The third person is present

An argument from deteminers in generic statements

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The debate

- Third person is the absence of person features (Kayne, 2000; Adger and Harbour, 2007; Béjar and Řezáč, 2003; Harley and Ritter, 2002; Kratzer, 2009)
- Third person is fully represented (Nevins, 2007, 2011; Harbour, 2016; Ackema and Neeleman, 2018; Grishin, 2023)

Main point of this talk

A "distance" effect with determiners in generic expressions supports the view that third person differs from the absence of any person specification.

Roadmap

Background on generic expressions

The ‘distance’ effect with
definite plurals in Germanic

Analysis

Third person and absence of person: Semantic derivation

Background on generic expressions

Generic expressions

- Generic predication involves semantically a kind as its argument. Kind readings are compositionally constructed by applying an intensionalized ι-operator to a plural nominal (Chierchia 1998, Dayal 2004, Longobardi 1994).
- Languages differ with respect to the expression of kinds/generics.

Definite plural in Romance and Greek

In Romance (Chierchia 1998), but also Greek (Alexiadou et al. 2007, Lazaridou-Chatzigoga and Alexiadou 2019), the definite determiner must appear overtly in generic statements (1).

(1) a. *(Las) linguistas aman los idiomas. *Spanish*
the linguists love.3PL the languages
'Linguists love languages.'

b. *(Oi) glossológoi agapáne tis glósses. *Greek*
the linguists love.3PL the languages
'Linguists love languages.'

Bare plural in Germanic

In contrast, in Germanic, an overt definite determiner is generally not used to express genericity (but cf. Farkas and De Swart 2007, Alexiadou 2022).

(2) a. Linguistinnen lieben Sprachen. *German*
linguists love.PL languages
'Linguists love languages.'

b. Linguists love languages. *English*

Optional definite plurals in Germanic: German

For German, it is reported that an overt determiner is optionally possible in generic expressions (3) (Brugger, 1994; Longobardi, 1994; Krifka et al., 1995; Dayal, 2004; Schaden, 2012).

(3) (Die) Bieber bauen Dämme. *German*
the beavers build dams
'Beavers build dams.' (Longobardi, 1994, 653)

The empirical results from experimental investigations are however inconclusive: Barton et al. (2015) seem to support the optionality, Czypionka and Kupisch (2019) point towards bare plurals as the single option.

Optional definite plurals in Germanic: English

For English, it has likewise been claimed that the definite article is an option that becomes obligatory under certain conditions (Farkas and De Swart, 2007; Alexiadou, 2022), like with de-adjectival nouns (4).

(4) *(The) slow are left behind. (Alexiadou, 2022, 34)

The ‘distance’ effect with definite plurals in Germanic

The 'distance' effect in English

Acton (2019) observes for English that definite plurals trigger a "distance" effect where the speaker "deemphasiz[es] their membership in the group" or "emphasiz[es] their nonmembership". In (5b), the definite article therefore seems to trigger an additional inference distancing the speaker from the kind.

(5) *The distance effect with definite plurals* (Acton, 2019, 37, 51)

a. Americans love cars. $\rightsquigarrow$ *The speaker may or may not consider themself to be an American.*

b. The Americans love cars. $\rightsquigarrow$ *The speaker is not an American or wishes to express distance from Americans.*

The 'distance' effect in German

- For German, Driemel et al. (2022) tested speakers' preference for different DPs (definite plurals, bare plurals, definite singulars, indefinite singulars) in a variety of generic contexts.
- In the context that suggests speaker distance, the definite plural and the bare plural are equally good candidates, while in all other contexts bare plurals are considered the best option (contra Barton et al., 2015 and pro Czypionka and Kupisch 2019's findings).

German: Generic, speaker distance context

There is a place in town where people meet for a drink and a chat after work. As there are federal elections coming up soon, a lot of the discussions and debates revolve around politics. Yesterday, one guest seemed very upset and continuously complained that "voting is meaningless because...

(6) a. **Politiker** tun doch sowieso, was sie wollen nach der
politicians do PRT anyway what they want after the
Wahl.
election
'Politicians do whatever they want after the election anyway.'
⇝ *The speaker may or may not consider themself a politican.*

b. **Die Politiker** tun doch sowieso, was sie wollen [...]
the politicians do PRT anyway what they want [...]
'The politicians do whatever they want after the election anyway.'
⇝ *The speaker is not a politician or wants to express distance from politicians.*

No ‘distance’ effect in Spanish and Greek

No comparable ‘distance’ effect is observed. Generic statements with definite plurals always leave open whether the speaker is or is not a member of the group denoted by the plural DP.

