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An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Dominance

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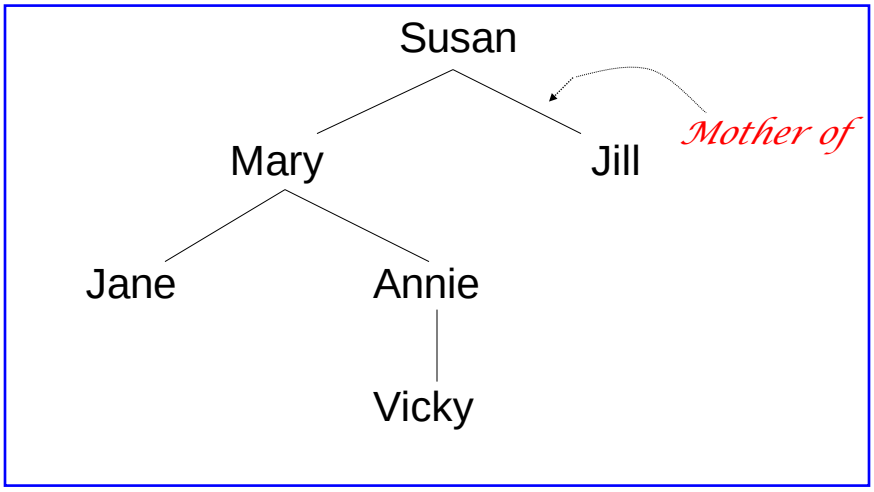
Example



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Intuition

- The above is an example of a tree, in fact, it is a directed tree.
- The top-to-bottom visual representation indicates directedness (in this case parenthood).
- Parenthood is asymmetrical, because if Mary is the mother of Jane, then Jane is not the mother of Mary.

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Dominance

- We can describe the mother as dominating the daughters, which in turn dominate the granddaughters.
- Alternatively, we can say that the granddaughter is subordinate of the daughter, which is in turn subordinate of the mother.

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Symmetrical relations

- Unlike parenthood, friendship is a relationship that is symmetrical. If Pinky is a friend of Raffy, then Raffy is a friend of Pinky.
- A diagram expressing friendship would not have the property of directedness.

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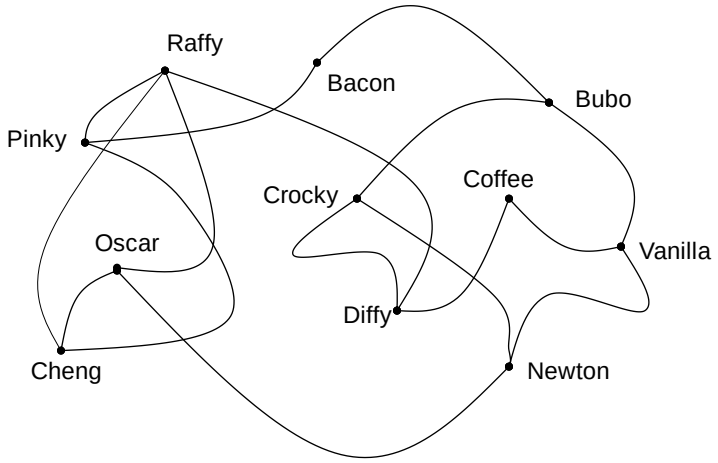
Network of friendships



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Network of relationships

- With the above intuition in mind, let's take a slightly more abstract approach.
- How can one express a network of relationships?
- We can use nodes and arcs (branches) to connect them.

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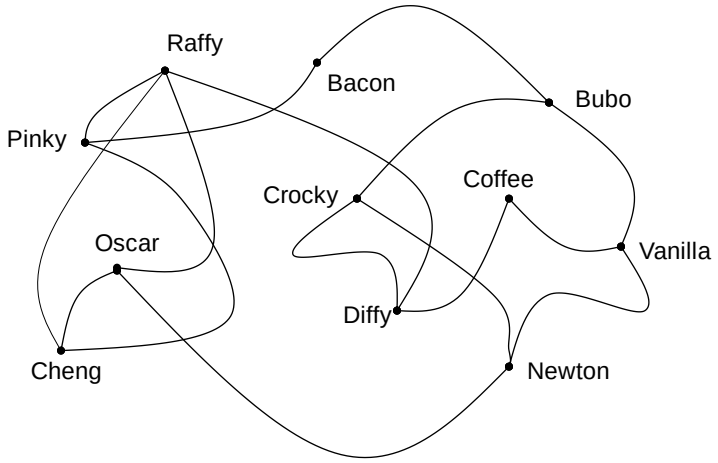
Network of relationships



