

1 Introduction

Normally, in order to refer to himself or herself, a speaker uses 1st person singular pronominal forms (in English, *I, me, my, mine, myself*). To refer to a (single) addressee, a speaker uses 2nd person singular pronominal forms (in English, *you, your, yours, yourself*). But this is not always the case. For instance, in an interview, newscaster Dan Rather referred to himself with the phrase italicized in (1).

- (1) At the time, CBS News and *this reporter* fully believed the documents were genuine.
(transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0709/20/lkl.01.html)

In a famous 1962 news conference, then future president of the United States Richard M. Nixon referred to himself with the italicized form in (2a); and in 2009, then Senate majority leader Harry Reid produced (2b).

- (2) a. You won't have *Nixon* to kick around any more.¹
(en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Richard_Nixon)
b. "Joe Lieberman is the least of Harry Reid's problems," Reid told reporters at his weekly press conference.
(tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2009/10/reid-lieberman-is-the-least-of-my-problems.php)

And there are many instances of English speakers referring to themselves as *yours truly*.²

- (3) a. . . . though *yours truly* has tried to present his readers with a diverse variety of viewpoints, some very different from his.
(www.dogandponny.org/2006/12/invitation-to-contributors.html)
b. *Yours truly* spent his formative years riding around in the back of a '65 Fairlane Ranch Wagon.
(www.mustangandfords.com/featuredvehicles/. . . /index.html)

Other English examples of the general phenomena of interest here include the italicized forms in (4). (Thanks to Anna Szabolcsi for pointing out example (4f).)

- (4) a. *Your humble servant* finds the time before our next encounter very long.
- b. *This reviewer* was unable to strictly follow the logic of the submission.
- c. James Patterson is represented, as is Danielle Steel, as is *your faithful correspondent*.
(From *Best American Short Stories 2007*, edited by Stephen King)
- d. (*Your*) *Daddy* is going to get you an ice-cream cone.
- e. A chandelier overhead scattered shards of red, yellow and blue refracted light around the bathroom as *this guest* literally soaked in the luxury.
(*New York Daily News*, 23 November 2007, 14)
- f. For *this middle-class citizen* who lives within my means, . . . , the angry posturing of law makers does nothing to appease my sickness at this foreseeable calamity.
(*New York Times*, 24 September 2008, 26)
- g. Can *the general/the judge* tell this committee why so many cases have yet to be processed?
- h. Would *the baroness* like more wine?

The forms in (4a–f), *on their usage of interest here*, are like those in (1)–(3) in that they denote the speaker. Those in (4g,h) differ in denoting the addressee. Hereafter, we refer to these forms as *imposters*. What follows lends substance to the idea implicit in this terminology that the phenomenon involves forms whose actual analysis is distinct from that suggested by their appearance. More precisely, we will propose that imposters have a more complex syntactic structure than any regular DPs they may be homophonous with.

So the goal of this study is to consider the grammatical status of imposters, that is, of usages like *this reporter* and *Nixon* in (1) and (2) as well as *yours truly* and the forms in (4). At first glance, each imposter appears to be a 3rd person DP, grammatically no different from other 3rd person DPs that do not denote speaker or hearer. Most of them have the syntactic form of a standard 3rd person DP (e.g., *this reporter*, *your faithful servant*, *the general*). But there are imposter expressions such as *yours truly* and French *bibi* (see (6c)), both of which denote the speaker, whose forms are distinct from those of ordinary 3rd person DPs.

Critically, even though they denote the speaker or addressee, all English imposters determine *3rd person verbal agreement*,³ as noted by Stirling and Huddleston (2002, 1464); see (5). (We return to the issue of plural and coordinated imposters in chapters 3 and 9.)

- (5) a. This reporter is/*am signing off from Madrid, Spain.
 b. Nixon is/*am not going to resign.
 c. Yours truly is/*am unhappy.
 d. Yours truly runs/*run in the morning.
 e. Is/*Are Madam not feeling well?
 f. Is/*Are the general going to dine in his suite?

A special case of the verbal agreement constraint was made explicit by Curme (1931, 14): “Instead of *we* some authors employ here a noun with the third person of the verb.”

Imposters are found in other languages besides English. For instance, we suggest that the italicized French forms in (6) fall into the same class. Further examples from other languages are given in chapters 9 and 19.

- (6) a. *Votre serviteur* a été interviewé en septembre
 your servant has been interviewed in September
 2006 dans les locaux d’ARTE.
 2006 at the site of ARTE
 ‘Your servant was interviewed in September 2006 at the site of ARTE.’
 (franckpoisson.blogs.com/blogapart/2007/03/exclusif_fautil.html)
 b. Comment *Madame* désire-t-elle sa fourrure?
 how Madam desire she her fur
 ‘How would Madam like her fur?’
 (www.acusa.ch/AN/an1997/14-fourrure.html)
 c. et *bibi* j’ai lu tous les livres que ma mère m’avait
 and darling I have read all the books that my mother to.me had
 interdits . . .
 forbidden
 ‘Me, I read all the books that my mother had forbidden.’
 (blogs.telarama.fr/numerique/2007/03/la_ps3_ne_passi.html)

Previous recognition of a grammatical category corresponding to our notion of imposter is limited; but the idea was informally grasped in traditional work, as shown in (7).

