

### Polite Pronouns and the PCC

**Background** The *Person-Case Constraint* (PCC) has played a substantial role in recent linguistic theorizing, particularly regarding agreement and the encoding of person (Anagnostopoulou 2017 and references therein). While different accounts vary in terms of which grammatical ingredients are responsible for PCC effects, most accounts converge on the idea that these effects arise in the morphosyntax, e.g. via morphological filters (Bonet 1991) or restrictions on Agree with multiple goals (Béjar and Rezac 2003, Anagnostopoulou 2005, Coon and Keine 2021, Deal 2022).

**Proposal:** We provide evidence from ‘polite’ pronouns that challenges the view that PCC effects should (always) be attributed to morphosyntax. Polite pronouns have the useful property that they exhibit a striking mismatch between the features expressed in their agreement and in their forms on the one hand, and what is interpreted on the other (see e.g. Wechsler and Hahm 2011); they therefore provide an ideal testing ground for morphosyntactic analyses of the PCC, which predict that 3rd-person polite pronouns used for addressees should behave like other 3rd-person arguments, and should thus fail to give rise to PCC effects. We find that this prediction is falsified in Italian for the polite pronoun LEI, which, as we show, is used for formal address but is grammatically 3rd-person, and for which PCC effects obtain (as also briefly noted by D’Alessandro and Pescarini 2016). We argue that the PCC pattern with LEI is consistent with a syntacticosemantic analysis of the PCC, and sketch how this can be captured in a system such as Pancheva and Zubizarreta’s (2018). The study has important implications for the theory of person restrictions and provides a novel empirical tool to probe such effects cross-linguistically.

**Data:** PCC effects have been reported to obtain in Italian (e.g. Bianchi 2006, D’Alessandro and Pescarini 2016): while clitic combinations of a 3rd-person indirect object (IO) with a 3rd direct object (DO) (henceforth 3>3) and 2>3 are licit, the clitic combination of a 3rd-person IO with a participant DO (1 or 2, the latter shown here) is illicit (1)-(4).

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| <p>(1) Glie la ha affidat-a<br/>         3SG.DAT 3F.SG.ACC has entrusted-F.SG<br/>         ‘He entrusted her to him/her.’</p> <p>(3) *Gli(e)/le ti/te ha affidat{-o/-a}<br/>         3SG.DAT 2SG.ACC has entrusted-{M.SG/F.SG}<br/>         Intended: ‘He entrusted you to him/her.’</p> | <p>(2) Te la ha affidat-a.<br/>         2SG.DAT 3F.SG.ACC has entrusted-F.SG<br/>         ‘He entrusted her to you.’ (adapted, Bianchi 2006)</p> <p>(4) *Ti/te gli(e)/le ha affidat{-o/-a}<br/>         2SG.ACC 3SG.DAT has entrusted-{M.SG/F.SG}<br/>         Intended: ‘He entrusted you to him/her.’</p> |
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The Italian ‘polite’ pronominal series, identified here by its citation form LEI, is used as a politeness form in reference to singular addressees. However, LEI behaves as 3F.SG, both in its morphological realization and in its verbal agreement behavior. In terms of its morphology, LEI is identical across the board with the 3rd-person feminine singular series: *lei* (stressed pronoun 3F.SG.NOM/ACC), *la* (3F.SG.ACC), *le/glie* (3F.SG.DAT), *su-o* (3POSS-INFL), and *si/se* (3REFL). In terms of its agreement behavior, despite referring to an addressee, LEI triggers 3rd-person subject agreement (5).

- (5) Lei {è / \*sei} qui.  
 LEI.NOM be.PRS.INDC.3SG /be.PRS.INDC.2SG here  
 ‘You (polite) are here.’

As a DO clitic, LEI is also treated like a 3F.SG for participle agreement. DO participant clitics optionally control gender/number agreement on past participles, alternatively allowing ‘default’ M.SG (6). In contrast, 3rd-person DO clitics obligatorily control such agreement. Once again, LEI patterns not with 2nd person, but rather with 3rd.

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| <p>(6) Maria, ti ho vist{-a/-o}.<br/>         Maria, 2SG.ACC have.1SG seen-{M.SG/F.SG}<br/>         ‘Maria, I saw you.’</p> | <p>(7) La ho vist{-a/*-o}.<br/>         {3SG.F/LEI}-ACC have.1SG seen-{F.SG/M.SG}<br/>         ‘I saw her/you (polite).’</p> |
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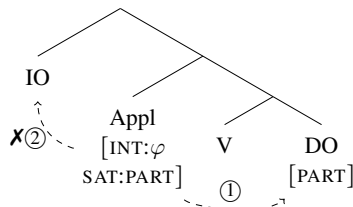
LEI can appear as an IO clitic with a 3rd-person DO (i.e. not in a PCC environment), as expected ((1), repeated in (8)). But strikingly, when LEI appears as a DO clitic with a 3rd-person IO clitic, the result is ungrammatical (9), displaying a PCC effect comparable to the one observed for the 2nd-person clitic (3). Note that there is nothing inherently ill-formed about the combination of the 3rd-person dative with a 3F.SG accusative, as shown in (1)/(8).