(7) a. Las linguistas aman los idiomas. *Spanish*
the linguists love.3PL the languages
‘Linguists love languages.’
⇝ *The speaker may or may not consider herself a linguist.*

b. Oi glossológoi agapáne tis glósses. *Greek*
the linguists love.3PL the languages
‘Linguists love languages.’
⇝ *The speaker may or may not consider herself a linguist.*

Summary

In languages that generally employ **bare plurals in generic expressions**, the use of **the definite article** gives rise to the implication that the speaker is not or does not wish to identify themself as a member of the kind.

Analysis

The 'distance' effect in Germanic

We suggest that the distance inference arises from a third person feature in the structure that has two consequences:

1. it triggers insertion of the definite determiner at PF (8).
2. it leads to the negation of alternative person interpretations at LF

Person information is encoded on the D-head. Kinds enter the derivation without person features and can freely combine with Ds that bear a person feature or not.

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In the latter case, the definite determiner will not be inserted and all person interpretations are possible.

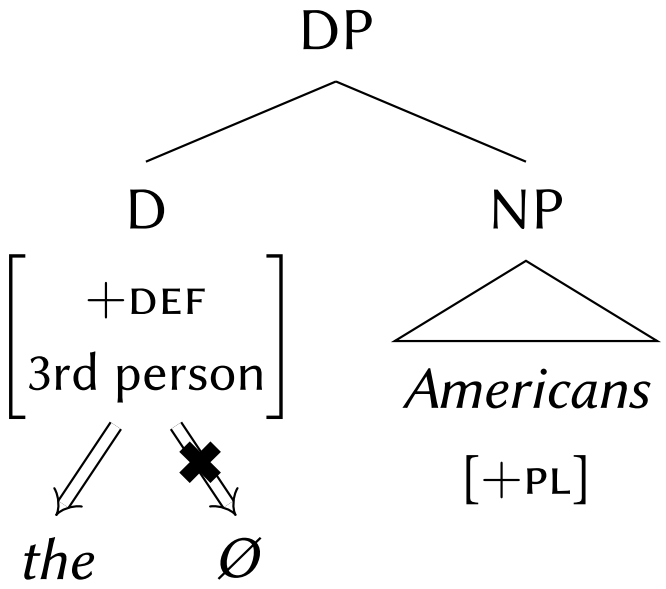
The 'distance' effect in Germanic: Two outcomes

(8) a. *der, die, das, ...* ↔ [+DEF, 3rd person, NUMBER, GENDER]

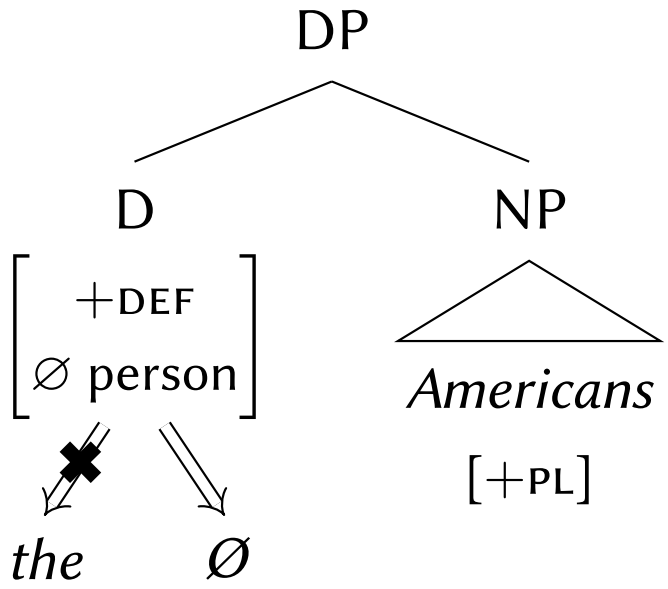
b. *the* ↔ [+DEF, 3rd person]

c. *Ø* ↔ [+DEF]

(9) *Kind with 3rd person D-head*



(10) *Kind with personless D-head*



No 'distance' effect in Spanish and Greek

In Spanish and Greek, the definite determiner is not specified for (third) person (11).

