Pronouns

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The articles in this thematic issue of *the Canadian Journal of Linguistics* are based on a selection of papers presented at the Calgary Workshop on Pronouns held at the University of Calgary on November 15–16, 2019. This was the eleventh event bringing together linguists from across Canada and beyond to discuss current issues in the grammar of nominals, and the second one to launch a special issue of this journal. (The first was the 2019 issue (64.4) co-edited by Will Oxford and Jila Ghomeshi, with papers from the University of Manitoba Workshop on Person.)

Building on the tradition of prior workshops, we invited faculty, postdocs and graduate students from Canadian universities who share a theoretical approach and an interest in the structure, distribution, interpretation and processing of pronouns, as well as leading researchers specializing in this topic from outside Canada. The workshop consisted of twenty-one talks, including two keynote addresses by international figures who have made major contributions to our understanding of the grammatical properties of pronouns. Our invitees came from Victoria in the west to Halifax in the east, representing a total of twelve different linguistics programs in Canada. Given the importance of these workshops for the development of professional networks within Canada, the inclusion of early-career scholars was given high priority, and the workshop included talks by three postdocs and four graduate students. The subject matter of the presentations represented a broad range of research, encompassing laboratory-based psycholinguistic work on pronouns in English to more traditional fieldwork examinations of less-studied languages, such as Inuktut and Chuj (Mayan, Guatemala).

Why pronouns? Since the earliest days of generative grammar, investigation into the distinctive properties of pronouns has advanced the development of linguistic theory. (See for example, Lees and Klima 1963, Postal 1969). Pronouns have long been the focus of research on the syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics

of nominals, as well at the interfaces between these different components. The debates that they engender are far from settled, in part because linguists continue to expand the empirical base of their inquiry – both to under-documented, understudied languages and to innovative pronouns that reflect sociocultural changes among speakers of well-documented and well-studied languages, and in part because of changes in foundational assumptions. The results of this theoretical work have also informed psycholinguistic research into the question of how different kinds of pronouns are processed.

The articles in this issue represent this breadth of inquiry, as they explore an array of issues in each of these areas, and draw on data from typologically, geographically, and genetically diverse languages. Taken together, they point to the broad conclusion that pronouns are not a homogeneous set of objects; rather, pronouns with different interpretations or different morphosyntactic properties often have different structures and different formal content. For example, the articles by **Cowper and Hall** on Marshallese (and Heiltsuk) and by **Royer** on Chuj both explore the relationship between demonstrative and personal pronouns, and both conclude that different pronouns require different analyses, each proposing a distinct point of contrast.

Cowper and Hall investigate variation in the content of formal morphosemantic features of pronouns and their mapping onto syntactic categories, concluding that the contribution of Universal Grammar is a contrast-driven mechanism for constructing featural representations, and not a universal repository that languages draw from. Such an approach can make sense of language-internal contrasts as well as seemingly contradictory conclusions of different articles in the field. For example, **Conrod** attributes variation in the relatively innovative use of definite singular *they* (dsT) by different English speakers to differences in their representation of gender features on D. For speakers who use dsT, gender features are optional, but for speakers who do not, they are obligatory. **Han and Moulton** also focus on the analysis of dsT, but they report on processing experiments that compare dsT (which they term referential singular *they*) and bound singular *they*. The conclusion they reach is that gender features are represented differently in the innovative use of *they* as a (co-)referential pronoun, when compared to its long-established use as a bound variable.

Another issue that has long been debated is whether pronouns consist entirely of nominal functional categories, or whether they also contain a (possibly elided) noun. **Compton** offers new arguments that Inuktut pronouns contain an overt noun that realizes person as well as functional superstructure dominating the lexical category. Thus, the difference between pronouns and other types of nominals in Inuktut reduces to the choice of noun. In contrast, **Royer's** description of Chuj makes it clear that in this language pronouns never contain an overt noun, but despite appearances, Royer demonstrates that Chuj 3rd person pronouns also consist of an NP dominated by layers of functional structure. He argues that the content of the NP is either null or elided, depending on whether it reflects a weak or strong definite description. The conclusions reached by the authors of these articles indicates that the distinction between pronouns and nouns is not structurally determined.

A related question concerns the relationship between structural complexity and the interpretation of nominals. Déchaine and Wiltschko's (2002) proposal that

different types of pronouns have different structures and concomitantly different binding theoretic properties has influenced much subsequent work on this question, including many of the articles in this issue. **Paul and Travis**'s point of departure is an analysis of Malagasy by Zribi-Hertz and Mbolatianavalona (1999), according to which variable bound pronouns are structurally defective, but in a way that Déchaine and Wiltschko did not anticipate. Specifically, Zribi-Hertz and Mbolatianavalona demonstrate that what is missing is not the DP layer, but rather an intermediate layer of functional structure (NumP). **Paul and Travis** investigate another variety of Malagasy which has bound pronouns that are not structurally defective. Taken together, the two varieties of Malagasy challenge any approach that seeks to attribute binding theoretic status to particular functional categories or to structural complexity more generally.

What then are the defining properties of pronouns? This question underlies the contributions of **McGinnis**, **Bjorkman** and **Kučerova and Szczegielniak**. Investigating the properties of reflexive clitics in French and Icelandic, **McGinnis** provides new arguments that despite their nominal morphological properties, these are not in fact anaphoric pronouns, but rather realizations of the verbal functional category Voice. **Bjorkman** revisits classical arguments that tense is a pronoun-like category in the clausal spine (Partee 1973, Kratzer 1998) in light of divergent developments in the syntactic and semantic analysis of pronouns and tense. **Kučerova and Szczegielniak** investigate the properties of politeness markers in Polish, arguing that this type of lexical noun is pronoun-like in that it can acquire a 2nd person feature value (on D, rather than N) at the syntax-semantics interface.

Like **McGinnis**'s article, **Chapman and Moulton**'s contribution is concerned with the distinctive properties of reflexive anaphors, and in particular the fact that anaphors must be bound by an antecedent. However, their interest is in the way English reflexive anaphors are processed. More specifically, they explore differences in the processing of reflexive anaphors embedded in arguments versus predicates, in order to determine at what point binding theory Principle A plays a role in processing anaphors. Taken together, these articles also predict that we should find a processing difference between reflexive nominals and reflexive Voice. This is perhaps the topic for the next pan-Canadian workshop on nominals.

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