

Unagreement is illusion in imposter constructions

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This article examines person agreement in English, Spanish and Japanese by exploring the imposter phenomenon studied by Collins & Postal (2012). Collins and Postal observe that when full-fledged DPs are used to refer to discourse participants such as speakers, these DPs show an agreement alternation in English, as shown in (1).

- (1) These reporters_i (=speakers) respect themselves_i/ourselves_i. (Collins & Postal 2012: 107)

The full DP in the subject position denotes the speakers, and it takes either a 1st person or 3rd person reflexive. Collins and Postal call these kinds of DPs as *imposters*.

The first person agreement exhibited by full DPs has also been observed in Spanish, known as *unagreement* (e.g. Ordóñez & Treviño 1999). Yet, Dudley (2014) reports that a full DP with the reference to the speakers can display 3rd person agreement as well as 1st person agreement in Spanish in (2).

- (2) Unos servidores_i quedamos/ quedaron en encontrar-nos_i/ -se_i a las 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: 49-53)

The imposter subject is combined with the 1st person or 3rd person verb and correspondingly with the bound object in the obligatory control. Spanish shows the same agreement alternation as English.

Full-fledged DPs can likewise refer to speakers in Japanese, another unrelated language, in (3).

- (3) Senseitai_i-mo {zibunzisin /*karerazisin/ *watasitatizisin}_i-o takameteiru.
teachers-also oneself themselves ourselves -Acc have.been.developing
'The teachers_i (=speakers) also have been developing oneself_i.'

The subject DP with the reference to the speakers takes the underspecified reflexive in Japanese. The three examples show that imposter phenomenon is observed in these languages. Yet, the agreement patterns do not seem to be uniform cross-linguistically.

What is also striking in imposter constructions is concerning person agreement patterns in coordinated constructions. Let us look at the English example (4).

- (4) This reviewer₁ (=speaker) never claimed that [he₁ and the editor]_k would devote ourselves_k to covering the story. (Adapted from Collins and Postal 2012: 249)

The matrix singular subject is in imposter use. The pronominal conjunct in the embedded subject position is coreferential with the matrix subject, and it is 3rd person. Remarkably, the embedded subject that contains this 3rd person pronoun is plural and agrees with the 1st person reflexive. The mismatch in person does not induce ungrammaticality. An analogous phenomenon is also observed in Spanish in (5).

- (5) [Un servidor_i y sus_i amigos]_k quedamos en encontrar-nos_k a las siete.
a servant and his friends decided.1PL on to.meet-ourselves at the seven
'Yours truly_i (=speaker) and his_i friends]_k decided to meet ourselves_k.' (Adapted from Dudley 2014: 52)

The first singular conjunct in the matrix subject is an imposter. When the pronominal possessor in the second conjunct is coreferential with the first conjunct, this pronoun is 3rd person. The coordinated subject with this pronoun shows 1st person agreement with the verb and the reflexive in the obligatory control. This is also grammatical, as in the case of the English example (4).

In contrast, Japanese does not display the same singular-plural asymmetry pattern in (6).

- (6) Sensei_i-wa [jibun_i-to zibun-no/*kareno tuma]_k-ga itumo {zibunzisin / zibintatizisin/
teacher-Top self-and self-Gen his wife-Nom always oneself oneself.pl

*watasitatizisin/*karerazisin}_k-o oopunnisiteiru-to omotteiru.
 ourselves themselves-Acc open-Comp think
 ‘The teacher_i (=speaker) thinks that [self_i and self’s wife]_k always open {oneself/oneself.pl}_k.’

Being coreferential with the matrix imposter subject, the first singular conjunct and the possessor of the second conjunct in the embedded subject are both underspecified. This embedded subject binds the underspecified reflexive in singularity or plurality.

Collis and Postal (2012, chapter 5) propose the existence of the null topic phrase on the right periphery in (7) and account for the agreement alternation exhibited by English imposter constructions.

(7) [TopicP AUTHOR_i {1st}] [s imposter_i {3rd}] ... Reflexive {1st/3rd}

The schematic structure has the phonologically null TopicP with a 1st person feature value and a full DP with a 3rd person feature value. According to Collins and Postal, thanks to the existence of TopicP, the null TopicP or the full DP determines its bound object, resulting in the agreement alternation. However, their analysis fails to extend to the presence of the underspecified agreement pattern in Japanese (whose constructions they do not observe).

Höhn (2016) observes unagreement phenomena in a wide variety of *pro*-drop languages including Spanish (but not Japanese) and proposes the existence of Person Phrase on top of DP for Spanish in (8).