(11) a. *los, las* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF] *Spanish*

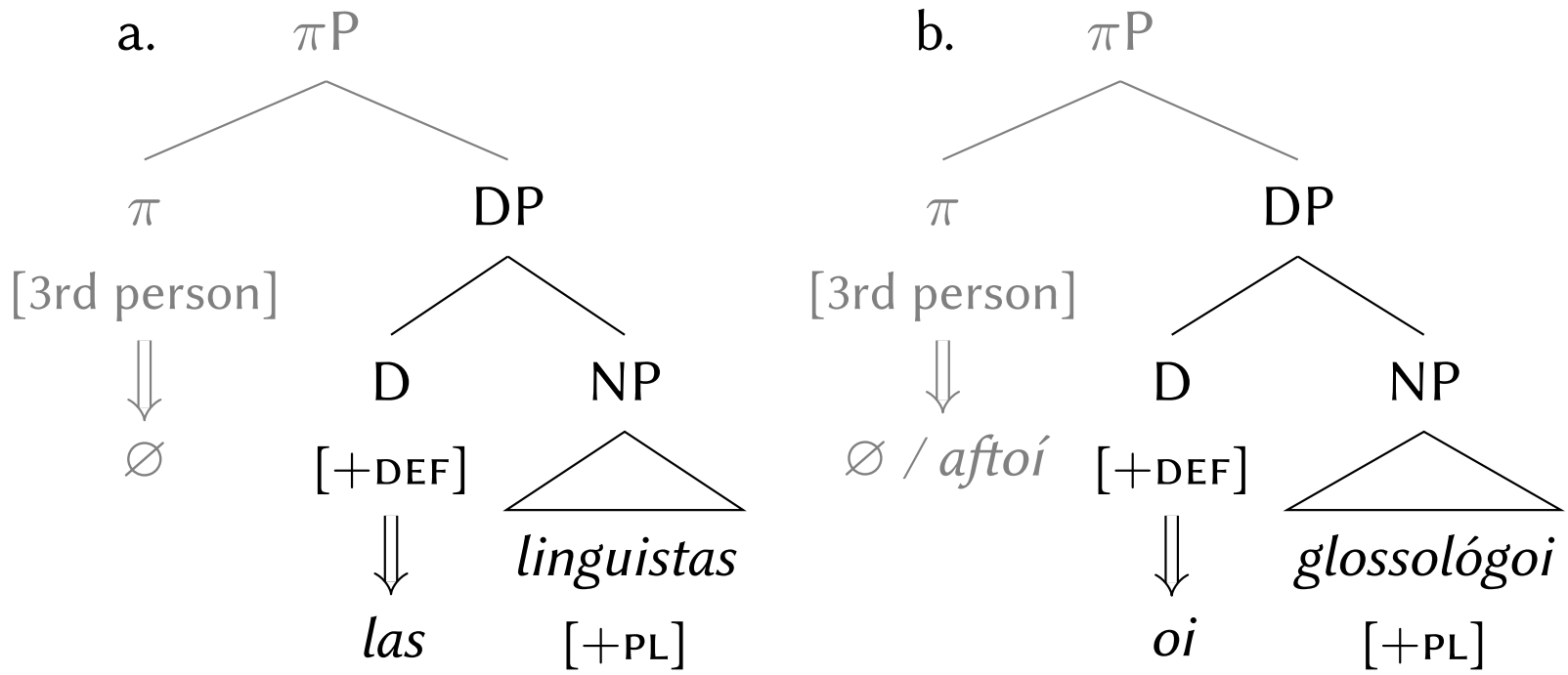
b. *oi* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF] *Greek*

This leads to a neutralization of the person-containing and personless derivations (12), an obligatory overt determiner on the PF side and the absence of a distance inference.

No 'distance' effect in Spanish and Greek due to structure

We suggest that the determiner cannot realize person features in these languages because, if present in the structure, these are hosted outside of D and are therefore not accessible for a D-element (cf. Höhn, 2016).

(12) Kind-denoting DPs in Spanish (a) and Greek (b)



More evidence for the structural split

The split in the use of determiners with generics (and the concomitant distance inference) between Germanic on one side and Spanish/Greek on the other aligns with a split in adnominal pronoun constructions (APCs) and unagreement.

Höhn (2016) argues that the source of this split is exactly that person and definiteness are realized on distinct heads in Spanish and Greek (and similar languages) while these features must be realized in the same head in German and English (and similar languages).

