

The complex life of 3rd person:

Syntactic visibility of 3rd person

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Third person has long stood apart from first and second in morphosyntax, raising the question of whether it should be treated as underspecified or absent in the syntax (3noP), or instead as a distinct feature that can be directly targeted (3yesP). In this talk, I will outline the theoretical stakes (whether 3rd person is inherently *invisible* to syntactic operations or can be explicitly *encoded*) and argue for expanding the empirical data beyond agreement to a wider range of person-sensitive phenomena.

Drawing on evidence from auxiliary selection, case marking, agreement, null subjects, and word order in languages such as Eastern Abruzzese, Algonquian, Hebrew, and Swedish, I show recurring asymmetries between local (1st/2nd) vs. 3rd person. These patterns reveal both cross-linguistic regularities and points of variation, raising the question of whether a unified account is possible. The talk expands the empirical base to compare the competing analyses of 3noP and 3yesP, and highlights directions for future work.