



An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Subjacency



Basic Idea

To be subjacent, means to be **lying immediately below**. In some uses, X is subjacent to Y if X is **one level lower** than Y, but **not immediately under** Y.

Example:

Tam is subjacent to Jas.

supervisor Jas



supervisor Jac



worker Beth



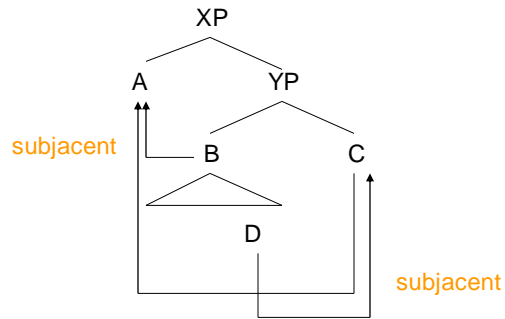
worker Tam

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Syntax

Immediate subadjacency



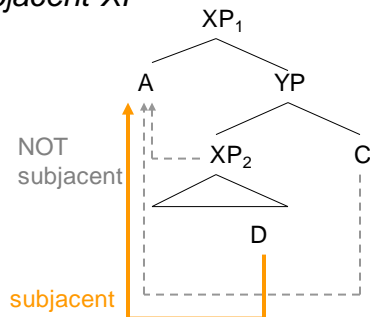
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Syntax

Phrase-specific subadjacency

E.g. subadjacent XP



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Motivation

Chomsky (1973) proposed this to explain why certain correlations between a syntactic trace and its binder are impossible.



Noam Chomsky

Who did the boy pinch?

Who did Mary say the boy pinch?

Mary asked whether the boy pinched Suzie.

*Who did Mary ask **whether** the boy pinch?

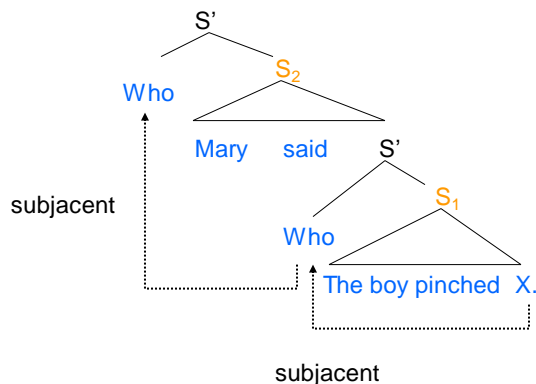
Picture from: <http://www.changeanything.com/political/buckley-vs-chomsky-ideology-and-progressive-change/>

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Movement and subadjacency

Wh-movement is only possible across subjacent S.

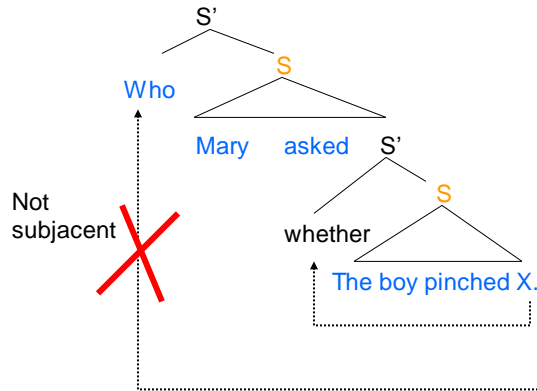


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Movement and subjacency

Wh-movement is only possible across subjacent S.



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Summary

Subjacency = *sub* "one-level down" + *adjacent* "beside"

In syntax, it can be used to explain attested "movement", i.e. possible correlations between items in a sentence.

Typically, subjacency works on levels of S (IP, TP, etc) and NP (DP). Such nodes, typically S and NP are called **bounding nodes**.

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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.

