Gender and T–V on pronouns as form indexicals

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- Typical underlying assumptions:
  - The form of the inference is often taken as an invariable given and assumed to be irrelevant for projection.
  - Inferences fall into several natural classes, internally characterized by certain properties (specific projection patterns and various "tests"; sometimes also triggering), with one of these classes being "presuppositions".

Phi-features in formal semantics & pragmatics: standard view

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    (1) If Skyler$_i$ brings her$_i$ dog, I'll give you $10.
    $\rightarrow$ Skyler is {a woman, female}.

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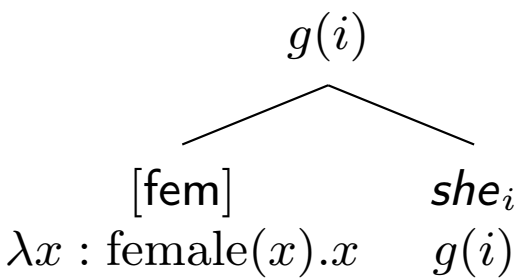
    $\rightarrow$ Skyler is {a woman, female}.

  - This inference is analyzed as a lexically encoded "presupposition" and is assumed to project as such, e.g., Heim & Kratzer 1998:

    (2)



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b. If Kim had cheated on the exam, they'd be **regretting** it.
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(4) a. *Context: Skyler is a woman.*
If Skyler was a man, I would buy {#him, her} flowers.
(adopted from Yanovich 2010)

b. Esli by my s vami byli na ty, ⟨#ty, vy⟩ by
if IRR we with you.V were on you.T you.T you.V IRR
menja ⟨#nazyvala, nazyvali⟩ Anja.
me called.T called.V Anya
'If we were on the T form basis, you'd be calling me Anya.'
(Russian)

Phi-features in formal semantics & pragmatics: standard view

- Because these inferences do not project like regular presuppositions, they are often treated as indexical presuppositions (e.g., Cooper 1983; Yanovich 2010, 2012):

(5) $[\![\text{she}]\!]^{c,g} = \text{female}(g(i))(c_w)$. $g(i)$, where c_w is the world of the context of utterance c (≈Yanovich 2012, (7))

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- Schlenker (2007) also treats T–V as contributing indexical presuppositions that reflect the level of familiarity between the speaker and the addressee:

  (6) $[\![\text{tu}]\!]^{c}$ = the speaker c_s believes in c_w they stand in a familiar relation to the addressee c_a . c_a (≈Schlenker 2007, (1b))

Goals of this talk

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- I show that the empirical diversity of usage patterns of pronouns calls for a richer formal analysis thereof, one that revisits the standard assumptions at all levels (lexical semantics, triggering, projection).
- I treat this as a case study that exposes the general methodological inadequacy of the standard approach to studying projecting inferences in formal semantics & pragmatics.

Outline of the talk

Counterfactual vs. ignorance local contexts

- For counterfactual LCs, judgements are indeed (near-)categorical:

(7) a. *Context: Skyler is a woman.*
If Skyler was a man, I would buy {#him, her} flowers.

b. Esli by my s vami byli na ty, ⟨#ty, vy⟩ by
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- But in ignorance LCs, the patterns are much more varied (contra the claims for gender in Yanovich 2010; Sudo 2012):

(8) a. *Context: Skyler's gender is unknown.*
If Skyler is a man, I will buy {%him, %them, #her} flowers.

b. Ja ne pomnju, na ty my ili na vy, no esli na ty,
I not remember on you.T we or on you.V but if on you.T
%⟨ty, vy⟩ %⟨možeš, možete⟩ nazyvat' menya Anja.
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'I don't remember if we're on the T or V form basis, but if we're on the T form basis, you may call me Anya.'

Counterfactual vs. ignorance local contexts

- Gender: 10 English speakers (PhD students born in late 1980s–mid 1990s) listed all the forms they accept for several versions of the counterfactual and ignorance LC examples above, indicating any preferences:

Counterfactual LC	
"actual" form	8
"actual" form $>$ *they*	1
%"actual" form/LC form/*they*	1
Ignorance LC	
they	3
they $=$ LC form	3
%LC form/LC form $>$ *they*	2
they $>$ LC form	1
%*they*/*they* $=$ LC form	1

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- T–V: 6 Russian speakers (PhD students or graduates born in mid 1980s–mid 1990s), myself included, listed all the forms they accept for versions of the counterfactual and ignorance LC examples above, indicating any preferences:

Counterfactual LC	
V	5
V > T	1
Ignorance LC	
T > V	2
T	1
?T	1
V > T	1
V	1

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    - Examples of lack of social gender–pronoun isomorphism: people with non-binary gender identity adopting binary pronouns; people adopting multiple pronouns regardless of whether they identify within the binary; people adopting pronouns that do not match their gender identity as a form of gender-non-conformity (e.g., he/him lesbians).