Adnominal pronoun constructions (APCs)

Spanish and Greek require a definite article in APCs (13a, b), German and English show a complementary distribution of definite determiner and personal pronoun (13c, d).

(13) a. Emeís *(oi) glossológoi agapáme tis glósses. *Greek*
we the linguists love.1PL the languages
'We linguists love languages.'

b. Vosotras *(las) linguistas amáis las idiomas. *Spanish*
you the linguists love.2PL the languages
'You linguists love languages.'

c. Ihr (#die) Linguistinnen liebt Sprachen. *German*
you the linguists love.2PL languages
'You linguists love languages.'

d. We (#the) linguists love languages. *English*

Unagreement

Spanish and Greek allow unagreement (14a, b), German (and English) lack unagreement (14c).

(14) a. Oi glossológoi agapáme tis glósses. *Greek*
the linguists love.1PL the languages
'We linguists love languages.'

b. Las linguistas amáis las idiomas. *Spanish*
the linguists love.2PL the languages
'You linguists love languages.'

c. *Die Linguistinnen liebt Sprachen. *German*
the linguists love.2PL languages
'You linguists love languages.'

Summary

- Kinds are person-free.
- They combine with person feature bearing heads in the syntax.
- Languages may vary
  - (i) in whether they bundle person and definiteness on D or not
  - (ii) whether the lexical item(s) for the determiner is specified for (third) person or not.

Completing the picture: Italian

The two points of variation result in four possible combinations.

(15) *Combinations of feature bundling and lexical specification*

	$\pi_{[\text{3rd person}]}$	$\text{D}_{[+\text{DEF}]}$	$\text{D}_{[+\text{DEF, 3rd person}]}$
DET↔[+DEF]	Greek, Spanish		Italian
DET↔[+DEF, 3rd person]	—		English, German

- The lower left cell is systematically excluded by the Subset Principle. The determiner will always have a superset of the features of the D-head that it would have to be inserted into.
- We argue that Italian instantiates the upper right cell.

Genericity, APCs and unagreement in Italian

Like Greek and Spanish, Italian requires an overt determiner in generic expressions (16) whose presence does not trigger a distancing effect.

(16) *(I) linguisti amano le lingue. *Italian*
the linguists love.3PL the languages
'Linguists love languages.'

Like English and German, Italian lacks unagreement (17a) and does not allow the definite determiner in APCs (17b).

(17) a. *I linguisti amiamo le lingue. *Italian*
the linguists love.1PL the languages
'We linguists love languages.'

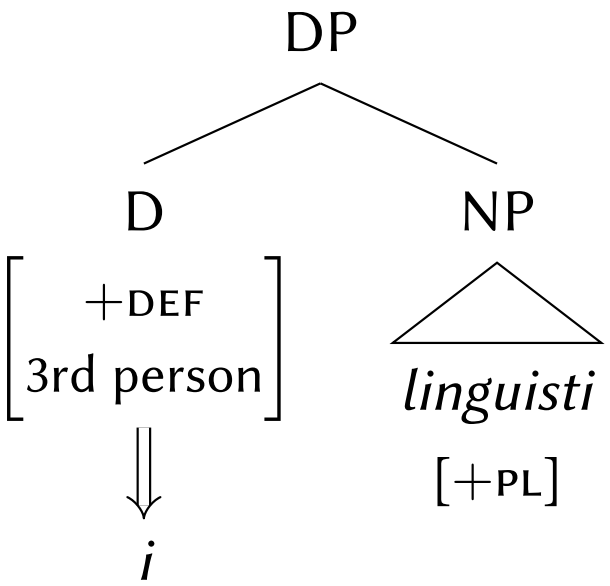
b. Noi *(i) linguisti amiamo le lingue. *Italian*
we the linguists love.1PL the languages
'We linguists love languages.'

