

On person-based honorifics and referential features in syntax

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Introduction: It has been proposed in the literature that the syntax of (pro)nouns contains not only phi-features but also a *separate type* of feature that targets the reference of the DP and is also active in morphosyntax. Majority of the evidence for such syntactically encoded referential features comes from switch reference and binding (Arregi & Hannink 2021, Hicks 2009, Raynaud 2020 etc.). We claim that pronouns that use 3rd person morphology to signal politeness towards one/many addressee(s) (henceforth 3rd person of politeness/3Pol) also require referential features in syntax. While our main evidence comes from the Dutch 3Pol *u*, we show that our account can be extended to Italian *lei* and Spanish *usted*.

The hybrid behaviour of *u*: Dutch has a dedicated honorific pronoun *u*. The pronoun triggers 3rd person agreement despite referring to one or more honorific addressee(s). We show that the pronoun also behaves like a 3rd person pronoun in i) adnominal pronoun constructions/APC and ii) conjunction resolution/CR. Strikingly, *u* can sometimes also pattern with 2nd person. In declaratives, *u* can occur with both a 3rd person reflexive *zich(zelf)* as well as a dedicated reflexive form *u(zelf)*. The dedicated form can appear in null subject imperatives, which only allow 2nd person reflexives *je(zelf)* but never the 3rd person reflexive *zich(zelf)*. Similarly, we found that certain Dutch speakers exhibit weak PCC effects with 1st and 2nd person weak pronouns in the direct object position in (IO-DO) ditransitives. *U* in the same structural position exhibits PCC too.

Account: We propose the featural treatment of *u* in (1), where the pronoun has 3rd person ϕ -features as well as referential features, labeled henceforth as ID-features. The ID-feature takes an index as its value, which for *u* is always mapped onto the speech act addressee (shorthand ADDR).

- (1) [ID: ADDR] [ϕ :3] \longleftrightarrow *u*

The idea is that verbal agreement, APCs and CR in Dutch track the ϕ -features of a pronoun. In many languages, CR is sensitive to the reference of the pronoun and resolves a person mismatch in favor of the person feature higher on the hierarchy (1 > 2 > 3) (Corbett 2006). However, this is not true of Dutch, where a conjunction of 2nd and 3rd person can be resolved in favor of either 2nd or 3rd person (Timmermans et al. 2004). We take this to suggest that in Dutch, CR tracks the person ϕ -feature. As opposed to the aforementioned phenomena, PCC in ditransitives tracks ID-features, following Raynaud (2020). This leaves binding, where *u* can pattern with either 2nd or 3rd person. Assuming (2), we claim that in general, antecedent-reflexive matching in Dutch also references ϕ -features. Since both *u* and *zich* reflexives have a 3rd person ϕ -feature which matches with the ϕ -feature of the antecedent *u*, either can be licensed in declaratives. However, in imperatives with null subjects, antecedent-reflexive matching uses ID-features. In specific, we assume that the C head in imperatives is specified as [ID:ADDR]. The subject is a PRO, which lacks all features. In the absence of any ϕ -features in the structure, the reflexive ends up matching with the ID-features, allowing only *je/u* reflexives.

- (2) VIs for Dutch reflexives:

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|---|--|
| a. [REFL; ID: SPKR; ϕ : 1] \longleftrightarrow <i>me</i> | c. [REFL; ID: ADDR; ϕ : 3] \longleftrightarrow <i>u</i> |
| b. [REFL; ID: ADDR; ϕ : 2] \longleftrightarrow <i>je</i> | d. [REFL; ID:.; ϕ : 3] \longleftrightarrow <i>zich</i> |

Discussion: Under our proposal, the division of labor between ID and ϕ -features may seem ad-hoc. However, employing cross-linguistic data (Table in 3), we suggest that this is not the case. In specific, we propose that syntactic phenomena that lack semantic effects never track ID features. Thus, agreement across all languages is consistently 3rd person, showing that it always tracks only ϕ -features. The ID-feature can only participate in phenomena that underlie referential dependencies. Therefore, it is not surprising that PCC tracks the ID-feature, leading to all 3Pols behaving like 2nd person pronouns for said phenomena. The presence of 2nd person reflexive forms with *u* in Dutch is not unexpected either since binding can track ID-features.

However, a crucial question remains: what prevents 2nd person reflexives with 3Pols in Italian and Spanish? We speculate that this is because binding does not underlie a uniform mechanism across languages. For instance, we know from Spathas (2018) that reflexivization can involve arity reduction in some cases, ϕ -matching in others, and pure coreference in yet others. The presence of a non-uniform account for APCs and CR may also account for attested variation across languages as regards these phenomena. Needless to say, the issue needs to be explored further.

(3) 3Pols across languages and phenomena

	Agreement	Binding	PCC	APC	CR
Dutch <i>u</i>	3	3/2	2	3	3
Italian <i>lei</i>	3	3	2	NA	2
Spanish <i>usted</i>	3	3	2	2	3

Our account of *u*, where it contains both ϕ and ID-features derives all properties seen with the 3Pol, and can potentially be extended to other languages. An obvious counterproposal is to treat 3Pols like a *committee*-type hybrid DP, containing [iPerson:2] and [uPerson:3], of which only the former is mapped to LF. However, this treatment raises the question of how a regular 2nd person pronoun (*ji*) and an honorific 2nd person pronoun (*u*) are semantically distinguished, if the one and only interpretable feature in both pronouns is just [iPerson:2].