SUBJECTLESS BINDING DOMAINS*

A proposal by Bresnan that binding domains for pronouns should not contain subjects is incorporated into the binding theory of Chomsky (1986a). Coupled with BT-compatibility, this predicts non-complementary distribution in any subjectless category. The article focuses on examining the predictions for PPs as subjectless binding domains, as seen in examples like John, looked behind him, himself. Bresnan's insight that only PPs with "semantic content" function as binding domains is predicted by using results in theta-theory in conjunction with defining CFC in terms of theta-role assignment, as in Freidin (1986) and Giorgi (1987). Subjectless VPs and NPs are discussed, as well as the effect of Specificity on binding domains.

0. INTRODUCTION

A long-standing problem in English syntax, dating back to at least Lees and Klima (1963), is that pronouns within certain PPs can be bound to antecedents which are "too close" to them, as in (1):

(1) John, put the book in front of him.

This problem has been discussed extensively in the literature, cf. Lakoff (1968), Chomsky (1965, 1981), Bresnan (1987), Kuno (1987), Wilkins (1988) and Zribi-Hertz (1989). In this paper I will propose a modification to the binding theory of Chomsky (1986a) (Knowledge of Language, henceforth 'KL'), from which facts like (1) and other connected phenomena will follow directly. The effect of the modification is to incorporate the following proposal by Bresnan (1987) (see also Sells (1985, 174)) into the KL binding theory:

(2) Binding domains for pronouns need not contain subjects

The result of this proposal is that facts like (1) are predicted by the KL-theory, and a wider range of non-complementary distribution between anaphors and pronouns is correctly predicted. I will give evidence for this mainly in English, but also draw on data from Norwegian.

The idea that the reference to "subject" should be removed from the KL binding theory is not new; Johnson (1987) argues that there should

* I would like to thank Steve Berman, Jane Grimshaw, Ray Jackendoff, Joan Maling, Torbjørn Nordgaard and Fritz Newmeyer for comments and discussion. This work was supported in part by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft to the University of Stuttgart (SFB 340; Hans Kamp, primary investigator).

be no reference to this notion for the purposes of computing binding domains for anaphors. This article focuses on the consequences this has for the distribution of pronominals and for non-complementary distribution between anaphors and pronouns.

1. The Binding Theory

Since I will be modifying an aspect of the KL binding theory, I will begin by introducing the basic elements of that theory.

1.1. BT-compatibility

Central to the KL-theory is the notion of BT-compatibility, which takes over the function of the classical Conditions A and B of Chomsky (1981). This theory can be informally stated as follows (adapted from KL, 169–172):

(3)a. An anaphor or pronoun must meet its binding requirement in the smallest binding domain D which contains a BT-compatible indexing.

b. An indexing I is BT-compatible for an anaphor if the anaphor is bound under I, and BT-compatible for a pronoun if the pronoun is free under I.

c. A binding domain D for α is the minimal CFC containing α, a governor for α and a subject.

d. A CFC is the domain in which all GFs associated with a head are realized.

The binding requirement of an anaphor is that it be bound, and the binding requirement for a pronoun is that it be free. The definitions in (3) replace the accessible SUBJECT condition (Chomsky 1981) and the Specified Subject Condition, but not the Tensed S Condition (Chomsky