Italian: structure and lexical items

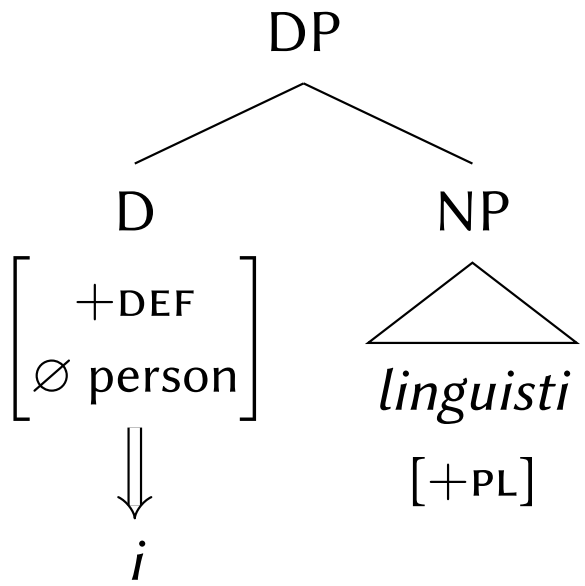
Italian bundles person features and definiteness on D. Definite determiners are underspecified for person (18).

(18) *i/gli, le* ↔ [+DEF, NUMBER, GENDER]

(19) *Kind with 3rd person D-head*



(20) *Kind with personless D-head*



Third person and absence of person: Semantic derivation

Presuppositional semantics of ϕ-features

- ϕ-features, including person, are interpreted as a presupposition on the reference of an individual-denoting expression (Cooper 1983, Heim and Kratzer 1998, Sauerland 2003, 2008b, Schlenker 1999, 2003b, 2003a, Heim 1994, 2008, Chemla 2009, Sudo 2012).
- The choice of the feature specification is regulated by the competition principle *Maximize Presupposition* (Heim 1991, Sauerland 2008a, Singh 2011, Percus 2006, Schlenker 2012)

(21) **Maximize Presupposition**

If ψ is a presuppositional alternative to ϕ in the context c and ψ triggers stronger presuppositions than ϕ choose ψ.

Person feature

- Featural representation of person (Zwicky, 1977; Noyer, 1992; Harley and Ritter, 2002; Sauerland, 2003, 2008b; McGinnis, 2005; Ackema and Neeleman, 2013, 2018; Harbour, 2016)
- We will adopt the privative features AUTHOR and PARTICIPANT with the semantics in (22), where '$\sqsubseteq$' encodes the relation 'included in' (cf. Sauerland and Bobaljik, 2022).

(22) a. $[\![\text{AUTHOR}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x$

b. $[\![\text{PARTICIPANT}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x \vee \text{addressee}(c) \sqsubseteq x$

c. $[\![\text{PERSON}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ x$

- The absence of any person marking is furthermore available as an alternative representation of 3rd person.

Presuppositionality via Exhaustification

- Exhaustivity operator (**exh**) encoded in the grammar (Fox 2007, Katzir 2007, Chierchia et al. 2012, Fox and Katzir 2011)
- **exh** negates relevant, non-weaker alternatives
- MP as a reflex of **exh** (cf. Magri 2009, Marty 2017)

(23) a. $[\![\textbf{exh}\ \textsc{author}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x$

b. $[\![\textbf{exh}\ \textsc{participant}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ (\text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x \vee \text{addressee}(c) \sqsubseteq x) \wedge \boxed{\neg\ \text{author}(c)} \sqsubseteq x$

c. $[\![\textbf{exh}\ \textsc{person}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\ \boxed{\neg\ \text{author}(c)} \sqsubseteq x \wedge \boxed{\neg\ \text{addressee}(c)} \sqsubseteq x$

Competition algorithm

(24) *Algorithm for computing alternatives* (Katzir 2007, 2014)
Alternatives for a structure Φ are at most as complex as Φ.

- PERSON as a vacuous feature $\Rightarrow$ It can enter structural complexity considerations for computing alternatives.
- This is consistent with the constraint that alternatives cannot be more complex than the scope of **exh**.

(25) They like languages.
exh PERSON like languages
$\Rightarrow \neg$ author $\wedge \neg$ addressee like languages

Effects of exh in pronouns and determiners

(26) a. *we (Americans)* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF, AUTHOR]

b. *you (Americans)* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF, PARTICIPANT] $\boxed{\neg \text{ author}}$

c. *the(y) (Americans)* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF, PERSON] $\boxed{\neg\text{author}\wedge\neg\text{addressee}}$

d. *Ø (Americans)* $\leftrightarrow$ [+DEF]

- In 26 (a-c), PERSON inferences are always present as a consequence of **exh** applying to AUTHOR, PARTICIPANT or PERSON.

Third person vs. absence of person

Proposal

Both PERSON and its absence are possible in the natural language.

