A note on "command"

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Consider the following facts about identity:

1. John scratched his arm and \{ so did Mary \{ Mary did (so) too \} \}.

The second clause of (1) is ambiguous - it could be derived from (2a) or (2b).

2. a. Mary scratched her arm (too).
   b. Mary scratched John's arm (too).

Thus it appears that linguistic identity is defined in such a way that the difference between his arm in the first clause of (1) and her arm in (2a) is "disregarded." However, it is not the case that differences between pronouns can be disregarded: (2a) cannot be transformed into (3b).

3. a. John scratched his arm and the boy who knew Mary scratched her arm.
   b. John scratched his arm and the boy who Mary knew did so too.

These facts can be accounted for if the following definition of identity is adopted in the theory of grammar:

4. Constituents are identical if they have the same constituent structure and if they are identical morpheme-for-morpheme, or if they differ only as to pronouns, where the pronouns in each of the identical constituents are commanded by antecedents in the non-identical portions of the P-Marker.

So notice that in (4), which underlies (1), the circled NPs John and Mary command the pronouns his and her, so deletion is possible.
But in (3'), which underlies (3), John commands his, but the boxed NP Mary does not command its pronoun her, so (4) will not let the deletion go through.

The same facts obtain for right-to-left pronominalization: (5a) can be derived from (5b) or (5c), because the circled noun phrases command the pronouns which refer to them.

(5) a. That the fuzz wanted to question him worried John but it didn't worry Mary.
b. That the fuzz wanted to question him worried John, but that the fuzz wanted to question her didn't worry Mary.

c. That the fuzz wanted to question him worried John but that the fuzz wanted to question John didn't worry Mary.

Note, however, that (6a) does not become (6b).

(6)  

a. That the fuzz wanted to question him worried John but that they wanted to question her didn't bother the boy who Mary had seduced.

b. ...but it didn't bother the boy who Mary had seduced.

So Langacker's notion of command receives some additional empirical support, although the above facts are presumably universal, so it may not be the case that command is a predicate which is available within particular grammars.

One horrible problem is posed by the nonambiguity of

(7).

(7)  The Poles kissed their wives and so did the Latvians.

For some mysterious reason, the second clause of (7) cannot be derived from The Latvians kissed the Poles' wives.

One other place where command plays a role: consider the well-known restriction that excludes negatives in than-clauses. Somehow, all the sentences in (8) must be excluded, while the ones in (9) must be allowed.
(8)  
a. John is prouder of having gone than nobody expected me to believe he would be.
b. ... than John didn't expect me to believe ...  
c. ... than John expected nobody to believe ...  
d. ... than John expected me not to believe ...  
e. ... than John expected me to believe not all my friends were.  
f. ... than John expected me to believe that he wasn't.

(9)  
a. John is prouder of having gone than people who don't know him would expect me to believe he would be.
b. ... than Sally expected Joan to believe that the man who didn't shave would be.  
c. ... than I expected you to believe he would be of not having fallen asleep.

In other words, to exclude all negatives from than-clauses would be to incorrectly exclude the sentences in (9). The difference between (8) and (9) can be expressed naturally if negatives are features on verbs, and if quantifiers are verbs of higher sentences, and if conditions on rules can be stated which make use of Langacker's notion of command. To exclude (8) it is sufficient to say "The feature [-negative] may not command the compared adjective in the than-clause."

Since Spanish has sentences which translate word-for-word into John is more intelligent than nobody (meaning "than anybody"), it would seem that this restriction is idiosyncratic to English, and that therefore the notion of command must be available in particular grammars.
Footnotes

1. This notion is discussed by Ronald Langacker, in his unpublished paper "On pronominalization and the chain of command" (University of California at San Diego mimeograph, 1966). A commands B if B is dominated by the first S node up the tree from A, and if neither node dominates the other.