- (7) Jespersen 1924, 217

“In the vast majority of cases there is complete agreement between notional and grammatical person, i.e. the pronoun ‘I’ and the corresponding verbal forms are used where the speaker really speaks of himself, and so with the other persons . . . and thus we may have such third-person substitutes for ‘I’ as *your humble servant*. . . . In Western

Europe, with its greater self-assertion, such expressions are chiefly used in jocular speech, thus *E. yours truly* (from the subscription in letters), *this child* (vulgarly *this baby*). A distinctively self-assertive jocular substitute for ‘I’ is *number one*. Some writers avoid the mention of ‘I’ as much as possible by using passive constructions, etc., and when such devices are not possible, they say *the author*, *the (present) writer*, or *the reviewer*.⁷⁴

Rather parallel remarks are found in the French literature:

(8) Blinkenberg 1968, 76–77 (our translation)

“Many nouns can be employed in everyday life by transposition of person to speak of oneself and above all to serve in addressing others. Thus the words *père*, *mère* and other words indicating close relatives as well as first names are used very regularly when one speaks of oneself to small children and serve also in their responses, so that the grammatical 1st and 2nd person are set aside at this level of usage. In a more refined usage, the various levels of society employ certain nouns in a particular way, using them as terms of politeness. It is only exceptionally that these usages express an agreement with the real sense, which contrasts with the form. But, if a term of politeness such as *monsieur* is employed directly as a term of address, that vocative function will lead regularly to the 2nd person in a relative clause that attaches to it:

Eh! Monsieur, qui vous cachez derrière ce volet.

‘Hey! Mister, who is hiding yourself behind that shutter.’

On the contrary, the same terms of politeness used in the ‘nominative’, that is to say as regular subjects, normally determine 3rd person agreement, a complete agreement drifting toward simple formal agreement.

Monsieur ne prend pas son parapluie?

‘The gentleman doesn’t take his umbrella?’

Madame est souffrante?

‘Madam is not feeling well?’

Expressions of politeness such as *altesse* (highness), *éminence* (eminence), *excellence* (excellency), *grace* (grace), *majesté* (majesty), *seigneurie* (lord) also regularly determine a normal agreement of term to term, as far as gender and person are concerned. The predicate will consequently be in the feminine and 3rd person, even though employed to designate a man to whom one speaks. . . . Finally, let us recall that the

nouns *bibi*, *mézigue*, *tézigue* can take, in the colloquial language, the function of the real 1st and 2nd persons, all the while keeping the formal agreement of the 3rd person.” [*Bibi* and *mézigue* are 1st person forms; *tézigue* is 2nd person.]⁵

Crucial in Jespersen’s description in (7) is his differentiation of *notional* and *grammatical* person, evidently a traditional distinction he felt no need to define or justify. But it seems fairly clear. Notional person is the semantic category that distinguishes DPs according to whether their denotations involve the speaker(s), the addressee(s), or none of those entities. Grammatical person refers to various morphosyntactic properties regularly associated with specific notional person forms. For example, in the case of the singular imposters in (5), these properties give rise to 3rd person singular subject-verb agreement. Imposters show that there is not a strictly lawful connection such that a form whose notional person is X inevitably has those morphosyntactic features associated in a particular language with X person. This conclusion is also supported by the syntactic construction called *camouflage* in Collins, Moody, and Postal 2008 (chapter 6 sketches a characterization of camouflage DPs and compares them with imposters).

Typically, 3rd person forms include both a limited set of pronominals and an unbounded set of nonpronominals; 1st person and 2nd person forms are normally exclusively pronominal.⁶ But imposters clash with the view that 1st and 2nd person forms are always pronominal (as do the camouflage cases discussed in chapter 6). Our concept of imposter might initially translate into Jespersen’s terminology roughly as follows:

- (9) An imposter is a notionally 1st person or 2nd person DP that is grammatically 3rd person.

But this is likely too restricted. We believe there are cases where grammatically 1st or 2nd person forms are notionally some distinct person (e.g., see the discussion of nurse *we* in chapter 18). This suggests generalizing (9) to (10).

- (10) An imposter is a notionally X person DP that is grammatically Y person, $X \neq Y$.

However, while (10) in fact covers most of the imposters we will deal with in this book, the essential structural properties of our analyses of imposters are independent of person. In principle, there could be number imposters, gender imposters, or seemingly even more arcane types. For instance, it *might* be correct to view the use whereby a government (or perhaps its executive component) is referred to indirectly by citing the name of its capital city, as in (11a), in the same terms as we view person imposters such as *this reviewer*.