(27) a. the Americans **exh** PERSON

b. Americans

- The "distance" effect with definite plurals is a consequence of the explicit specification of the definite determiner for 3rd person.

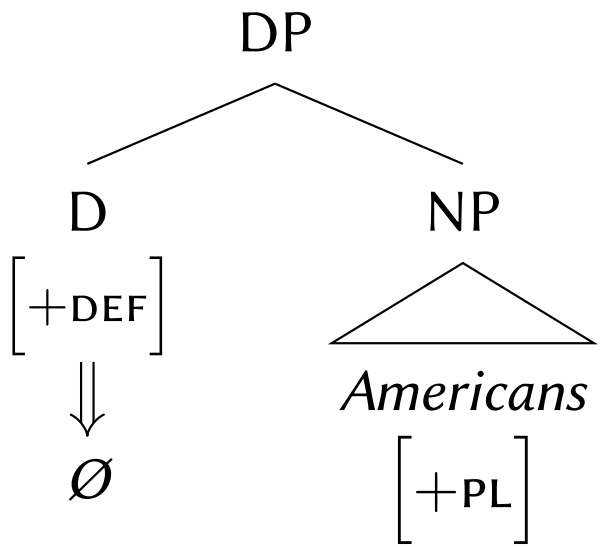
Absence of person

exh does not take PERSON as its argument ⇒ the absence of any person inferences.

We argue that this explains the person-free semantics of **kinds**.

The absence of [PERSON] blocks insertion of the definite determiner and pronouns on the PF side of the derivation.

(28) *Kind-denoting DP in English*



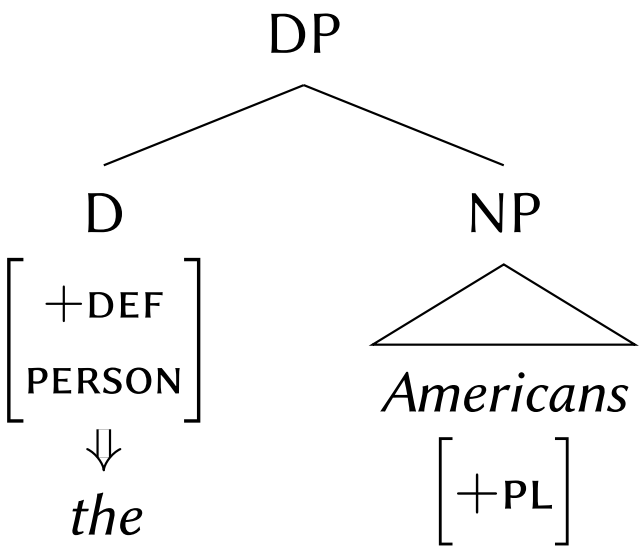
Third person

In contrast to kinds, third person inference arises as a consequence of **exh** taking PERSON as its argument.

(29) $[\![\textbf{exh}\ \textsc{person}]\!]^c = \lambda x\,.\,\neg\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x \wedge \neg\ \text{addressee}(c) \sqsubseteq x$

exh applying to PERSON rules out non-weaker alternatives, thus pronouns (*we, you*) cannot be inserted.

(30) *3rd person DP in English*



$\rightsquigarrow$ author, addressee $\not\sqsubseteq$ $[\![\text{Americans}]\!]$

Cross-linguistic differences: Greek

- In Greek, the overt definite article does not compete with the silent one as bare plurals are not an option for the expression of genericity.

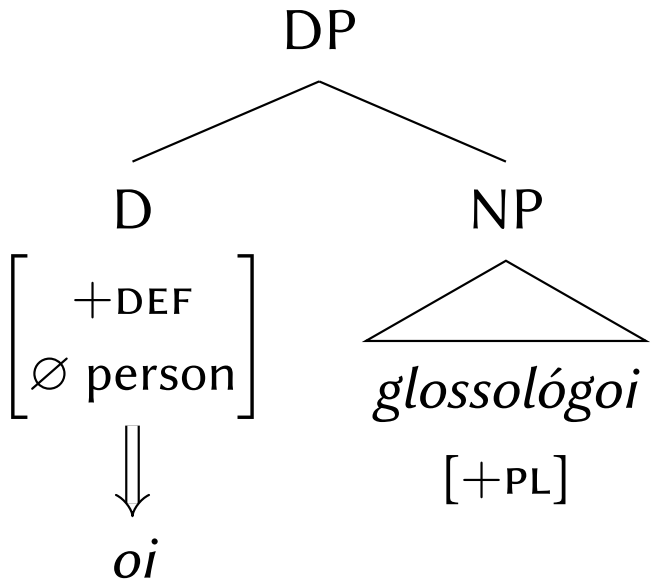
(31) *(I) ghates ine aneksartita zoa. *Greek*
the cats are independent animals
'The cats are independent animals.' (Alexiadou et al., 2007)

Cross-linguistic differences: Greek

exh does not take PERSON as its argument ⇒ the absence of any person inferences ⇒ **kinds**.

