Cross-Linguistic Studies of Imposters and Pronominal Agreement

Edited by
Chris Collins

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Paul Postal for reading over all the papers in this volume and providing valuable feedback to me and the authors.

I have benefited from presenting parts of the introduction to audiences at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (2011) and the Department of Linguistics, Harvard University (2012).

I thank Hallie Stebbins of OUP for ushering my project through the publication process.

Lastly, I am grateful to Eve Tauss for preparing the index.

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Introduction

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1. Data

The primary data studied in Collins and Postal (2012) represent alternations in pronominal phi-feature values (person, number, gender) that do not correlate with any truth conditional differences. Some examples are given below:

(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.
   b. [This reporter$_1$ (= speaker) and his$_1$ son]$_2$ are proud of ourselves$_2$/themselves$_2$.
   c. Your$_1$ Majesty should praise yourself$_1$/herself$_1$.
   d. [Every one of us]$_1$ thinks we$_1$/they$_1$ are intelligent.
   e. I am a teacher who$_1$ takes care of myself$_1$/himself$_1$.
   f. Would [your$_1$/her$_1$ (= addressee) Majesty]$_1$ like her tea on the veranda?

In (1a), the reflexive can either be 3PL, agreeing in phi-feaure values with the antecedent *the present authors*, or 1PL. In (1b), the reflexive can be either 3PL, agreeing with the antecedent *[This reporter and his son]* or 1PL. In (1c), the reflexive can either be 3SG, agreeing in phi-feature values with the antecedent *Your Majesty*, or 2SG. In (1d), the pronominal subject of the embedded clause can be 1PL or 3PL (if there are only males in the domain of quantification, 3M.SG is also possible). In (1e), the reflexive can be either 3SG, agreeing with the relative pronoun antecedent *who*, or 1SG. In (1f), the possessive pronoun can be either 3SG or 2SG, in both cases denoting the addressee.

The remarkable property of these alternations is that they do not seem to correlate with differences in meaning. For example, the truth conditions of the two variants of (1a) are identical.

With the exception of Kratzer (2009), whose analysis of fake indexicals overlaps with the account that Collins and Postal (2012) give of examples like (1e), I know of no other linguistic work that treats the facts above. In particular, there is no existing semantic treatment of these facts that can be compared to the account given in Collins and Postal (2012).

Corbett (2006: 217) discusses a large amount of data that he classifies under the rubrics "syntactic agreement" and "semantic agreement". For example, consider the use of *committee* in British English:

(2)   a. The committee has   decided.
       b. The committee have decided.

Corbett (2006: 155) describes these data as follows:

> I shall use the well-established terms **syntactic** and **semantic** agreement. In the most straightforward cases syntactic agreement (sometimes called "agreement *ad formam*," "formal agreement" or "grammatical agreement") is agreement consistent with the form of the controller (*the committee* has *decided*). Semantic agreement (or "agreement *ad sensum*," "notional agreement," "logical agreement" or "synesis") is agreement consistent with the meaning (*the committee* have *decided*).

In the framework of Collins and Postal (2012), all the pronominal agreement options described in (1) are cases of syntactic agreement, as we shall see below. There is no semantic agreement distinct from syntactic agreement. In fact, a purely syntactic account of the data in (2) can also be given (see Dikken 2001).

2. Pronominal Agreement Condition

Syntacticians have recognized that pronouns agree with antecedents. Some quotes illustrating this are given below:

(3)   a. Sag, Wasow, and Bender (2003: 208)
          The Pronominal Agreement Condition (PAC)
          Co-indexed NPs agree.
       b. Lasnik and Uriagereka (1988: 47)
          An anaphor must agree in syntactic features with its antecedent.
       c. Carnie (2007: 11)
          An anaphor must agree in person, gender, and number with its antecedent.
       d. Payne and Huddleston (2002: 486)
          Personal pronouns agree with their antecedent in person and number; in the third person singular, they also agree in gender.

