

Lecture 5. Introduction to Issues in Anaphora

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Readings: (full references and links for downloading are in References at the end.)
(Karttunen 1976, Partee 1978, Reinhart 1999, King 2005, Carlson 2006)

1. What is Anaphora?

Anaphora as a phenomenon refers to the relationship between a “referentially dependent” expression (the anaphoric expression, or anaphor) and a “referentially independent” expression that serves as its *antecedent* and from which the anaphoric expression gets its reference (or other semantic value). Examples:

- (1) a. *John* left because *he* was tired. Pronominal anaphora; antecedent an NP.
- b. *Mary went to California* because Susan did _____. VP anaphora. The anaphoric expression is a null VP; the antecedent is the VP *go to California*.
- c. *Tom may arrive this evening*. If *so*, I’ll be very happy. Sentential anaphora; antecedent *Tom arrive(s) this evening*.
- d. Some *careless driver* backed into our car. *Such* people make me mad. Adjectival anaphora, antecedent a property-denoting expression.
- e. *No one* wanted to admit that *he* might be wrong. Pronominal anaphora with a quantified NP as antecedent.

To determine semantic value of an anaphoric expression such as *he*, *so*, *such*, or anaphoric \emptyset (as in (1b)), we need to know what its antecedent is, and we need to know the semantic rules that determine the value of the anaphor in terms of the value of its antecedent. In a simple case like *John* and *he* in (1a), the antecedent refers to an individual, and the pronoun refers to the same individual. The examples in (1b-d) show that anaphora is not always a relation between individual-denoting expressions, and example (1e) shows that even with pronominal anaphora, the anaphoric relation is not always a relation of “coreference”, as it seems to be in (1a).

The study of anaphora involves both syntax and semantics. We need syntax to describe the distribution of anaphoric expressions and their antecedents, and we need semantics to describe how the semantic value of an anaphoric expression is determined. And as we progress, we will find ourselves needing to bring pragmatics into the picture as well, because there is presumably a close connection between the anaphoric use of *he*

in (1a) and what is sometimes called a *deictic* use¹ of *he* in (2), as it might be uttered while looking at someone who just walked by, where there is no linguistic antecedent.

- (2) *He* looks lost.

Two notes on terminology. In the broad sense of the term *anaphora*, all of the examples above as well as the ones in (3) below involve anaphora. There are two narrower senses in which *anaphora* or *anaphor* are distinguished from other terms.

Anaphora vs. cataphora. In all the examples above, the anaphoric expression follows the antecedent. But sometimes it may precede, as in (3); that is known either as *backwards anaphora* (this is the more common term in contemporary western syntax) or *cataphora* (a classic term); in this case the term “antecedent” is also a misnomer but is only rarely replaced by *postcedent*.

- (3) a. If you can find *it*, I would recommend buying *the 1977 Vishnevskaya recording*.
 b. As we have ____ in the past, WFCR will continue to *bring you the finest music*.
 c. I can’t believe *it!* *We won!*
 d. You must remember *this*: *A kiss is just a kiss; a sigh is just a sigh*. (from *Casablanca*, the song “As Time Goes By”)

Anaphors vs. pronominals. In his “Binding Theory”, Chomsky has emphasized the difference in syntactic distribution among three classes of expressions, which he calls “anaphors”, “pronominals”, and “R-expressions” (“referential expressions”). Reflexive pronouns like *himself*, *myself*, Russian *sebjā* and *-sja* are called “anaphors”, while ordinary personal pronouns like *he*, *him* are called “pronominals” and distinguished from anaphors. The term “anaphor” therefore has a much narrower meaning in Chomskian syntax than the way I have used it above. We’ll introduce the basics of Chomsky’s Binding Theory in Section 3 below. If we followed Chomsky’s terminology, none of the anaphoric expressions in the examples above would be called anaphors, but the anaphoric expressions in (4) below would be.

- (4) a. Bill loves only *himself*.
 b. Vanja ljubiti *sebjā*.
 c. Oni čitali žaloby *drug na druga*. (Testelefs 2001, p.602)

We will use the terms *anaphora* and *anaphor* in the broad sense in which they apply to all the examples in (1-4), except when explicitly discussing Chomskian Binding Theory.

