

Indexical pronouns: generic uses as clues to their structure

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Outline – I argue that 1st and 2nd person pronouns have one common, underspecified lexical entry representing an index. This shared base gets morphosyntactically specified in the syntax via spatio-temporal discourse anchoring and allows a straightforward account for both interpretational and morphosyntactic phenomena.

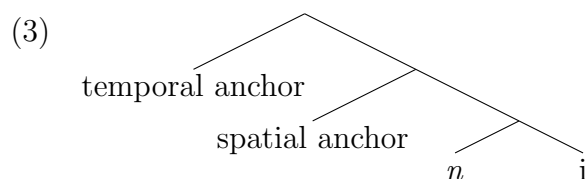
Background – A considerable number of languages can employ 2nd person for generic statements (Siewierska 2004:212). So far the issue has only been dealt with from a purely semantic point of view (cf. Alonso-Ovalle 2002; Malamud 2007). However, these approaches ignore important cross-linguistic evidence pointing to a morphosyntactic side.

Core data – It is known that Null Subject Languages such as Italian can only use *pro* and not an overt pronoun for generic references (Jaeggli 1986). Moreover, 2nd person *pro* can be used this way only in generic and not in episodic sentences (Alonso-Ovalle 2002). Interestingly, obligatory subject languages that dispose of strong and weak pronouns behave similarly: Dutch, for instance, can use the weak 2nd person pronoun *je* for generics (1) but not the strong *jij* (2):

- (1) Als **je** allergisch bent voor honden, ben **je** niet automatisch ook allergisch voor katten.
if you allergic are for dogs, are you not automatically also allergic for cats
'If you_{Addressee} are allergic to dogs, you_{Addressee} are not also necessarily also allergic to cats.'
also: 'If one is allergic to dogs, one is not also necessarily also allergic to cats.'
- (2) Als **JIJ** allergisch bent voor honden, ben **JIJ** niet automatisch ook allergisch voor katten.
if you allergic are for dogs, are you not automatically also allergic for cats
'If you_{Addressee} are allergic to dogs, you_{Addressee} are not also necessarily also allergic to cats.'
not: 'If one is allergic to dogs, one is not also necessarily also allergic to cats.'

This suggests the generalisation that languages that dispose of more than one set of pronouns can always only employ the weakest form available for generics: i.e. *pro* in Italian and the weak pronoun in Dutch. Interestingly, similar effects can even be shown in languages like Standard German that appears to only have one set of pronouns.

Analysis – I assume that pronouns are not atoms of language but that they have internal structure that correlates with their distribution and interpretation (e.g. Cardinaletti and Starke 1999; Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002; van Koppen 2005), and that they are *pure indexicals* in the sense of Kaplan (1989). I explore the idea that both 1st and 2nd person pronouns start out as an index that gets drawn from the lexicon, and then combines with a nominal categorial head *n* forming the *indexical base*. Crucially, this base is uniform for both 1st and 2nd person. The distinction between the two is then made by additional structural layers. Drawing on data mainly from English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Turkish I hypothesize that these additional layers are spatio-temporal anchors to the utterance context that get added to the indexical base in the syntax. I take spatial anchoring to occur first. In certain cases this is followed by temporal anchoring, rendering the basic hierarchical structure in (3):



I will show how this structure straightforwardly explains restrictions on generic uses of indexical pronouns that are paralleled by restrictions on generics in general. Furthermore, I will illustrate how this structure accounts for different types of indexical pronouns and the varying interpretational ranges they can have.

Total words: 435

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