None of these conditions can handle the facts in (1). For example, consider (1a). Carnie's formulation successfully predicts that the 3PL reflexive *themselves* should be acceptable, since its antecedent is 3PL. But without some further

assumption, it is not clear how to allow the 1PL *ourselves*. Collins and Postal (2012) assume that there is a null DP called AUTHOR in the left periphery of the clause (see section 3). On this assumption, we can successfully capture the facts in (1a) if we assume that the reflexive has two different antecedents (*the present authors* and AUTHOR), and that the reflexive can agree with either one of them. Crucially, we must modify Carnie's formulation to allow agreement with one of several antecedents. So, instead of saying "with its antecedent," we need to say "with some antecedent."

Given this issue and many others that come up in the analysis of the sentences of (1), Collins and Postal (2012) propose the following condition to replace the conditions in (3):

(4)   Pronominal Agreement Condition
       If P is a non-expletive pronominal, then for all phi-features F of P
       for which P is not inherently valued, P agrees in F with some source.

This condition incorporates a number of innovations over earlier proposals. First, putting aside expletive pronouns and a few minor cases (singular-*they* and Nurse-*we*) where pronouns seem to have inherent feature values, all pronominal phi-feature values are due to agreement.

Second, pronouns can agree with any one of their antecedents, as in the example in (1a), or with some other source. A source is any DP that a pronoun can agree with in terms of phi-feature values. We give a full definition in section 5 below, where we show that there are a number of alternative (non-antecedent) sources from which a pronoun can obtain phi-feature values. To understand (3), it is crucial to note that all antecedents are sources, but not all sources are antecedents.

Third, a single pronoun can agree with several different sources. Hence, the NUM feature of a pronoun P can be valued by one source (a particular DP), and the PERSON feature of the same pronoun P can be valued by a different source (a different DP). In both cases, P agrees in F with some source, but there is not a single source which provides all the features that P agrees with. For reasons of space, I do not discuss this third innovation here (see Collins and Postal 2012, Chapter 14, for much more discussion of so-called split agreement).

3. Theoretical Preliminaries

Before showing how to account for the data in (1) in the system of Collins and Postal (2012), I will discuss a few background notions.

First, there is a relation of antecedence between DP nodes. Antecedence roughly corresponds to co-indexation in standard Principles and Parameters

theory, the most important difference being that antecedence is asymmetric (X antecedes Y, but not vice versa). Antecedence does not require a c-command relation (just like co-indexing does not require a c-command relation), and hence antecedence is not the same relation as binding (c-command plus co-indexation).

When a pronoun has several antecedents, there are two that are of special importance: the immediate antecedent and the ultimate antecedent. For example, in the following sentence, the immediate antecedent of the reflexive is *he* and the ultimate antecedent is *John*.

(5)   John$_1$ said that he$_1$ likes himself$_1$.

Second, all non-expletive pronouns have antecedents. The assumption that all pronouns have antecedents sharply distinguishes the system of Collins and Postal (2012) from all mainstream approaches in syntax and semantics which assume that some (non-expletive) pronouns do not have antecedents (as in Lasnik's famous example of an unpopular man leaving a party, and somebody saying "Well, he's left.").

Third, there are null DPs AUTHOR and ADDRESSEE in the left periphery of the clause encoding indexical information about the context in which the sentence is used. The relevant structure is illustrated below:

(6)   [[$_{DP}$ AUTHOR]$_1$ [$_{DP}$ ADDRESSEE]$_2$ [Mary hates me$_1$.]]

Note that even though there are no second person pronouns in (6), AD-DRESSEE is still present, since ADDRESSEE is the syntactic way of encoding the fact that the sentence is addressed to someone.

AUTHOR is either 1SG or 1PL and ADDRESSEE is either 2SG or 2PL. Neither AUTHOR nor ADDRESSEE are pronouns, and hence do not obtain their phi-features values by agreement.

The structure in (6) is underspecified. There are two ways in principle that the details could be filled out: an approach based on an expanded left periphery, and an approach based on a null performative verb.

