

## Daniel Harbour (QMUL) - *Phi-sec: Person > Number*

This talk is about looking for syntactic understanding in nonsyntactic places. The traditional view of person and number features is that they denote first order predicates, combined via conjunction. For instance, the first person singular is any  $x$  satisfying “ $x$  is not a plurality &  $x$  contains the speaker”. However, this approach leads to well known problems of both under- and overgeneration (Zwicky 1977, Noyer 1992, Harley and Ritter 2002). In recent and ongoing work (Harbour 2012, 2013), I have argued that semantics, morphology, and typology are all better served if we understand person and number features as actions on the domains that variables range over: featural treatments of hitherto recalcitrant numbers become available, the theory generates only attested (systems of) persons and numbers, and both sets of features emerge as largely semantically and morphologically uniform.

The syntactic impact of this approach arises via the order of composition between person and number. It is very easy to show that theory just outlined delivers the right results only if person composes before number (the reverse order both under- and overgenerates): for first singular, say, inserting the speaker in  $x$  then making sure that it is as small as possible is not the same as making sure  $x$  is as small as possible and then inserting the speaker, as the latter can deliver me-and-you as a potential referent of “I”.

Assuming a transparent interface between syntax and semantics, this means that person is lower in the tree than number. Surprising as this may be, it interacts straightforwardly with a simple approach to linearisation and thereby delivers some nontrivial properties of agreement position and discontinuities. These can be illustrated with prefixal versus suffixal agreement in Classical Hebrew and with double split agreement in Yimas (building on Trommer 2002, Harbour 2007, 2008).