- (11) a. Albany is trying to persuade Washington to increase Medicaid allotments.
 b. The government of the state of New York is trying to persuade the government of the United States to increase Medicaid allotments.

The natural interpretation of (11a) as (11b) raises, we believe, many of the same issues raised by the use of *this reporter* to refer to the speaker. But regardless of the ultimate scope of the class of imposters (which could be vast), here we concentrate exclusively on the type involving person. It would not have been misleading, then, to name this book *Person Imposters*. That said, we simply use the term *imposter* here to refer to the person cases illustrated in (5).

In the modern syntactic literature, we can point to few works discussing imposters. Ross (1970) notices members of the class but has little to say about them. The scope of English imposters is recognized more fully by Stirling and Huddleston (2002, 1464–1465). Baker (2008) offers some very brief proposals, and Siewierska (2004, 1–2) offers some brief remarks. We are unable to cite any other work on imposters in the linguistics literature. Given the richness of the phenomena (documented in the rest of this book) and the theoretical importance of the factual results, the fact that imposters have not received more attention has a more general implication: even what might at first appear to be marginal grammatical phenomena, and even in the most intensively studied languages, can reveal depths of mystery with rich theoretical consequences.

We have not made a systematic study of which DPs can be imposters. But putting aside the exceptions noted in chapter 5, as well as indefinites also discussed there, one possibility is that every definite human DP can function as an imposter. We do not pursue this issue in the present book, but we will offer a range of examples to illustrate the wide scope of the imposter phenomenon in English.

For the imposter type represented by *this reporter*, an unlimited number of similar examples can be formed. Just as a reporter might say (12a) referring to himself or herself, so a syntactician, phonologist, semanticist, logician, priest, teacher, and so on, could say one of (12b) referring to *himself* or *herself*.

- (12) a. This reporter has studied that question.
 b. This syntactician/phonologist/semanticist/logician/priest/teacher has studied that question.

Nor can the imposter type based on proper names be exhaustively listed. Moreover, imposters of this type can consist of first names, last names, or full names (e.g., *Jerome, Jones, Jerome (J.) Jones*); and there can be more complex instances of this type with determiners and some modifiers.

- (13) a. The present Thomas Wilson Belmont will never accept that.
 b. The former Mrs. Hubert Puffington is now a free woman. (said by the ex-wife of Mr. Puffington)

There is no problem interpreting the subjects of (13a,b) as denoting the speaker. And the syntactic criteria advanced in what follows show that (13a,b) represent 1st person imposters just as clearly as any other case dealt with here.

It appears, then, that the class of English imposters will (properly) include the open sets *the* + Modifier + Human Proper Name and *this* + Common Noun denoting humans—more accurately, denoting sentient beings. Other imposters include the following:

- (14) a. *1st person imposters*
- i. yours truly, your faithful correspondent, the (present) author(s), the present reviewer(s), the undersigned, the court, the (present) writer(s)
 - ii. personal names
 - iii. diminutive kinship terms: Daddy, Mommy, Auntie, Granny, Gramps⁷
 - iv. nondiminutive kinship terms plus a personal name: Uncle + Name, Aunt + Name, Cousin + Name, Grampa + Name, Granma + Name⁸
- b. *2nd person imposters*
- i. Madam, the + Common Noun denoting ranks in a military organization (the general/colonel, etc.), the Holy Father, my lord, my lady, baby/darling/dear/dearest/love/sweetheart/sweetie (see (15)), the reader, the attentive listener, my colleague from South Carolina (legislative context)⁹
 - ii. the elements of (aii), especially when talking to very small children and pets (*Does Bobby want to go to the movies?*)
 - iii. the elements of (aiii)
 - iv. possibly with some strain, the elements of (aiv)

The following examples illustrate cases not already discussed:

- (15) a. How is my baby/darling/dear/dearest/love/sweetheart/sweetie tonight?
 b. Would little Jimmy like another ice-cream cone?

How should one approach the grammatical analysis of imposters? The view we will argue for is that each imposter DP₁ has a complex structure containing another DP, DP₂, where DP₂ is invisible in the string of words representing the

surface form of DP_1 . Moreover, if DP_1 is a 1st person singular imposter, its contained DP_2 is a 1st person singular pronominal; if DP_1 is a 1st person plural imposter, its contained DP_2 is a 1st person plural pronominal; if DP_1 is a 2nd person singular imposter, its contained DP_2 is a 2nd person singular pronominal; and if DP_1 is a 2nd person plural imposter, its contained DP_2 is a 2nd person plural pronominal. Viewed in these terms, it will turn out that the denotation of an imposter is identical to that of its non-3rd person component. The remaining chapters of the book can be seen as an attempt to justify this hypothesis, which we call the *Syntactic View* in chapter 2.