In the first approach, there would be special functional projections (Prt1 = AUTHOR participant, Prt2 = ADDRESSEE participant) in the left periphery of the clause containing AUTHOR and ADDRESSEE. The projection introducing AUTHOR is Prt1P, and the projection introducing ADDRESSEE is Prt2P. The hierarchical relation of these projections to ForceP, TopP, FocP, and FinP is unclear (on the expanded left periphery, see Rizzi 1997). In other words, it is unclear whether PrtP dominates ForceP, or vice versa. This approach is sketched below:

(7)

```
                    Prt1P
                   /    \
               DP         Prt1'
            AUTHOR       /    \
                      Prt1     Prt2P
                             /      \
                          DP          Prt2'
                      ADDRESSEE       /    \
                                   Prt2    . TP
```
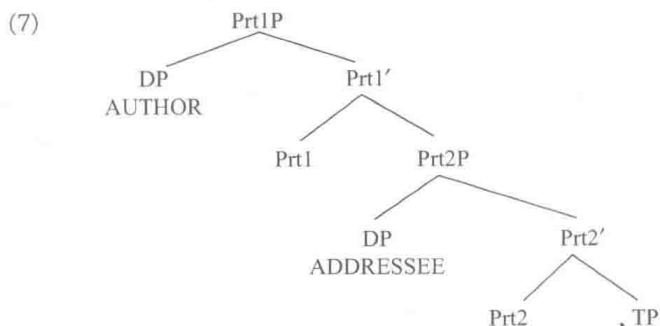
An alternative, based on Ross (1970), is that the DPs AUTHOR and AD-DRESSEE are arguments of a covert performative clause. The main verb of such a clause is V_{PERF}. The ADDRESSEE argument is introduced by APPLP, and the AUTHOR argument is introduced by vP.

(8)

```
                    vP
                   /  \
               DP       v'
            AUTHOR     /  \
                     v      APPLP
                          /      \
                       DP          APPL'
                   ADDRESSEE       /    \
                               APPL       VP
                                        /    \
                                   V_PERF     CP
```
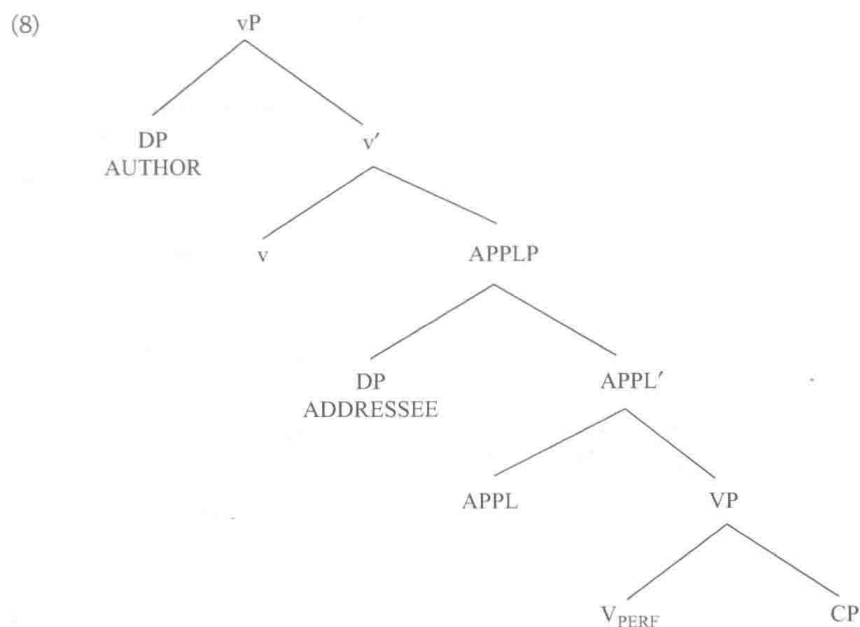
Many details of this structure remain unresolved. For example, what is the nature of the null verb in (8)? Should it be *say* or something more general? Also, are there functional projections dominating the performative vP (e.g., TP or CP)? I will not attempt to answer these questions here. I will adopt the approach based on the expanded left periphery for convenience below.

4. Imposters and Camouflage DPs

Some third person DPs, such as *Daddy, yours truly, the undersigned, the present authors, this reporter,* can be used to refer to the speaker. Similarly, some third person DPs, such as *Madam, the General, little Johnnie,* can be used to refer to the addressee. These DPs are referred to as imposters:

(9)   An imposter is a notionally *n* person DP which is grammatically *m* person, $n \neq m$.

The importance of imposters for the study of pronominal agreement is that when they are antecedents they often give rise to the kinds of pronominal phi-feature alternations seen in (1) (as in (1a)). Collins and Postal (2012) propose that such ambivalent behavior with respect to pronominal agreement should be understood in terms of a null indexical pronoun contained within the imposter.