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  - For both gender and T–V: deliberate use of incorrect/more marked forms can have negative non-inferential conversational effects, and most speakers want to avoid it; for some speakers, even accidental use of incorrect/more marked forms is undesirable.
- Note: Yanovich (2012) discusses various social aspects of pronoun use (wrt gender), but the empirical picture he assumes (and, consequently, his analysis) is still incomplete.

Lexical semantics: form indexicals

- Gender and T–V on pronouns are *form indexicals*:

(9) a. $[\![[\textsc{form}]]\!]^{c,g} = \lambda x.\mathrm{form}(\textit{form}, x, c)$, i.e., the speaker c_s believes *form* to be an appropriate way to refer to x in c

b. $[\![[\textsc{she-}\phi]]\!]^{c,g} = \lambda x.\mathrm{form}(\textit{she}, x, c)$

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  - how the conventions are established and changed;
  - the inventory of forms and their markedness status;
  - what one does when talking about groups of individuals and non-specific individuals.

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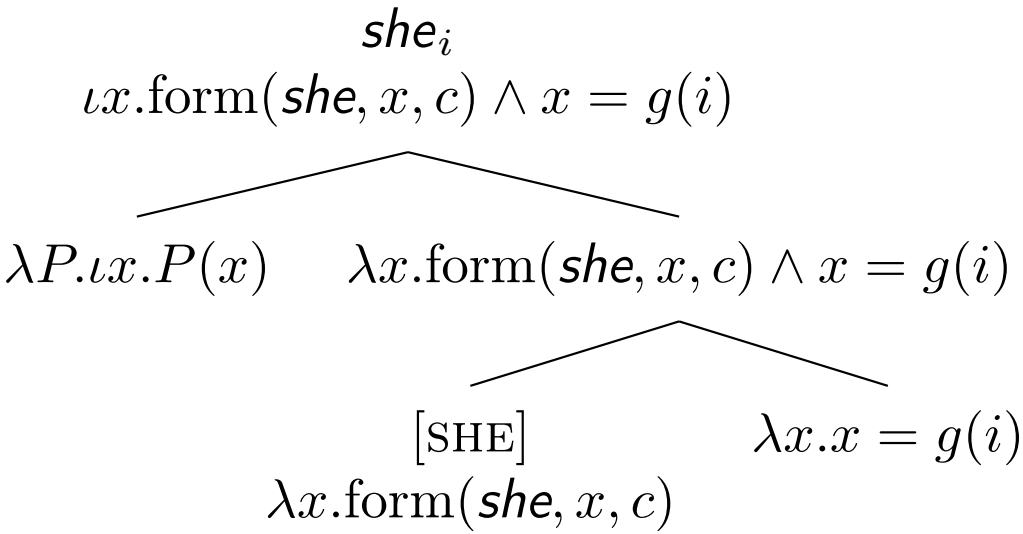

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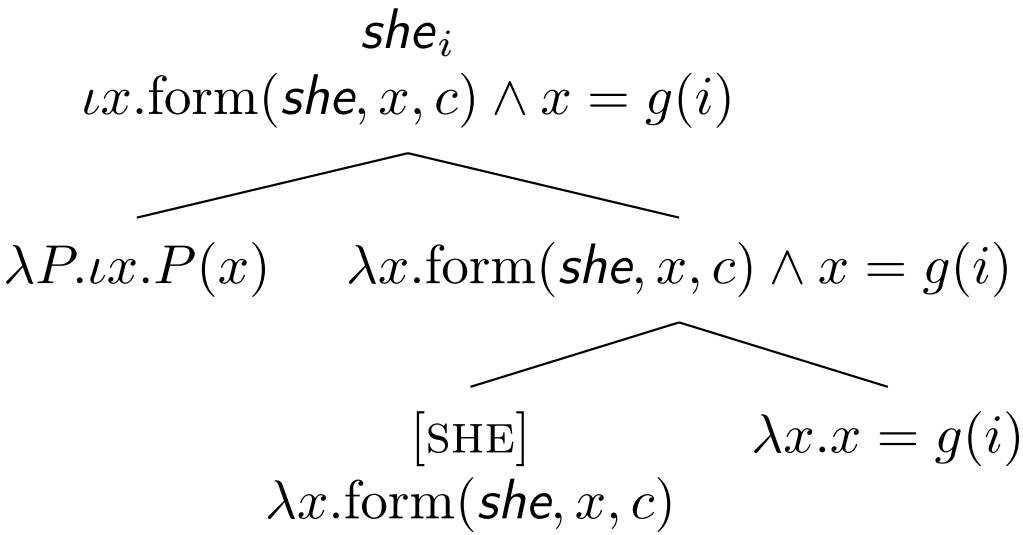

