Binding Theory determines the interpretation and distribution of pronouns and anaphors. It is formulated in terms of three principles, Condition A, which applies to anaphors, Condition B, which applies to pronouns, and Condition C, which applies to name and other referential expressions (R-expressions).

We have already discussed Condition C.

(1) Condition C: a pronoun cannot refer to an R-expression that it c-commands.

We now focus on Conditions A and B of the binding theory.

1 Condition A

Condition A governs the distribution and interpretation of anaphors. Anaphors are dependent nominal elements, which must have a sentence-internal antecedent. Unlike pronouns, they cannot refer to a sentence-external contextual element.

Most languages have two kinds of anaphoric elements.

(2) a. reflexives: himself, herself, themselves, myself, ourselves, yourself
    b. reciprocals: each other

The discussion here will focus largely on reflexives. Most of what we will propose for reflexives will also apply to reciprocals, but reciprocals introduce additional complexity which we will not get into here.

1.1 Properties of Anaphors

• Anaphors, unlike pronouns, must have an antecedent within the sentence.

(3) a. *Himself arrived.
    b. He arrived.

The ungrammaticality of (3a) can be plausibly attributed to an inability of himself to appear in a nominative position. (4) does not run into this problem.

(4) a. *[For himself to leave now] would be good.
    b. [For him to leave now] would be good.

• Anaphors must have feature-compatible antecedents.

(5) a. Stephin_i likes himself_i.
    b. *Claudia_i likes himself_i

(6) a. *Susan_i believes [himself_i to be a genius].
    b. Susan believes [him to be a genius].
Pronouns do not require a sentence-internal antecedent. However, if they do have a sentence-internal antecedent, then it must be feature-compatible with the pronoun.

(7) a. Vladislav\textsubscript{1} thinks that he\textsubscript{1/2} is a genius.
   b. Vladislav\textsubscript{1} thinks that she\textsubscript{2/4} is a genius.

- The antecedent of the anaphor must c-command the anaphor.

(8) a. *Stephin’s\textsubscript{1} mother likes himself\textsubscript{1}.
   b. Stephin’s\textsubscript{1} mother likes him\textsubscript{1}.
   c. *[That Stephin\textsubscript{1} is always ignored] irritates himself\textsubscript{1}.
   d. *[That Stephin\textsubscript{1} is always ignored] irritates him\textsubscript{1}.

Pronouns do not have a c-command requirement. The antecedents of the pronouns in (8b, d) do not c-command them.

- The antecedent of the anaphor cannot be ‘too far’ from the anaphor.

(9) a. *Stephin\textsubscript{1} thinks that Claudia likes himself\textsubscript{1}.
   b. Claudia thinks that Stephin\textsubscript{1} likes himself\textsubscript{1}.

The antecedent of a pronoun cannot be ‘too close’ to the anaphor.

(10) a. Stephin\textsubscript{1} thinks that Claudia likes him\textsubscript{1}.
    b. *Claudia thinks that Stephin\textsubscript{1} likes him\textsubscript{1}.

1.2 Binding Domains

The intuition is that anaphors must have a binder that is ‘close enough,’ while pronouns may not have a binder that is ‘too close.’

(11) NP\textsubscript{1} binds another NP\textsubscript{2} iff NP\textsubscript{1} c-commands NP\textsubscript{2} and NP\textsubscript{1} and NP\textsubscript{2} are co-indexed.
    (An NP is bound iff there is an NP’ s.t. NP’ binds NP)

(12) a. Condition A: An anaphor must be locally bound.
    b. Condition B: A pronoun must not be locally bound.
    c. Condition C: An R-expression can not be bound.

What does locally bound mean? In particular, what constitutes local?
local in the context of the binding theory = binding domain

Thus the binding conditions can be restated as:

(13) a. Condition A: An anaphor must be bound in its binding domain.
    b. Condition B: A pronoun must not be bound in its binding domain.
    c. Condition C: An R-expression can not be bound.

(14) Binding Domain (Attempt 1): the binding domain of an NP is the smallest IP that contains it.
1.3 Problems with 14

(14) goes quite far in capturing the examples we have seen so far. In fact, it explains every single example discussed in this handout up until this point. It can also explain cases of ambiguity like the following.

(15) They pointed the guns at each other.

Despite this, it is ultimately inadequate. ECM provides one environment where (14) makes incorrect predictions.

(16) a. Vladislav\textsubscript{i} believes [\textsubscript{IP}himself\textsubscript{i} to be a genius].
   b. *Vladislav\textsubscript{i} believes [\textsubscript{IP}him\textsubscript{i} to be a genius].

By (14), the binding domain of the subject of the embedded IP is the embedded IP. Therefore, we incorrectly predict that (16a) should be ungrammatical and that (16b) should be grammatical. One might think (17) to also be a counterexample.

(17) a. John\textsubscript{i} tried [\textsubscript{IP} to kill himself\textsubscript{i}].
   b. *John\textsubscript{i} tried [\textsubscript{IP} to kill him\textsubscript{i}].

Given our assumptions, it isn’t a counterexample. Why? We might have the intuition that what is going wrong in (16) is that we are dealing with a non-finite IP and that therefore we should reformulate (14) as follows:

(18) Binding Domain (Attempt 2): the binding domain of an NP is the smallest finite IP that contains it.

However, ECM proves to be a problem once again.

(19) a. *Risto\textsubscript{i} considers [Liina to be fond of himself\textsubscript{i}].
   b. Risto\textsubscript{i} considers [Liina to be fond of him\textsubscript{i}].

By (18), the binding domain of himself/him in (19) is the entire sentence – the entire sentence is the minimal finite clause that contains the anaphor/pronoun. Hence (19a) is incorrectly predicted to be good and (19b) to be bad.

- Reverse engineering points out that we need to distinguish between the subject of an ECM infinitive and the object of an ECM infinitive. The binding domain of the subject of the ECM infinitive seems to be larger than that of the object of the ECM infinitive.

1.4 Reformulating Binding Domains

- Binding domain of the subject of the ECM infinitive includes the clause of the ECM verb.
- Binding domain of the object of the ECM infinitive includes only the ECM infinitive.

(20) Binding Domain (Attempt 3): the binding domain of an NP is the smallest clause that contains (i) the NP, (ii) its case-marker, and (iii) a subject.