2. Coreference vs. variable-binding

The main question in the semantics of anaphora is this:

- What is the semantic relation between an anaphoric expression and its antecedent? Is it always the same, or is there more than one kind of anaphora from a semantic point of view?

¹ There are a pair of rare terms that are useful here: *endophora* for the case where a referentially dependent sentence gets its value from a linguistic expression within the same text, and *exophora* for a case like that in (2) where it gets its value from outside the linguistic context. But those terms are very rarely used.

One possibility: Coreference

When the antecedent is a proper name, as in (1a) and (4a), a natural first hypothesis is that the relation is one of coreference: the antecedent is an e-type expression that denotes (refers to) an individual, and the pronoun “picks up the reference of” its antecedent.

Another possibility: Bound variable anaphora

But we can see in example (1e), and we saw earlier in Lecture 3 (section 3.4, p.11), that sometimes a personal pronoun is interpreted as a *bound variable*, not as a referring expression that is “coreferential” with its antecedent.

Does that mean that we need two different interpretation rules for pronouns?

Montague (1973): All pronouns treated as bound variables.

What does the binding? Review Lecture 3! It’s not directly the “antecedent”; the actual binding is always done by a lambda-operator! But informally we often speak of an NP a binding a bound-variable pronoun if the lambda-operator is part of the interpretation of the ‘quantifying in’ rule. **See Homework 2, optional exercise 7:** the derivation in our fragment of *Every professor_i knows a student who admires him_i*.

No treatment of exophora in Montague’s work (pronouns with non-linguistic antecedents), but a natural extension is to treat those as “free variables” with values provided by the context. No treatment of reflexive pronouns.

Argument for two different interpretation rules: the strict-sloppy identity problem, introduced in Lecture 1, and repeated here.

Sentence (5) has one obvious ambiguity – “his” can mean “John’s”, or it can have a referent outside the sentence – someone else that we have been talking about, for instance Max. Such an ambiguity is sometimes notated as follows:

(5) John_i loves his_{ij} wife. (I.e. *his* can have the same “referential index” as John or a different one.)

But the ambiguity of (6) raises a further puzzle. (6) involves “VP (Verb Phrase) anaphora”: “so does” is anaphoric to the VP of the first sentence, “loves his wife”.

(6) John loves his wife and so does Bill. Possible interpretations:

- (i) John loves Max’s wife, and Bill loves Max’s wife. (“loves his_j wife”, he_j = Max)
- (ii) John loves John’s wife, and Bill loves John’s wife. (“loves his_j wife”, he_j = John)
- (iii) John loves John’s wife, and Bill loves Bill’s wife. (??? “loves self’s wife”?)

The contrast between (ii) and (iii) arises even when the first clause seems to unambiguously say that John loves John’s wife. Is that first clause actually ambiguous? In what way?

The readings in (i) and (ii) are called “strict identity” readings, and (iii) “sloppy identity”. Why “sloppy”? (It’s J.R. Ross’s term; he was the first to discuss the phenomenon, in Ross (1967).) Because there isn’t always exact morpho-syntactic identity; cf. (7).

(7) John can stand on his head, and Mary can too. (= “can stand on *her* head too”)

Keenan, Partee, and others argued that so-called “sloppy identity” is strict semantic identity involving *bound variable* readings of pronouns.

Pragmatic anaphora. Partee (1978) argued that “coreferential” anaphora should be viewed as just one subcase of a more general phenomenon of “pragmatic anaphora”, unifying examples like (1a), (2) and (8) below as a variety of ways in which a pronoun can get its reference “from the context”, including both linguistic and non-linguistic context.

(8) I couldn’t reach Elliot last night. *He* is probably in Boston.

Partee (1978) argued:

Where I do want to draw a sharp line is between the bound variable use and the pragmatic use of pronouns. The bound variable use is best described at the level of syntactic form and semantic interpretation of single sentences, and the relevant question is not what the pronoun refers to, but what quantifier phrase is binding it. The pragmatic use is best described at the pragmatic level, where the full context of the sentence in use is considered; on the syntactic level, these pronouns are really no different from proper names, and at the semantic level, they can be viewed as free variables or as dummy names. (p.112 in 2004 reprint; p.3 in the pdf file.)