(8) Glie la ha affidata.  
 LEI.DAT 3SG.F.ACC has entrusted.F.SG  
 ‘He entrusted her to him.’

(9) \*Glie La ha affidata/affidato.  
 3SG.DAT LEI.ACC has entrusted.F.SG  
 Intended: ‘He entrusted you (formal) to him.’

**Analysis:** We argue that the evidence from Italian polite LEI is incompatible with morphosyntactic analyses of the PCC, and instead favors a syntacticosemantic account. Consider, for example, theories that derive PCC effects from the mechanics of Agree: because polite LEI behaves as a 3rd-person argument for purposes of agreement (as shown in (5)-(7)), such theories would then expect it to obviate PCC effects (see Preminger 2014, 124–125 for a related suggestion about K’ichee’), contrary to fact. As one representative example, Deal’s (2022) Interaction/Satisfaction model essentially attributes PCC effects to the inability of a probe to agree with an IO after agreeing with a DO that bears that probe’s ‘satisfaction’ features ([PARTICIPANT] in the case of the Strong PCC), with an Agree relation being necessary for argument cliticization (10). Given that polite LEI is treated as 3rd-person for agreement, a probe should agree with DO LEI and fail to be satisfied due to the unavailability of the formal feature [PARTICIPANT], and should therefore be able to agree with the IO, as in licit 1>3, 2>3, and 3>3 constructions; this is not borne out.

(10)



We suggest instead that a syntacticosemantic account of the PCC is on the right track, with a recent representative analysis being that of Pancheva and Zubizarreta (2018). P&Z attribute PCC effects to the encoding of point-of-view centers within a domain defined by an argument-introducing verbal head (for them, Appl). In brief, for Strong PCC grammars, Appl enters into an Agree relation with the *interpretable* person

features of the IO in order to establish it as a point-of-view center (for them, the relevant feature is [+PROXIMATE], which is entailed by participant features), and a ‘P-Uniqueness’ constraint dictates that at most one DP in the domain can bear the relevant feature. The key property of such an account is that it is fundamentally about interpretable person features and is not inherently tied to the formal features as they are overtly reflected in morphosyntactic agreement. The relevant person feature (for P&Z, [+PROXIMATE]) is entailed by interpretable [PARTICIPANT]; thus polite LEI is expected to run afoul of P&Z’s P-Uniqueness constraint exactly as 2nd-person arguments do. While P&Z’s account is capable of deriving the PCC patterns with polite pronouns, we take it to be a more general prediction of a syntacticosemantic account of PCC effects that they should obtain with 3rd-person polite pronouns.

The same argument applies for other person restrictions beyond the PCC: to the extent that LEI patterns with 2nd rather than 3rd person for these effects, any account of them that is intrinsically tied to formal features and morphosyntactic agreement will face the same challenges. We observe that this is the case for Postal’s (1989) Fancy Constraint, which is also found in Italian (see e.g. D’Alessandro and Pescarini 2016), and which has been accounted for along similar lines to the PCC (e.g. Sheehan 2020). According to the constraint, in a *faire infinitif* construction, DO clitics can only be 3rd-person but cannot be 1st- or 2nd-person (regardless of whether the causee is a clitic or not). As with the PCC, we observe that LEI patterns with the 2nd-person and not the 3rd-person for the purposes of the constraint (11).

(11) Micol {la /\*ti /\*La} fa pettinare a Carlo.  
 Micol 3SG.F.ACC /2SG.ACC /LEI.ACC make.3SG comb.INF to Carlo  
 ‘Micol<sub>i</sub> is making Carlo comb {her<sub>k</sub>/\*your/\*your (polite)} hair.’

**Implications/Further Directions:** In the talk, we address two further extensions: i) other PCC-like person restrictions in Italian including the Clitic Logophoric Restriction, interactions with reflexives, and Weak PCC environments (some of which appear to have an even stronger effect with LEI than the 2nd person); ii) a cross-linguistic comparison with other languages that exhibit PCC-like effects and have formally 3rd-person polite pronouns, such as German. Strikingly, we find that assumed-identity copular constructions, which do give rise to person restrictions in German (Keine et al. 2019) but are not double object constructions, treat the formally 3PL polite *Sie* as 3rd-person for the purposes of said restrictions, suggesting a potentially heterogeneous source for different types of person restrictions.

**Select References:** Anagnostopoulou (2017). The Person Case Constraint. • Bianchi (2006). On the syntax of personal arguments. • Coon & Keine (2021). Feature gluttony. • Deal (2022). Interaction, satisfaction, and the PCC. • D’Alessandro & Pescarini (2016). Agreement restrictions and agreement oddities. • Keine, Wagner & Coon (2019). Hierarchy effects in copula constructions. • Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018). The Person Case Constraint: The syntactic encoding of perspective. • Postal (1989). Masked inversion in French. • Sheehan (2020). The Romance Person Case Constraint is not about clitic clusters. • Wechsler & Hahm (2011). Polite plurals and adjective agreement.