Agreement and Morphology of the Person Feature

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This paper discusses the imposter phenomenon studied in Collins & Postal (2012) and investigates data from English (non-pro-drop language) and Spanish and Japanese (pro-drop languages). Agreement with an imposter is shown to different patterns between English/Spanish and Japanese, whose patterns also differ from those of a personal pronoun in these languages. The paper proposes that D of a full DP can have a person feature value associated with a discourse participant even when it is lexically underspecified in the framework of the Distributed Morphology.

English and Spanish plural imposters show 1st and 3rd person agreement in (1).

(1) a. In this reply, the present authors$_1$ (= the writers of the reply) attempt to defend ourselves$_1$/themselves$_1$ against the scurrilous charges which have been made.

(Collins and Postal 2012)

    b. Unos servidores quedamos/quedaron   en encontrar-nos/-se   a l as   siete.
    some servants   decided.1PL/decided.3PL on to.meet-ourselves/themselves at the.PL seven
    'These guys (=speakers) decided to meet each other at seven.'

(Adapted from Dudley 2014)

Moreover, English singular imposters of some dialects of English (Collins and Postal 2012) as well as Spanish singular imposters (Dudley 2014) only show 3rd person agreement.

Unlike English and Spanish, a Japanese imposter takes the underspecified reflexive in (2).

(2) *Senseitati$_i$-wa*   *ichiban*   {**watasitatizisin$_i$/*karerazisin$_i$/zibun$_i$*}-*o*   *sonkeisiteiru.*
    teachers-Top   most   ourselves/themselves/ZIBUN-Acc   respect
    'Teachers$_i$ (=we) respect {*ourselves$_i$/*themselves$_i$/self$_i$} most.'   (Furuya 2016)

These agreement patterns displayed by imposters differ from those by personal pronouns in these languages since the latter do not show the agreement alternation as in (1) or exclusively take the underspecified reflexive as in (2).

These observations suggest that the morphosyntactic variation is not associated with properties of null subjects since the agreement patterns shown by imposters are not uniquely and uniformly observed in pro-drop languages such as Spanish and Japanese. This challenges analyses with a pronominal element such as *pro* or clitic argued by Ordóñez and Treviño (1999), Choi (2014), Torrego and Laka (2015) among others. Moreover, the agreement patterns shown by imposters are also problematic to symmetric approaches to agreement proposed by Ackema and Neeleman (2013) Nikitina and Haug (2015). If both the target and the controller have phi-features independently as symmetric approaches argue, it is not clear how 3rd person reflexives and the underspecified reflexive in (1) and (2) are coreferential with the full DPs that are used to refer to speakers. Even though the Spanish verbal forms are morphologically "rich" as shown in (1b), again it is mysterious whether the 3rd person form of the verb is associated with the reference to speakers. This weakens null subject and symmetric approaches. Alternatively, Collins and Postal (2012) and Dudley (2014) argue that the agreement alternation in (1) is attributed to different antecedents in a clause. In this perspective, a null topic DP with 1st person in the left periphery and the imposter in subject position can determine 1st or 3rd person agreement. Yet, this analysis fails to account for the selection of underspecified reflexive in (2).

I suggest that D of a full-fledged DP may have a person feature value associated to discourse participants although it is normally assumed to be 3rd person. Typologically, it has been noticed that DP-internal concord never involves person features (Baker 2008). Carstens (2011:

section 5) argues that the person feature is intrinsic to D, and Danon (2011: 309) argues that a valued person feature is generated on the D head. However, there is no principal reason that D universally has a specific value for person in the lexicon when it is morphologically underspecified. When D of an imposter DP involves [+Speaker], it refers to the speaker. This nominal as the controller enters into an agreement relation with the target in syntax, and it is correctly interpreted for a reference to speakers in LF. Yet, unlike persona pronoun, a full DP is not morphologically associated with [+Speaker]. That is, notional (functional) features and grammatical (morphosyntactic) features are not always in a one-to-one relation (Landau 2016).

Let us consider the 3rd person and underspecified agreement patterns in (1) and (2) in Distributed Morphology. Based on the agreement patterns in (1) in comparison with patterns shown by 3rd person pronouns, I assume that the patterns of multiple syncretisms in (3).

(3) Hypothetical multiple syncretisms

	singular	plural
Imposters with a reference to speakers	A	B, C
3rd person pronouns	A	C

There is no person feature value shared by 1st person singular and thus A must thus be treated as the default form. B is 1st person. What is common in C is plurality in that it is specified for [-Singular]. This is summarized in (4).

(4) a. A $\leftrightarrow$ [   ]   b. B $\leftrightarrow$ [+Speaker, -Singular]   c. D $\leftrightarrow$ [-Singular]

This indicates that singular imposters are uniformly realizing A as default. This explains singular imposters show 3rd person or underspecified agreement in (1) and (2). On the other hand, the plural counterparts are realized as B or C in (3). I propose that this results from the optional application of the impoverishment operation in (5).

(5) [Person] on imposter DP $\rightarrow$ $-\emptyset$ / [____, -Singular]

(5) states that the person specification is connected with number specification in imposter constructions (see Watanabe 2012 for a similar argument in Fula). Yet (4) is optional. The application of the impoverishment operation will generate C; otherwise B will appear in PF. Note that the Subset Principle (Halle 1997) is not necessarily applicable to (3) since the existence of the alternatives results from the optional application of (5). What is significant is that the morphological underspecification in (1) and (2) is relegated to the morphological component. . On the other hand, a nominal needs a full set of phi-features to be LF-interpretable and its specification is not underspecified in syntax. Thus, 3rd person forms are not underspecified for person and number both in syntax and LF. This argument is compatible with the cross-linguistic fact that 3rd person forms are not necessarily associated with a reference to the 3rd party in the linguistic literature (e.g. Baker 2011, Furuya 2017 for English)

This paper examines imposter phenomenon in English, Spanish and Japanese. It argues that D of a full-fledged DP may have a person feature value associated with discourse participants. Yet due to the lack of one-to one relation between form and meaning, the person feature of the D head may be possibly underspecified in PF.

Selected references: Ackema, Peter, and Ad Neeleman. 2013. Subset controllers in agreement relations. *Morphology* 23 (2): 291–323. **Nikitina and Haug** (2016). *Feature sharing in agreement. Natural Language* and Linguistic Theory. 34. 865–910. **Landau, Idan** 2016. DP-internal semantic agreement: A configurational analysis. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 34: 975–1020.