Precede-and-command revisited revisited

Jan-Wouter Zwart
University of Groningen

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1. The issue

(1) What are the configurational constraints on dependency?

(2) \textit{Dependency}
   - binding (antecedent–dependent)
   - movement (operator–variable)
   - agreement (controller–dependent)
   etc.

(3) \textit{c-command}
   $\alpha$ c-commands $\delta$ iff $\alpha$ is merged with (a constituent dominating) $\delta$

(4) Epstein 1999: this is a function of Merge

(5) Bruening (2014) ‘Precede-and-command revisited’ (B14)
   a. it’s basically precedence
   b. constrained by ‘phase command’

(6) \textit{phase-command}
   $\alpha$ phase-commands $\delta$ iff there is no phasal node $\gamma$ such that $\gamma$ dominates $\alpha$ but not $\delta$

(7) \textit{phasal nodes} (Chomsky 2001)
   clause (CP), verb phrase (vP), noun phrase (DP)

(8) no dependency

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
    \node (gamma) at (0,0) {$\gamma$};
    \node (delta) at (1,0) {$\delta$};
    \node (alpha) at (-0.5,-0.5) {$\alpha$};
    \draw (gamma) -- (alpha);
    \draw (delta) -- (alpha);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{a.} c-command theory: ever
\textbf{b.} phase-command theory: unless $\gamma$ is not a phasal node

2. Evidence for phase command: Principle C

(9) Interpretation of R-expressions: dependency is obviation
(10) *Condition C (Chomsky 1981)*
   a. An R-expression is free
   b. \( x \) is free if there is no \( y \) such that \( y \) c-commands \( x \) and \( x \) and \( y \) are co-indexed

(11) *Condition C (B14)*
   a. An R-expression is free
   b. \( x \) is free if there is no \( y \) such that \( y \) precedes and phase-commands \( x \) and \( x \) and \( y \) are co-indexed

(12) a. *He\(_i\) loves John\(_i\)
   b. *I met him\(_i\) in Ben\(_i\)'s office
   c. *He\(_i\) said that John\(_i\) is an idiot

(13) [DP His\(_i\) mother ] loves John\(_i\)
   ✓ c-command theory
   ✓ precede-and-command theory (if DP = phasal node)

(14) a. *I [vP met him\(_i\) in Ben\(_i\)'s office ]
   b. People [vP worship him\(_i\) ] in Kissinger\(_i\)'s native country
   ✗ c-command theory (him\(_i\) not a c-commander in either case)
   ✓ precede-and-command theory (him\(_i\) inside a vP-phase in b. only)

(15) a. *[IP He\(_i\) has a lot of talent ] and *[IP Peter\(_i\) should go far ]
   b. Mary said [CP that he\(_i\) has a lot of talent ] and [CP that Peter\(_i\) should go far ]
   ✗ c-command theory (he\(_i\) not a c-commander in either case)
   ✓ precede-and-command theory (him\(_i\) inside a CP-phase in b. only)

3. Some doubt

(16) a. *VP-adjunct, object outside vP* (Dutch)
    *Ik heb hem\(_i\) in Ben\(_i\)'s kantoor gesproken
    1SG.NOM AUX.1SG 3SG.M:ACC in Ben-POSS office speak:PART
    'I saw him in Ben's office.'
    ✓ c-command theory (hem\(_i\) object shifted = A-movement)

    b. *IP-adjunct, object outside vP*
    ... dat ze hem\(_i\) [vP op handen dragen ] in Kissinger\(_i\)'s
    that 3PL 3SG.M:ACC on hand:PL carry:INF in Kissinger-POSS
    geboorteland
    native.country

    ‘...that they adore him in Kissinger's home country.’
    (op handen dragen ‘adore’)
    ✗ precede-and-command theory (no phasal node shielding off hem)
4. Relevance of discourse

(17) B14: left-to-right reference tracking
a. active vs. background discourse referents
b. Principle C is about active discourse referents
c. move discourse referents from active to background at the right edge of a phase

(15b) Mary said [cp that hei has a lot of talent ] and [cp that Peteri should go far ]

active
he > background
active

(18) The intuition about active vs. background discourse referents is probably right, but are phases really relevant?

5. Bolinger on ‘repeated nouns’

(19) Bolinger 1977 ‘Pronouns and repeated nouns’
a. default: use a pronoun instead of a repeated noun
b. use a repeated noun to reintroduce the referent as a topic
c. there can be ‘distractors’ increasing the need to be clear about the identity of a discourse referent
d. this mechanism is not sensitive to phrasal status

(20) a. i) *Hei flunked when Johni cheated
ii) Hei usually flunks when Johni tries to cheat
b. i) *Hei was just a little boy when I saw Johni
ii) Hei was just a little boy when I first saw Johni
c. i) *I bought himi the house that Johni wanted
ii) I bought himi the house that Johni always wanted
d. i) *Hei looks at the wall and Johni throws the ball at it
ii) Hei looks at me and Johni goes out of his mind
e. i) *Either hei eats or Johni sleeps
ii) Either hei does what I say or Johni loses his job
f. i) *Hei lost the money and Johni found it again
ii) Hei lost the money and then Johni found it again
g. i) *Hei is not to be believed when Johni tells a story
ii) Hei is not to be believed when Johni tells a crazy story like that
h. i) *Hei didn’t mind, when I blamed Johni, for it
ii) Hei didn’t seem to mind, when I blamed Johni, for it
i. i) *Hei’s going to be flunked, if Johni cheats
ii) Hei’s going to get flunked, if Johni cheats
j. i) *It surprises himi that Johni is so well liked
ii) It surprised himi that Johni was so well liked

(21) The contrasts in (20) are subtle [like in (15)], but phases are not relevant.
Bolinger’s observation applies to the earlier cases also.

People [\text{vP worship him, }] in Kissinger’s native country can be usefully reintroduced as the discourse topic because his identity is crucial to the reference of native country.

Mary said [\text{CP that he, has a lot of talent }] and [\text{CP that Peter, should go far }]

Distractor = the circumstance that the quote is ascribed to Mary, so we need to keep track of who the speaker has in mind, as well as of who the speaker thinks Mary has in mind (and the speaker has to anticipate that)

In fact, the Principle C-effects can be lifted under relevant conditions as well:

[\text{Ben is such a private person that he won’t let anyone in his office}] So it was quite a thrill to actually meet him, in Ben’s OFFICE.

[\text{We spent all afternoon discussing draft picks, and no one generated more heated discussion than the shortstop from Kansas, Peter. But in the end we reached a consensus.}] He, has a lot of talent and Peter, should go far. [But who needs another shortstop?]

Conclusion for Principle C

a. not an absolute principle (use a pronoun for a known discourse referent)

b. phases irrelevant

Principle C not the best case for probing dependency relations

6. The argument from conceptual necessity

(Something like) Merge is inevitable in the approach to syntactic structure of current generative grammar (including B14)

C-command is a function of Merge (Epstein 1999), hence it, too, is inevitable.

The status of phases is much less clear:

a. they are useful, but not conceptually necessary;

b. that CP/vP should be phasal nodes is essentially a stipulation;

c. layered derivations (Zwart 2009) cover much the same ground, and are needed anyway.

References


Department of Linguistics/Center for Language and Cognition Groningen
Faculty of Arts, PO Box 716, Groningen
www.let.rug.nl/zwart • c.j.w.zwart AT rug.nl