(8) [s [PersonP [1st] [DP]]] ... Verb {1st}

PersonP contains a 1st person feature value and determines 1st person agreement for the unagreement phenomenon in syntax. Yet, his analysis is also problematic to Japanese, another *pro*-drop language.

Alternatively, instead of assuming an extra phrase in syntax, building on the classical pronominal determiner account (e.g. Postal 1969, Abney 1986), I claim that the syntactic operation underlying the mismatch effects is simply normal agreement between subject and verb/object in proper syntax. Particularly, under the assumption that the person feature exists in DP as standardly assumed, I basically adopt the existence of multiple values for 1st person in line with Halle (1997: 129) in (9).

(9) a. {+Par(ticipant), +A(uthor)} b. {-Par, +A}

In (9), [+Par] represents speech act participants, and [+A] represents the speech act author. In Halle’s analysis of Walbiri, Australian language, (9a) and (9b) are both 1st person, and yet (9a) differs from (9b) in that the latter excludes the addressee(s) in the speakers’ group unlike the former. Saab (2013) claims that Spanish full DPs have the value (9b) for 1st person agreement. However, this faces empirical problems since the imposter subject in (2) does not necessarily exclude addressees for 1st person agreement as in (1) and (3). Moreover, the application of (9b) to Japanese imposter constructions also fails to explain the existence of the underspecified reflexives in (3) and (6). Instead, based on the facts that imposter constructions discussed here behave like pronouns, I further decompose (9a) into (10).

(10) {(+Par) +A, +Pron(ominal)}

First person pronouns always involve {+A, +Pron} and show 1st person agreement. Likewise, while English and Spanish plural full-fledged DPs are not pronouns, they may also show 1st person agreement in addition to as 3rd person agreement. Thus, full DPs in plurality may or may not have (10). By contrast, singular counterparts always exhibit 3rd person agreement. Singular forms are not fully specified for person and number since there is no morphological primitive representing person and number on DPs, uniformly realizing 3rd person as default (e.g. Nevins 2007). I assume the optional impoverishment operation (11).

(11) {+Pron} → ∅ / [_____, +Pl] (optional operation)

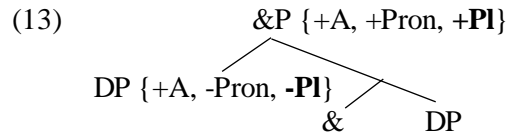
With (11), I suggest the morphological specifications (12) for English and Spanish imposters.

(12) a. [D {+A, +Pron, +Pl}] ↔ 1st person plural

- b. [D {+A, \emptyset , +P1}] \leftrightarrow 3rd person plural
 c. [D {+A, \emptyset , -P1}] \leftrightarrow 3rd person singular

A DP with {+A, +Pron} in (11a) shows 1st person agreement, and a DP with (11b) or (11c) exhibits 3rd person agreement. Despite the 3rd person agreement shown by the DP, the DP denotes the speaker(s) due to the presence of {+A}.

Given (12), I propose the 1st person feature values for the embedded subject of (4) in (13).



The first conjunct DP that is coreferential with the matrix imposter subject is {-P1}, and it is realized as 3rd person. In contrast, &P is {+P1}, and thus this coordinated subject involves {+A, +Pron, +P1}. If the impoverishment operation is not applied, 1st person agreement is observed. If the impoverishment operation (11) is optionally applied, 3rd person agreement is exhibited. This also holds for the Spanish imposter (5).

I assume the impoverishment operation (14) for Japanese imposters since they lack the singular-plural asymmetry in light of person agreement, unlike English and Spanish counterparts.

- (14) {+Pron} \rightarrow \emptyset

Given (14), under the assumption that the underspecified person is a default in Japanese, Japanese constructions always show the underspecified agreement patterns in (15).

- (15) [D, {+A, - \emptyset }] \leftrightarrow underspecified

This article examines person agreement in English, Spanish and Japanese by focusing on agreement patterns shown by imposters. While relevant syntactic-semantic properties of full-fledged DPs are uniform in light of the reference to discourse participants in these languages, the imposter DPs show non-uniform agreement patterns cross-linguistically and the agreement alternation in English and Spanish in relation to the singular-plural asymmetry, unlike in Japanese. I decompose 1st person feature into two types and claim that the relevant features are fully specified for person agreement in proper syntax. By reducing to the problem of syncretism, a purely morphophonological issue, I demonstrate that the mismatch is apparent only in morphology since form and meaning do not always form univocal units.

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