This is not a standard position, but it is not far away in spirit from ideas in Reinhart’s work (Reinhart 1976, 1983b, 1983a, Grodzinsky and Reinhart 1993, 1993) and in the work of Bach and Partee (Bach and Partee 1980, Partee and Bach 1981). In any case, every theory has to have something to say about the basic differences between “coreferential anaphora” and “bound variable anaphora”, and every theory has to have something to say about the relation between the anaphoric use(s) of pronouns and their “free” or “exophoric” uses.

3. Syntactic aspects of anaphora, and syntax-semantics interface issues

There has been even more work on the syntax of anaphora than on its semantics, because the syntactic distribution of various anaphoric expressions has raised challenges that have played a major role in various developments in syntactic theory, most famously but not only in Chomskian theories.

A central syntactic question is how to best describe and explain the differences in distribution between “plain pronouns” like *he, she, it* (called *pronominals*, or *pronouns*, in Chomskian Binding Theory) and reflexive pronouns *himself, herself, itself* (*anaphors* in Chomskian Binding Theory), and similar forms in other languages. Reinhart and Chomsky are two of the classic names in this endeavor; Chomsky is more prominent among syntacticians, while semanticists especially appreciate Reinhart for her equal attention to syntactic and semantic aspects of the problem. Reinhart (1999) begins as follows (I’ve changed the example number):

Binding theory is the branch of linguistic theory that explains the behavior of sentence-internal anaphora, which is labelled ‘bound anaphora’ To illustrate the problem, the sentences in (9) each contain an anaphoric expression (she, herself), and a potential antecedent (Lucie or Lili).

- (9) a. Lucie thought that Lili hurt her.
b. Lucie thought that Lili hurt herself.
c. *Lucie thought that herself hurt Lili.

The two anaphoric expressions have different anaphora options: In (9a), only Lucie can be the antecedent; in (9b), only Lili; in (9c), neither can. This pattern is universal. (Reinhart 1999, p.86)

Binding Theory, especially on Reinhart's account, is concerned primarily with the distribution of reflexive pronouns like *herself*, but is also concerned with the differences between the distributions of pronominals and of reflexive pronouns.

What does "binding" mean in syntax? Roughly, 'bound' in syntax means 'co-indexed with a c-commanding² NP.' Skipping the technical definition of a "local domain", which to a first approximation can be thought of as a "clause", the Binding conditions proposed in (Chomsky 1981) can be summarized as follows:

(10) *Binding conditions*

Condition A: An anaphor must be bound in its local domain.

Condition B: A pronoun must be free in its local domain.

Condition C: An R-expression must be free.

These conditions rule out the impossible choices of co-indexing in (9), and also account for the contrasts in the following.

- (11) a. Felix_i invited himself_i.
b. *Felix_i invited him_i.
(12) a. Felix_i heard himself_i sing.
b. *Felix_i heard him_i sing.
(13) a. Lucie_i believes that we should elect her_i.
b. *Lucie_i believes that we should elect herself_i.

It is argued that these conditions are universal, with parametric variation across languages (and perhaps even across particular subclasses of anaphors and pronominals within a language) on the relevant definition of "local domain".

Typological issues. English vs. Russian. Testelets (2001, pp. 600-603) discusses work of Rappaport (1986), who argued that a difference between English and Russian is that for English anaphors, a crucial factor for local domains is the notion of "**accessible subject**", which includes subjects of both finite and infinitive clauses, while for Russian reflexives, what is crucial is the domain of a **finite subject**, and for the distribution of Russian reciprocal *drug druga* (also an anaphor), the domain of *any* subject, including e.g. dative agents, is a local domain. This explains, among other things, the difference between the English examples (14a-b) and the Russian examples (15a-b).

² Node A c-commands node B in a constituent structure tree if the first branching node that dominates A also dominates B.

- (14) a. John thinks that a picture of *himself* will be in the show.
b. They_i asked the journalists_j [PRO_j to write an article about *themselves**_{ij}]
(15) a. *Ivan dumaet, čto svoja fotografija budet na vystavke.
b. Oni_i poprosili žurnalistov_j [PRO_j napisat' o sebe_{ij} stat'ju]

Typology of pronouns and anaphors is a big area of research, and we will return to it.

