

Asymmetries in person indexicals

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Person indexicals, i.e. person pronouns, possessive forms, and (person-based) demonstrative systems, present asymmetries both in their diachronic development and in relation to agreement facts.

Firstly, person features show a diachronically stable organisation in both person pronouns and possessive forms, while they can undergo a semantic reorganisation in demonstrative systems, as reflected in their paradigms (1):

(1) a. *Person pronouns*

1SG	2SG	3SG	
ego	tu	is/ipse/ille	(Latin)
yo	tú	él	(Spanish)

b. *Possessive forms*

1POSS	2POSS	3POSS	
meus	tuus	suus	(Latin)
mon	ton	son	(French)

c. *Demonstrative forms*

near 1	near 2	far from 1/2	
custu	cussu	cuddu	(Sardinian/1)
near 1/2		far from 1/2	
custu		cuddu	(Sardinian/2)

Secondly, while person features in person pronouns trigger agreement, person features in the indexical part of possessives and demonstratives do not, as in (2):

- (2) a. I_[1] am a PhD student.
b. My_[1POSS] thesis/Mine_[1POSS] is/*am on indexicality.
c. This_['near 1'] thesis/This_['near 1'] is/*am boring.

In this talk, I build on these observations to put forward different structural analyses for the encoding of (interpretable and valued) person features across inherently indexical forms and argue that these differences account for the attested asymmetries. Specifically, I propose that 1) person pronouns are derived by the direct composition of person features and the set of discourse-related atoms, 2) the indexical base of possessives is derived along the same lines, but is inherently case-marked, and 3) the indexical base of demonstrative forms is derived by the indirect composition of person features to the set of discourse-related atoms, mediated by a space function.