(10)   An imposter contains a covert indexical pronoun.

So an imposter like *the present author* will have embedded within it a null 1SG pronoun (see (13) below).

Camouflage DPs are similar to imposters in terms of pronominal agreement, but are defined by the presence of an overt pronominal possessor. Camouflage DPs such as *your honor, your majesty, your grumpiness* are third person DPs that are used to refer to the addressee. Forms such as *my honor, my majesty*, and *my grumpiness* with a first person possessor are impossible with these camouflage DPs. The ACC (Ass-Camouflage Construction; see Collins, Moody, & Postal 2008) is possible with a wider range of possessors, including non-pronominal possessors: *my ass, your ass, Putin ass*, etc. The form *my lady* is an imposter, not a camouflage DP, since the reference is to the addressee, but the possessor is first person.

An imposter such as *the present author* takes AUTHOR as its antecedent, precisely because it contains a null first person indexical pronoun. Similarly, a camouflage DP such as *your majesty* takes ADDRESSEE as its antecedent.

Collins and Postal (2012) claim that imposters share characteristics with pronouns modified by appositive DPs, which they dub precursors:

(11)   a. I, Nixon, am going to get even.
        b. We, the present writers, disagree with the following points.
        c. We, the undersigned, propose a number of improvements.
        d. I, your faithful correspondent, should write more often.
        e. You, Madam, should not try to deceive us.
        f. You, my lord, can certainly win the tournament.

Such precursors are parallel in interpretation to imposters:

(12)   a. Nixon is going to get even.
        b. The present writers disagree with the following points.
        c. The undersigned propose a number of improvements.
        d. Your faithful correspondent will hereafter write more often.
        e. Madam should not try to deceive us.
        f. My lord can certainly win the tournament.

In general, precursor structures appear to provide the correct semantics for imposters. That is, imposters have non-third person denotations, and corresponding precursors have visible pronominal components with the right non-third person denotations. So each imposter in (12) is equivalent in denotation to its corresponding precursor in (11). Moreover, imposters have a third person lexical component that matches the predicate nominal of the corresponding precursor. And the nonrestrictive meaning provided by the precursor predicate nominal seems to represent as well the meaning of the third person component of an imposter.

Given the parallelism between imposters and precursors, Collins and Postal (2012) develop an account in which imposters are derived from underlying precursor structures. The analysis is shown below for the imposter *Nixon*, which is derived from the precursor *I, Nixon*:

(13)
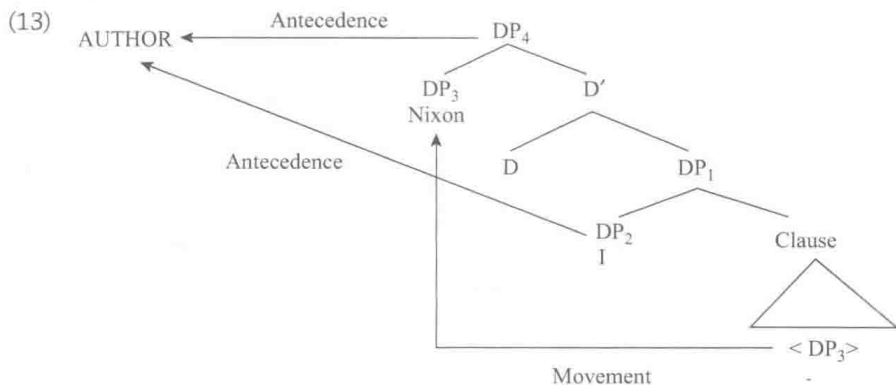
In this fully binary branching structure, the appositive DP_3 moves up to the specifier of a higher DP_4. A DP is moved up, and not just an NP, because possessed DPs like *my lady* can serve as imposters. From its raised position, the appositive DP_3 determines the phi-feature values of the whole imposter (DP_4). There are two ways that determination could work. First, via Spec-Head agreement, the moved secondary DP_3 agrees with the head D_4. Then, since D_4 is the head of DP_4, DP_4 inherits the phi-feature values of D_4. Second, it might simply be that since DP_3 is the highest DP in the structure with specified phi-feature values, the phi-features of DP_3 are the only ones available internal to DP_4.

