

Multidimensional variation in person agreement: evidence from Alor-Pantar languages (oral)

In Siewierska's (1999) influential typology grammatical and anaphoric agreement are separated by an intermediate type, ambiguous agreement. Haspelmath (2012) uses different terms for these types (gramm indexes, cross indexes and pro-indexes) and emphasizes their *sui generis* nature. I use variation in one family, the Alor-Pantar family of about 20 non-Austronesian languages spoken in eastern Indonesia, to make two important points about person agreement. First, the different types represent related phenomena and should not be treated as unrelated or *sui generis*. Even the boundary between anaphoric and ambiguous agreement is not clearcut. Second, while the two extremes of Siewierska's typology serve as a good basis, the ambiguous type, which represents the majority of languages with person agreement, should be articulated further to cover the significant differences found in languages with it.

It is possible for some verbs to belong to the anaphoric type (Haspelmath's pro-indexes) and others to belong to the ambiguous type (Haspelmath's cross indexes). In Adang (West Alor) verbs typically either have a prefix obligatorily or they do not. This is arbitrary (Haan 2001), and what one might expect for ambiguous or grammatical agreement. But there is still a split according to person. Repetition of the argument is impossible for all pronouns (except third plural) (1a)-(1b), but not for nouns (2a) and the third person plural pronoun (2b). Splits like this are familiar, of course (see Corbett 2006: 108).

(1) Adang

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|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>nife</i> <i>na-muning</i>
 our.mother 1SG-kiss
 'Our mother kisses me.'</p> | <p>b. <i>*nife</i> <i>nari na-muning</i>
 our.mother 1SG 1SG-kiss
 'Our mother kisses me.'</p> |
|---|--|

(2) Adang

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|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>na</i> <i>boi</i> '-ah=am
 1SG pig 3-feed=PFV
 'I fed the pigs.'</p> | <p>b. <i>na</i> <i>supi</i> '-ah=am
 1SG 3PL 3-feed=PFV
 'I fed them.'</p> |
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However, there is a small subset of Adang verbs (3a)-(3b) for which prefixation is not obligatory, so that the complementary alternation between affix and pronoun typical of pronominal agreement is possible.

(3) Adang

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|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>in</i> <i>n-eh</i>
 mosquito 1SG-bite
 'The mosquito bites me.'</p> | <p>b. <i>in</i> <i>nari eh</i>
 mosquito 1SG bite
 'The mosquito bites me.'</p> |
|---|--|

The examples in (3) look like an anaphoric system, but clearly share the constraint on co-occurrence of prefix and pronoun found in the system illustrated in examples (1) and (2), which looks more like an ambiguous system.

Support for the view that the ambiguous agreement type needs further articulation can also be found in other Alor-Pantar languages. In Teiwa (Pantar) there are striking differences in the extent to which co-referential nominals are allowed. A corpus study revealed that prefixed verbs occurred 40% of the time with the third person plural free pronoun, and rarely with the first person exclusive plural, first person singular and third person singular. For the other person-number combinations, co-reference is impossible.

There is a broad continuum of phenomena which one could label agreement. Within each language a variety of types can be observed, but these overlap in the properties they share. The Alor-Pantar languages show that typology must articulate the space between the two extremes.

497 words in total