What is the problem with the simple pattern predicted by Principle B? Why doesn’t language work like that?

The distribution of pronouns is less restricted than predicted in which both pronouns are syntactically bound.

Research Question
What is the problem with the simple pattern predicted by Principle B?

Two Technical Assumptions About Binding

- The Uncontroversial Assumption
  syntactic binding ≠ discourse-binding (Reinhart 1983; Reuland 2001; Safir 2004); I consider only syntactic binding.

- The Controversial Assumption
  There are no indices. Principle B does not rule out any grammatical bound pronoun reading exists (cf. Chomsky 1995; Rogers 1998).

For example, (3a) is ungrammatical with respect to syntactic binding because there is no grammatical reading in which both pronouns are syntactically bound.

(3) a. * Every patient said that I want him to sedate him.
   b. Every patient told some doctor that I want him to sedate him.

Adjuncts commonly show no obviation, and the same is true of nested DPs.

(4) Adjuncts
No woman put the box in front of her(self).

(5) Recursion inside DPs
a. Every post-modern artist must paint at least one [picture of [him(self) and a picture of [him(self)]]].
b. No client wanted to see a [presentation of [a presentation to him(self)] to him(self)].

Even though possessed picture phrases show obviation, they still do not threaten Limited Obviation because they instantiate new binding domains.

(6) Every woman liked John’s picture of her*’/(self).

Coordination is illicit if the coordinated pronouns are syntactically bound and homophonous. As a result, only a limited number of bound pronouns can be coordinated.

(7) Coordination
a. Every football player told some cheerleader that the coach wants to see (both) him and her in his office.
b. * Every football player told his friend that the coach wants to see (both) him and him in his office.
c. Every football player told his friend that the coach wants to see (both) him (deictic) and him (deictic) in his office.

Evaluation of Data

Every configuration that endangers Limited Obviation is blocked (coordination of homophonous pronouns), or constitutes a new binding domain (possessed picture phrases), or is exempt from the obviation requirement (certain adjuncts, recursion inside DPs).

However, the reverse is not necessarily true. Principle B might be suspended in non-problematic configurations, e.g. local binding in Frisian.

Conclusion

- Computational considerations suggest that something along the lines of Limited Obviation must hold for syntactic binding in natural language.
- Principle B cannot apply to every pronoun, because this would violate Limited Obviation.
- All constructions that could violate Limited Obviation indeed show special behavior.
- In sum, syntactic binding differs from the neat picture of Chomsky (1981) because this simple system is too computationally demanding.

References