In the remainder of this introduction, we will refer to DP_2 as the core or notional component of the imposter and DP_4 as the shell of the imposter.

5. Sources

As mentioned above, a pronoun can agree with an antecedent or some other source. A major claim of Collins and Postal (2012) is that in some cases a pronoun may agree with non-antecedent DPs. The list of sources argued for in Collins and

Postal (2012) (no doubt to be expanded in later work) is given below in (14) and (18). The role that these sources play in determining pronominal agreement will be discussed in detail in the next section.

In order to define the notion of *source*, we first define *primary source*, and then give a recursive definition of *source*. The recursive definition will allow us to account for the fact that there can be a long chain of source relations, where the pronoun agrees with any of the elements in that chain.

A primary source is a direct source of phi-feature values of a pronoun. For example, an immediate antecedent is a primary source. In the example in (5), the immediate antecedent of the reflexive is *he*, and the reflexive agrees directly with its immediate antecedent. The immediate antecedent is a primary source for the reflexive.

(14)   Definition: *primary source*
        A is a *primary source* for B if and only if:
        a. A immediately antecedes B, or:
        b. A is a key conjunct of B, or:
        c. A shares a lexical basis with B.

(14a) represents the prototypical case of pronominal agreement with an immediate antecedent. (14b) is used when calculating the phi-feature values of a coordinate structure. Consider the following example:

(15)   John and I saw ourselves in the mirror.

The 1SG pronoun *I* is the key conjunct of the coordinate structure, and hence the pronoun is a primary source for the coordinate structure. Intuitively, the key conjunct is the conjunct with the highest person feature value of all the conjuncts. Crucially, imposters such as *Daddy* and *yours truly* count as having 1SG feature values for the purpose of determining the key conjunct (see Collins and Postal 2012, Chapter 9, for precise definitions).

(14c) is used in the case of relative clauses and also to account for pronominal agreement with camouflage DPs (e.g., *your majesty*). Consider the following examples:

(16)   a. The man who I saw
        b. your majesty

In (16a), the DP headed by *the* and the relative pronoun *who* share a lexical basis (the noun *man*). In (16b), the pronoun *your* and the DP *your majesty* share a lexical basis (the noun part of the DP *your*; see Collins and Postal 2012: 85). The intuition in both cases is that there is a single noun that is being shared by two functional projections (see Collins and Postal 2012: 59 for a precise definition).

A secondary source is any kind of source that is not a primary source.

(17)   Definition: *secondary source*
        A is a *secondary source* of B if and only if A is a source of B and not a primary source
        of B.

A secondary source is an indirect source of phi-feature values of a pronoun, since secondary sources are defined in terms of primary sources. Secondary sources can transmit phi-features to a pronoun via an intermediate primary source. In the definition below, sources are defined recursively in terms of primary source (the base case (18a)) and the chaining together of the various source relations (the recursive case (18b)).

(18)   Definition: *source*
        A is a *source* for B if and only if:
        a. A is a primary source for B, or:
        b. there is a C which is a source for B, and:
            (i)   A is a primary source for C, or:
            (ii) C is a predicate nominal and A is C's subject, or:
            (iii) C is a partitive DP and A is C's set DP.

(18bi) allows the chaining together of immediate antecedent relations. In example (5), *he* is the immediate antecedent of *himself*, and *John* is the immediate antecedent of *he*, so *John* is a (secondary) source for *himself*.

(18bii) says that if a predicate nominal is a source of a pronoun, the subject of the predicate nominal is also a source for the pronoun. Consider the following example from Collins and Postal (2012: 166):

(19)   If you were a shirt, it/you wouldn't sell for very much.

The immediate antecedent of the main clause subject pronoun *it/you* is the DP *a shirt*. The pronoun can agree in phi-features with the immediate antecedent (3SG), or with the subject of the predicate nominal (2SG).

(18biii) says that if a partitive DP (such as *every one of us*) is a source of a pronoun, the set DP of the partitive (*us* in this case) is a source for the pronoun (see illustrations below).

6. Some Examples

In this section, I will show how the system applies to the examples in (1). Consider first (1a), shortened and repeated below:

(20)   The present authors$_1$ (= the writers of the reply) attempt to defend ourselves$_1$/
        themselves$_1$.