

Workshop: “Textual analyses of person”

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Organisers: Silvia Pieroni (Università per Stranieri di Siena), Paolo Poccetti (Università di Roma ‘Tor Vergata’)

In case of questions about this workshop, please contact: silvia.pieroni@unistrasi.it

As a grammatical category, person is at the heart of all human expression and linguistic formalisation. For this reason, it has been at the centre of linguistic and philosophical thought since antiquity.

In modern linguistics, Benveniste (1946, 1956, 1958, 1970) recognised its pivotal role in the theoretical framework of linguistic subjectivity. Person is indeed crucial to the distinction between *énonciation* and *énoncé*, and between the enunciative situations of dialogue and narration. The relationships that mutually bind these constitutive aspects of language have important cognitive and narratological implications, in relation to the participants’ roles and the speaker’s attitude. Among the deictic functions of language, person is the shifter par excellence (in the sense of Jakobson, 1957), as it constitutes the essential role exchange.

Person plays a key role in defining the basic illocutionary force of any linguistic act, in conjunction with other fundamental verb categories, such as tense, mood, aspect and voice. These combinations can affect verbal semantics, the type of modality, and the performativity of a linguistic act. As is well known, the performative function of certain verbs is realised only in the first person of the present indicative, whereas the epistemic and deontic values do not exhibit the same kind of constraint. As for semantics, the first person of a verb expressing fear or volition can function as a *verbum putandi* (with different moods used in different contexts and languages: e.g. the indicative in English *I am afraid it is raining* versus the subjunctive in Latin *nolim eum esse domi*). Negation also has different perlocutionary effects depending on verbal person (e.g. *nolo facere* versus *noli facere*).

On the other hand, person interacts with nominal categories such as gender and number, often in a manner which is by no means obvious. For instance, the interplay between person and number in personal pronouns differs drastically from the variation in number in common nouns. The first-person plural of the personal pronoun may or may not include the addressee and, in some contexts, it may function as a singular with a different argumentative force (e.g. *pluralis maiestatis* or *modestiae*) or perform pragmatic and diaphasic functions such as politeness or formality.

By contrast, person also defines impersonal uses, which include singular non-persons with meteorological predicates (e.g. *pluit*) and plural third persons with generic value (e.g. *dicunt*); the latter should be compared with so-called generic uses of the second person (e.g. *crederes*) (like English *you* ‘somebody, one’).

In addition, person serves to express the speaker’s commitment to, and agreement (or disagreement) with what is uttered, as well as their disengagement, distancing, or caution. Adopting person

markers establishes intersubjective relationships, whereas avoiding personal forms when addressing someone may be a way of refusing interaction.

Eventually, its role in the syntactic organisation of sentences and the hierarchisation of various types of direct and indirect speech is equally important. Here, the polyphony of persons can provide clarification or, conversely, create ambiguity; it can establish enunciative associations or dissociations.

Person is pervasive in language, primarily manifesting in personal pronouns, verbal inflection and possessive pronouns. However, relations of person within an utterance context are also expressed by demonstratives (both deictic and anaphoric), and in a yet different way, by indefinite pronouns expressing a dual relation (e.g. *alter, uter, neuter*). Person therefore plays a fundamental role in defining and identifying the subjects involved in an utterance.

Against this general background, which only touches on the main aspects of a much broader theoretical reflection, the workshop aims to investigate the role of person as a textual function, thus taking a less conventional standpoint. The purpose is to observe person in its various manifestations as a constructive element of textual architecture (i.e., of Latin texts of any period or genre), and as a creative means of discursive realities not necessarily coinciding with – and in any case not depending on – factual realities. We will therefore highlight role alternations, their enunciative effects, their semantic and pragmatic implications, including those of cohesion markers. The workshop welcomes synchronic and diachronic perspectives, as well as sociolinguistic and contrastive considerations.

Here follow some possible avenues of research within the textual focus adopted:

- The use of personal pronouns in unexpected contexts;
- Shifts in person for the same referent;
- Interactions between person, definite and indefinite reference;
- Interactions between person and number (e.g. the use of the plural for the singular and remnants of the dual);
- Non-person, impersonal strategies, generic quantifiers and their different textual functions;
- Person as a deictic category and its correlation with other deictic elements (e.g. tense, demonstratives, or lexical elements).
- Interactions between person and verbal categories (tense, aspect, mood and voice) and their implications at the utterance level;
- The relationship between person and semantic classes of verbs (e.g. *verba dicendi, putandi* and *timendi*);
- The role of person in relation to *verba dicendi* with respect to affirmation, assent and enunciative dissociation;
- The distribution of persons in relation to speech acts;
- The use of person in direct and indirect speech and intermediate forms between the two;
- Person in verbs of state and motion and related grammaticalization phenomena;

- Textual cohesion markers in relation to person;
- Interaction between person, basic illocutionary force and modality;
- Ancient reflection on the concept of person, focusing on the Latin grammatical tradition.

Proposals addressing other themes are also welcome, with no restrictions on the theoretical approaches chosen. Papers are accepted in all languages permitted at the *Colloquium*.

Suggested reading

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Pieroni, S., 2010, Deixis and anaphora, in P. Baldi & P. Cuzzolin (eds), *New Perspectives on Historical Latin Syntax*, vol. III, Berlin – New York, De Gruyter Mouton, 389-501.

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Pinkster, H., 1986, *Ego, Tu, Nos*. Opmerkingen over het gebruik van subjektpronomina, in het bijzonder in Cicero *De Oratore* II, «Lampas», 19, 309-322.

Pinkster, H., 2015, *The Oxford Latin Syntax*, 1. *The Simple Clause*, Oxford, University Press, 81-215.

Poccetti, P., 2010, Greeting and farewell expressions as evidence for colloquial language: between literary and epigraphical texts, in E. Dickey & A. Chahoud (eds.), *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, in honour of J. N. Adams, Cambridge, CUP, 100-126.

Siewierska, A., 2004 *Person*, Cambridge, UP.