Kinds of reflexives and hypotheses about the syntax-semantics interface.

One view of reflexive pronouns is expressed in Binding theory: reflexive pronouns and other anaphors are anaphoric expressions that have to be bound by an antecedent. This view of anaphors makes them very similar to the bound-variable pronouns of Montague grammar, with additional syntactic principles to explain when a bound-variable pronoun should be expressed as a reflexive pronoun and when it should be expressed as a plain pronoun.

There is another view of reflexives, which is particularly plausible for reflexive clitics like Russian *-sja*. This is the view of reflexives as *operators* on verbs: reflexivization turns a 2-place verb into a 1-place verb by identifying two of its arguments. Let *R* be a variable of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$, the type of simple transitive verbs like *love*, *wash*. Then we can define the semantics of an operator *-sja* as follows:

$$(16) \quad \mathbf{TR}(-sja) = \lambda R \lambda x [R(x, x)]$$

If we apply that operator to a transitive verb like *myt* 'wash', we obtain as the interpretation of *myt'sja* the following, assuming that *wash*' is the translation of *myt*':

$$(17) \quad \mathbf{TR}(myt'sja) = \lambda R \lambda x [R(x, x)] (wash') = \lambda x [wash'(x, x)]$$

On this view, a "reflexive" is not a kind of NP, but rather a kind of operator on verb meanings. This view has some plausibility for reflexives expressed by bound morphemes on verbs, whose semantics is often limited to indicating identification of subject and direct object arguments. It is less plausible for reflexives that have a form and distribution more like pronouns and other full NPs. But there are views of reflexives that combine aspects of the operator view and of the "pronoun-like" view, for instance (Bach and Partee 1980). For some interesting work on the two Polish reflexives *się* and *siebie*, see (Lubowicz 1999). For extensions of that work to Russian *-sja* and *sebjja*, see (Kapitonov 2007).

"Anti-reflexives". Saxon (1984) discusses the phenomenon of "disjoint anaphora" in Dogrib, an indigenous language of western Canada. "Disjoint anaphors" are expressions whose syntactic distribution is constrained in the same way as typical anaphors, but their interpretation is not "identical to the antecedent" in the way that a reflexive is, but rather they denote some salient individual necessarily *different* from the "antecedent" (which typically means "different from the subject".) This work is particularly interesting in how it helps to distinguish the syntactic notion of "anaphor subject to Principle A" from the semantic notion of "reflexive". The treatment of full-NP reflexives in Polish and Russian

actually resembles the treatment of disjoint anaphors in Dogrib. But the details will have to wait until we discuss reflexives later in the semester.

Exploring the typology of pronouns and anaphors.

It has been claimed in some of my work and elsewhere that in English, reflexive pronouns (almost) always express bound variable anaphora, whereas plain pronouns can express either bound variable anaphora or pragmatic anaphora. So, for example, in contrast with the strict vs. sloppy identity ambiguity in (6), we get only a “sloppy identity” reading (i.e. a bound-variable anaphora reading) in (18) below: Frank must have photographed himself, not Daniel.

(18) Daniel photographed himself, and Frank did too.

Japanese has been reported to have overt pronouns that never express bound variable anaphora, and null pronouns that always express bound variable anaphora. Reinhart and Reuland, whose work we will look at later, raise very interesting hypotheses about further typological distinctions among reflexive pronouns.

4. Definite NPs as anaphoric expressions: debates

Another issue in the discussion of anaphora is the semantics of definite NPs like *the king*, *the chair*. We have discussed so far only one family of views of the semantics of definites, that on which a definite noun phrase asserts or presupposes that one and only one entity satisfies the given description. This family of views may be called *the uniqueness theory of definites*. There is another theory, called *the familiarity theory of definites*. This theory finds support in examples like (19) below, which don't seem to assert or presuppose uniqueness.