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Network of relationships

- If you think of a family, then it should be clear that the network we just saw would be inappropriate.
- Familial networks are highly organized in terms of:
  - Generation
  - Seniority

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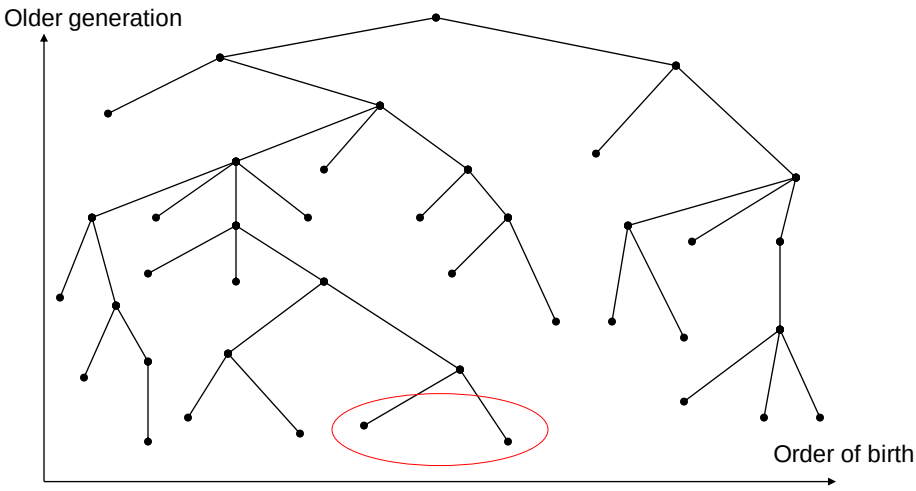
Family relationship



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Directedness

- The picture we drew earlier encodes asymmetrical relationships (such as parenthood or older sibling of …).
- Such representations have the property of directedness.
- When two notes are connected by a line which indicates an asymmetrical relationship, then there is directedness.

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Asymmetrical relationship

- If an entity (represented as a node) A is related to entity B by a relationship R, but B does not relate to A by the same relationship R, then the relationship is asymmetrical.
- Such relationships include: boss-hood, taller than, heavier than, older than, parenthood, …

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Transitivity

- Dominance is transitive.
- If A dominates B, and B dominates C, then A also dominates C (through B).
- E.g.

  If Abel is the boss of Beth, and Beth is the boss of Celine, then Abel is also the boss of Celine.

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Expressing directedness

- One of the ways used to express asymmetrical relationships (i.e. directedness) in the kind of nodes and arcs representations, we appeal to notions such as dominance.

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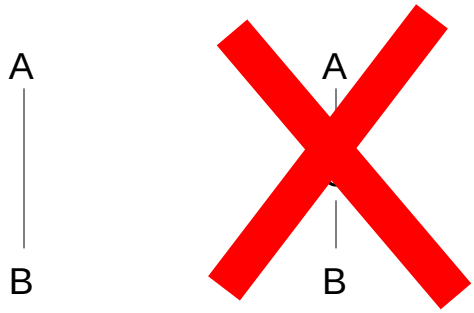
Immediate dominance

- If A dominates B and if there is no node C which is dominated by A that also dominates B, then A immediately dominates B.



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Dominance in Linguistics

- Dominance is widely used in linguistic representations.
- Here are some that might be familiar to you:

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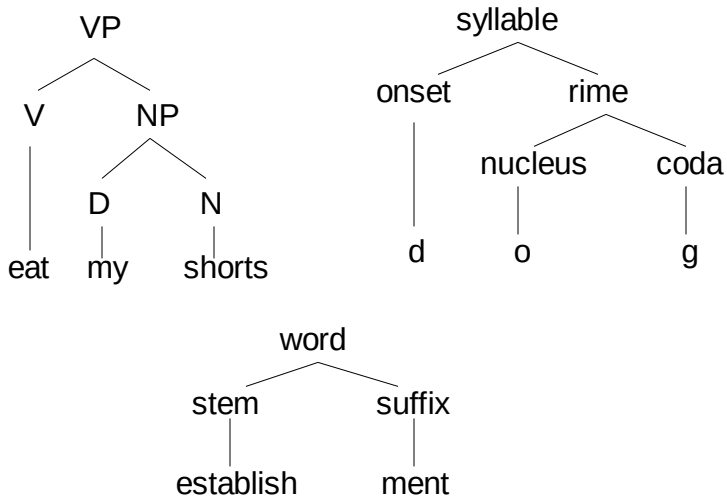
Dominance in Linguistics



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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.