Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer (1988) *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, pp.206-276. Blackwell Publishers.
- Horrocks, Geoffrey (1987) *Generative Grammar*, pp.108-127. London: Longman.
- Ouhalla, Jamal (1999) *Introducing Transformational Grammar: From Principles and Parameters to Minimalism*, 2nd edition, pp. 225-256. London: Edward Arnold Publishers.
- Radford, Andrew (1988) *Transformational Grammar*. Cambridge University Press.
- Reuland, Eric. (2005) Binding Theory: Terms and Concepts. In Martin Everaert and Henk Van Riemsdijk (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*. Blackwell Publishing. Also available in e-version as Blackwell Reference Online (2007).

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The End

Wee, Lian-Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)
An animated and narrated glossary of terms used in Linguistics.
Hong Kong Baptist University.