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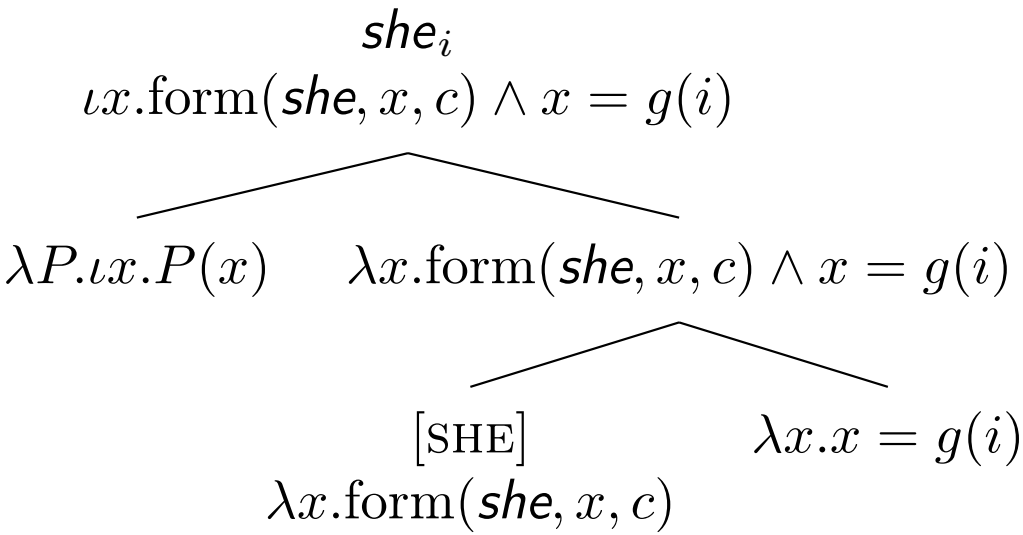

- Like any descriptive content of referential expressions (*the female person*, *a certain woman*, *this person with 'she' pronouns*, *Masha*, etc.).
- Unlike the descriptive content of non-referential expressions (e.g., *Are they {a he or a she?, a man or a woman?, a Masha or a Maria?}*).

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- Same logic applies in quantificational cases, except the reasoning becomes even more complicated (see also Yanovich 2012 for a relevant discussion of gender in quantificational cases).
  - E.g., the common question of whether "presuppositions" project existentially or universally in various quantificational environments doesn't help in explaining why some speakers can use arbitrary gendered forms w/o intending any universal inferences for non-specific individuals, but not when talking about a group of specific people:

(11) Possible pattern of pronoun use:

a. If you make [a friend]$_i$, you should be kind to her$_i$.
   $\not\rightarrow$ If you make a friend, that friend will have *she* pronouns.

b. [Every friend of mine]$_i$ likes her$_i$ job.
   $\rightarrow$ All my friends have *she* pronouns.

Speaker-external meaning

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  - E.g., negative effects of deliberate or accidental misgendering. Cf. effects of expressing one's emotions by swearing on the speaker or effects of hearing a slur on an external observer.
  - The potential to induce such effects can affect one's choice of form, but the effects themselves are not part of the truth-conditional content and should not be modeled as such (instead they can be modeled as direct manipulation of the context, à la expressive semantics in Potts 2007).

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- Two further observations:
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  - Either way, not an instance of grammatical indexical shift.

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  - The nature of triggering and projection patterns for a given inference need to be studied on a case by case basis. Adopting "presuppositions" as an umbrella category is not helpful for either problem.

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