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”.
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- Grammatical gender on human-referring pronouns is assumed to contribute projecting inferences about the referent’s real-life “gender”, w/o specifying what “gender” is and assuming a one-to-one mapping b/n grammatical gender and “gender”:

(1) If Skyler$_i$ brings her$_i$ dog, I’ll give you $10.$
→ Skyler is \{a woman, female\}.
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\phi \text{-features in formal semantics & pragmatics: standard view}
\]

(1) If Skyler\(_i\) brings her\(_i\) dog, I’ll give you $10.
→ 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:

\[
g(i)
\]

\[
\lambda x : \text{female}(x). \ x \quad \text{she}_{i}
\]

\[
[\text{fem}]\quad \text{she}_{i}
\]

\[
\text{g}(i)
\]
However, gender on pronouns doesn’t behave like other “presuppositions” wrt local contexts (LCs); I observe that in counterfactual LCs T–V features in Russian pattern with gender:
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(3) a. If Mia was in the library, Lea would be there, **too**.
   b. If Kim had cheated on the exam, they’d be **regretting** it.
   c. If Zoe was married, I would have met **her spouse**.
However, gender on pronouns doesn’t behave like other “presuppositions” wrt local contexts (LCs); I observe that in counterfactual LCs T–V features in Russian pattern with gender:

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    c. If Zoe was married, I would have met her spouse.

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

\[
\text{[she]}^{c,g} = \text{female}(g(i))(c_w) \cdot g(i), \text{ where } c_w \text{ is the world of the context of utterance } c
\]

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

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

(6) \([\text{tu}]^{c} = \text{the speaker } c_s \text{ believes in } c_w \text{ they stand in a familiar relation to the addressee } c_a \cdot c_a\) \((\approx\text{Schlenker 2007, (1b)})\)
Goals of this talk

- 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).
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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

1. Introduction: the standard view
2. More on pronouns in local contexts
3. Reconsidering the standard view
4. If we have time
5. Conclusion
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
if IRR we with you.V were on you.T you.T you.V IRR
menja ⟨#nazyvala, nazyvali⟩ Anja.
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‘If we were on the T form basis, you’d be calling me Anya.’
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me called.T called.v Anya

‘If we were on the T form basis, you’d be calling me Anya.’

- 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.

\[b. \ Ja \ ne \ pomnju, \ na \ ty \ my \ ili \ na \ vy, \ no \ esli \ na \ ty, \ I \ not \ remember \ on \ you.T \ we \ or \ on \ you.V \ but \ if \ on \ you.T %\langle ty, vy \rangle %\langle možeš, možete \rangle nazyvat’ \ menya \ Anja. \]

you.T you.V may.T may.v call me Anya

‘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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“actual” form &gt; they</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they = LC form</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%LC form/LC form &gt; they</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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  | they             | 3           |
  | they = LC form   | 3           |
  | %LC form/LC form > they | 2        |
  | 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:

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Verdict: the social aspect of pronoun use matters for projection

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  - For gender: following the tradition in the literature, in the examples above, the LCs for gender use words *female, male, woman, man, girl, boy*, etc., but for some people there isn’t a direct one-to-one mapping b/n biological sex or even social gender and pronouns.
  - 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.
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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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Gender and T–V on pronouns are *form indexicals*:

(9)  

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

b. $[[\text{SHE-ϕ}]]^{c,g} = \lambda x.\text{form}(\text{she}, x, c)$
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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.
Triggering: configuration, not lexical “presuppositions”

- For *phi*-features, you don’t need to believe in “presuppositions” as a natural class of inferences with their own triggering mechanism.
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- Esipova 2019: *phi*-features and other pronoun-internal modifiers (e.g., in Khoekhoe) are obligatorily non-restricting and, thus, not-at-issue, because they always modify a property whose extension is a singleton set:

\[
(10) \quad \text{she}_i \\
\forall x. \text{form}(\text{she}, x, c) \land x = g(i)
\]

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- Like any descriptive content of referential expressions (the *female person*, a *certain woman*, this *person* with ‘she’ pronouns, Masha, etc.).
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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?}).
“Projection”: lexical semantics + pragmatic reasoning

- Again, no class of “presuppositions” with uniform projection patterns.
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- Again, no class of “presuppositions” with uniform projection patterns.
- “Projection” for gender and T–V is the process of selecting a context-appropriate form, affected by a range of utterance-internal and -external factors, including social cost of using the wrong form.

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, you should be kind to her.

b. Every friend of mine likes her job.

→ All my friends have she pronouns.
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     $\nRightarrow$ 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

Another common property of the standard approach to inferences in formal semantics & pragmatics: often no clear separation b/n the speaker’s reasons for using a certain linguistic form (speaker meaning) vs. inferences drawn by an external observer + non-inferential conversational effects (speaker-external meaning).
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  - Inferences about the speaker meaning; e.g., she used to refer to smb you know nothing about by smb whose pronoun use patterns you do know.
  - Inferences about the speaker; e.g., she used to refer to smb who you know uses he pronouns by smb whose pronoun use patterns you don’t know.
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- Inferential speaker-external meaning for gender and T–V:
  - Inferences about the speaker meaning; e.g., *she* used to refer to smb you know nothing about by smb whose pronoun use patterns you do know.
  - Inferences about the speaker; e.g., *she* used to refer to smb who you know uses *he* pronouns by smb whose pronoun use patterns you don’t know.

- Non-inferential conversational effects for gender and T–V:
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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.
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  - 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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- Temporarily “pretending” to have different conventions.
- Either way, not an instance of grammatical indexical shift.
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Generalizing from this case study:

- The specific form of a projecting inference matters for issues of projection, and it can vary across speakers.
- 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.