In Greek, definite plurals do not participate in structural complexity considerations for computing PERSON alternatives.

(32) *Kind with personless D-head in Greek*



No competition in Greek

As kind-denoting nominal in Greek obligatorily surfaces with the definite article means that the article in Greek cannot be in the scope of **exh** $\Rightarrow$ PERSON inference would arise, contrary to the fact.
NO PERSON in Greek is compatible with definite determiners. This furthermore explains the absence of "distance" effects.

(33) a. the linguists **exh** PERSON

b. oi glossológoi

Insertion of the definite determiner in Greek generics does not involve application of **exh** to PERSON.

No competition in Greek

- This semantic prediction neatly correlates with syntax.
- Alternatives competing for the insertion in English: *the* and ∅
- In Greek, however, such a competition does not emerge.
- This is precisely the stance of Alexiadou (2014) who, building on Alexopoulou and Folli (2019), provides syntactic evidence for availability of null Ds in English and obligatory overtness of D in Greek on the basis of the availability of multiple determiners.

Summary

Main proposal

Third person crucially differs from the absence of the PERSON feature.

- Realization of determiners in generic statements provides evidence for the existence and representation of third person.
- No overt determiners in generic statements (English, German):
  - definite articles are specified for PERSON
  - an overt realization of the determiner in these languages triggers "distance" effects
- Overt determiners in generic statements (Greek, Spanish):
  - determiners are not specified for PERSON
  - the absence of PERSON leads the absence of "distance" effects.

Thank you for your attention!

Appendix

Default third person: Pruning of alternatives

If **exh** always applied in this way, person marking would end up to render certain meanings ineffable:

(34) Every person, including you and me, loves **their** mother.

How can *their* be bound if third person excludes author and addressee?

(35) Alternatives can be pruned from an occurrence **exh** if a meaning is otherwise ineffable (Elliott and Sauerland 2019, Elliott et al. 2022).

Default third person: Pruning of alternatives

Lower **exh** in the scope of the higher one gets pruned.

Effect: deactivation of **exh**, overrides presupposition failure.

(36) exh ... ~~exh~~

(37) Every person $\lambda x.x$ loves x's mother.

$\lambda x\,.\ \boxed{\neg\ \text{author}(c)} \sqsubseteq x \wedge \boxed{\neg\ \text{addressee}(c)} \sqsubseteq x$ loves x's mother

$\Rightarrow$ presupposition failure, 1st and 2nd person blocked

(38) Every person, including you and me, $\lambda x.x$ loves x's mother.

$\lambda x\,.\ \neg\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x \wedge \neg\ \text{addressee}(c) \sqsubseteq x$ loves x's mother

$\Rightarrow$ pruning and deactivation of negated alternatives

$\Rightarrow$ 1st and 2nd person available alongside 3rd

Default third person: Pruning of alternatives

Pruning of alternatives furthermore accounts for "distancing" in cases when the author or the addressee is still a member of the kind, i.e., it can apply to only one feature alternative:

(39) The Americans love cars.

$\lambda x\,.\ \boxed{\neg\ \text{author}(c)} \sqsubseteq x \wedge \boxed{\neg\ \text{addressee}(c)} \sqsubseteq x$ love cars

$\Rightarrow$ 1st and 2nd person blocked

① $\lambda x\,.\ \cancel{\neg\ \text{author}(c)} \sqsubseteq x \wedge \neg\ \text{addressee}(c) \sqsubseteq x$ love cars

$\rightsquigarrow$ *the speaker is a member of the kind*

② $\lambda x\,.\ \neg\ \text{author}(c) \sqsubseteq x \wedge \cancel{\neg\ \text{addressee}(c)} \sqsubseteq x$ love cars

$\rightsquigarrow$ *the addressee is a member of the kind*

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