963 words (Limit of 1,000)

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PERSON

Person is a morphosyntactic property of nominal phrases (nouns and pronouns) used to indicate the discourse role of their referent. English personal pronouns show three person distinctions: first person, indicating speakers (*I*, *we*); second person, indicating addressees (*you*); and third person, indicating discourse non-participants (*he*, *she*, *it*, *they*). Some languages also distinguish inclusive and exclusive "we": Ojibwa has *kiinawint* for groups including speakers and addressees, and *niinawint*, for groups including speakers, but excluding addressees. Further divisions include an impersonal category and a sentient/non-sentient third-person opposition. Like *NUMBER* and *GENDER MARKING*, person can also be indicated on agreeing elements, particularly finite verbs. Present-tense English verbs show third-person singular agreement (*walk-s*); agreement on Italian indicative verbs distinguishes three persons in singular (*parl-o* 'I speak', *parl-i* 'you speak', *parl-a* 'he/she/it speaks') and plural.

Linguistic phenomena related to person include morphological categories of pronouns and agreement; morphological syncretisms among person categories; interactions of person with the ordering of pronominal *CLITICS*; interactions of person with *CASE*, *AGREEMENT*, or structural position; and surprising restrictions on person combinations, usually involving direct and indirect objects (the **me lui* effect or Person

Case Constraint). Such phenomena form the empirical basis of morphosyntactic theories of person.

There are three principal theoretical approaches to person. A traditional insight represents person categories within a hierarchy of nominals, with third person ranked below first and second; some scholars rank first person highest (Zwicky 1977), while others regard the ranking of first and second person as variable. Another approach seeks to derive person hierarchy effects by representing person as a complex category built from elemental features. One such *FEATURE ANALYSIS* locates person features such as [participant], [speaker], and [addressee] within a universal geometry of privative pronominal features, in which the availability of one feature may depend on the presence of another. An influential paper by Harley and Ritter 2003 outlines this approach. Another type of feature analysis treats person features as binary rather than privative; this allows the grammar to refer to negative values, such as [–speaker]. Noyer 1992 makes a significant case for the binary-feature analysis. A third approach, potentially compatible with the second, associates different persons with different syntactic representations (Ritter 1995, Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002, Bejar 2003).

Within the featural approach, most commentators assume the existence of features corresponding to first and second person. However, third person is widely treated as simply lacking such features (Zwicky 1977, Noyer 1992). This analysis correctly predicts certain limits on the *TYPOLOGY* of person categories (Greenberg 1966). As noted above, some languages have separate categories for inclusive and exclusive "we", whose use depends on whether addressees are included. Thus, [addressee] is a distinctive feature: inclusive ([speaker, addressee]) has it, while first person ([speaker]) does not. However,

there is no parallel contrast between categories whose use depends on whether non-participants are included. For example, no known languages have separate categories for inclusive and exclusive plural "you", whose use depends on whether non-participants are included. Such observations imply that there is no third-person feature, therefore no categories such as [speaker, addressee, non-participant], [speaker, non-participant], or [addressee, non-participant]. Third-person pronouns thus refer to non-participants by default, lacking the features that allow reference to discourse participants. Nevertheless, some phenomena seem to require reference to non-participants, for example syncretism in Mam pronominal enclitics (Noyer 1992) or the Spanish "spurious *se*" rule (Bonet 1991). If so, the grammar must permit limited reference to negative values, such as [–speaker, –addressee]. The success of the privative approach depends on identifying plausible alternative analyses for such cases.

Although the [speaker] and [addressee] features are sufficient to generate the four main person categories attested cross-linguistically, there is evidence for an additional [participant] feature, shared by first and second person (Farkas 1990, Noyer 1992, Halle 1997). For example, while Winnebago agreement distinguishes first and second person, free personal pronouns only distinguish participants from non-participants (*nee*, 'I' or 'you', *ʔee* 'he/she').

The argument against a [non-participant] feature also applies to the [addressee] feature in languages without an inclusive category (McGinnis 2005). Such languages treat the inclusive as first person, not second (Zwicky 1977, Noyer 1992). Thus, in such languages, [addressee] is non-distinctive: there can only be an opposition between [speaker] and non-[speaker] participants, not between [addressee] and non-[addressee]

participants. If [non-participant] is nonexistent because it is never distinctive, then [addressee] is likewise nonexistent in languages without an inclusive category. This suggests that the morphosyntactic contrast between first and second person is sufficient to activate [speaker], while [addressee] can be activated only by an additional contrast between inclusive and first person. In such cases [addressee] is indeed necessary, to capture widespread (and non-default) syncretisms between inclusive and second person — most famously identified in Algonquian languages, but common among languages with an inclusive category.

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