- (19) a. If a man beats a donkey, the donkey kicks him. (Heim 1982,p.227)
b. A dog saw a cat. The cat meowed. (Heim, p. 241)

On this theory, definite descriptions are also anaphoric. We will study such a theory when we study Heim's dissertation in Lectures 6-8.

There is some evidence that there are actually two kinds of definite expressions, some fitting the uniqueness theory and others fitting the familiarity theory; this evidence comes especially from languages in which there are morphological and/or lexical differences between two definite articles, as in certain dialects of German (Florian Schwarz, UMass dissertation in progress.)

5. Issues and puzzles in anaphora. Preview of coming lectures

5.1. Donkey anaphora and discourse anaphora with indefinite antecedents and the rise of Dynamic Semantics. Weeks 6-8.

Anaphora with indefinite antecedents: Binding, coreference, or neither? How this problem together with the problem of “donkey anaphora” led to some major changes in semantic theory: Dynamic Semantics and the Kamp-Heim theory: Heim's “File Change Semantics” and Kamp's “Discourse Representation Theory. (Lectures 6-8).

Lecture 6. March 18. Kamp-Heim theory I. Discourse anaphora with indefinite antecedents; donkey anaphora; definites and indefinites. Previous approaches.
Reading: (Heim 1982). **Read Chapter 1.** Dissertation available as [a djvu file](#) or as [a very large PDF file](#). We will try to have a CD available on March 18 for the class with this and other readings.

Lecture 7. March 25. Kamp-Heim theory II. Heim's theory in its “Logical Form” version, and Kamp's Discourse Representation Theory. **Reading:** (1) Heim dissertation, Chapter 2. (2) (Kamp 1981) **Optional readings:** (3) (Heim 1983a) [File change semantics and the familiarity theory of definiteness](#). (4) (Lewis 1979) [Scorekeeping in a language game](#). (5) (Stalnaker 1978). [Assertion](#). Homework #3: Heim's theory of indefinites, definites, quantifiers, and anaphora. Due April 8.

Lecture 8. April 1. Kamp-Heim theory III. Definite NPs as anaphoric expressions. Parallels between anaphora and presupposition. **Reading:** (Heim 1983b). [On the projection problem for presuppositions](#). **Optional:** Heim dissertation, Chapter 3. Other readings to be added.

5.2. Pronouns and reflexives, syntax and semantics. Typology. Weeks 9-11.

Here we will look more at the syntactic and semantic issues concerning kinds of anaphoric expressions discussed above in connection with bound variable anaphora vs. coreferential or pragmatic anaphora, and in connection with Chomskian Binding Theory. Class participants will be invited to look at pronouns and reflexives in languages you know, and to share the results.

Lecture 9. April 8. Pronouns and reflexives, syntax and semantics. Readings to be assigned: Chomsky, Reinhart, Bach&Partee, others. **Homework #4:** Look at issues of pronouns and reflexives in Russian and/or in other language(s) that you know, and prepare to give a very short presentation in class, with a short handout, April 22. Due April 22.

Lecture 10. April 15. Pronouns and reflexives 2: typological issues. Readings to be assigned. Reinhart, Testelefs, Lubowicz, others.

Lecture 11: April 22: Pronouns and reflexives 3: Short presentations by class participants relating to pronouns and reflexives and typology. Homework #5: Write up a short report based on your presentation; this can be done in teams of two or more, comparing anaphora in two or more languages. Due at the time of Lecture 13 (probably May 13).

5.3. Other topics: Weeks 12 – 15 or 16.

What other topics we will look at will be partly up to the class, so please give me suggestions anytime you think of them. If there are anaphora-related issues that you are already interested in, please let me know.

Lectures 12 – 15 or 16: April 29, [no class May 6] May 13, 20, 27, June 3(?) lecture topics to be decided later, probably to include: Nominal and Temporal Anaphora;

Pragmatics and more about "Pragmatic Anaphora"; Verb Phrase anaphora, anaphora involving other categories (sentential, common noun phrase, adjectival and adverbial anaphora). Other possible topics include "Variable-free semantics"; anaphoric properties of distributivity markers; reciprocals; Anaphora in intensional contexts; topics in Russian anaphora. Participants in the class will help decide what we will cover in the last lectures, and there could be more student presentations and/or guest presentations.

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