

Anonymous person features

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In this talk, we argue that grammatical properties of person can be captured using two privative features, *prox* and *dist*, that operate on a "person space". This space consists of a series of nested sets, with the innermost set containing the speaker and its associates, the first superset containing the addressee and its associates in addition, and the final superset also containing others. The person features are anonymous, in that they do not refer to discourse participants. Rather, they are used to navigate the person space. That is, they are functions that select part of their input set, discarding the remainder.

The fact that the proposed person features are anonymous permits a particularly sparse system. This becomes clear when we compare our proposal with well-known alternatives in the literature. Alternatives that use privative features typically use more than two (compare Harley & Ritter 2002). Alternatives that use binary features usually make do with two (compare Halle 1997). Since *prox* and *dist* encode complementary functions, it is trivial to translate our feature system into one with binary features. However, only one such feature would be required (say $\pm\text{prox}$).

The consequences of this feature system, in conjunction with various additional hypotheses, include the following. (i) It directly generates a plausible cross-linguistic inventory of persons: three in the singular and four in the plural. (ii) It generates a typology of impersonal pronouns. (iii) It explains why third person, despite having a feature specification, functions as the default. (iv) It implies, correctly in our view, that R-expressions are not specified for person. (v) It implies that the 'associative effect' found with first and second person pronouns is not an effect of the number system, and that plurals of first and second person pronouns are therefore regular plurals. (vi) It explains the relative markedness of 1-3 syncretisms as compared to 1-2 and 2-3 syncretisms. (vii) It accounts for Moskal's (2014) observation that in no language can the first person singular and first person inclusive be syncretic to the exclusion of the first person exclusive. The talk will explore as many of these results as time permits.