Inner Self and Outer Self and the Syntactic Representation of Self-Talk

In this talk I will take up the issue of talking to oneself, or "Self-talk", and show that it offers valuable evidence for how speech acts are syntactically represented. Self-talk is relevant for the topic of the workshop, the morphosyntax of speaker and hearer, as an extreme case in which speaker and hearer coincide. However, as Holmberg (2010) observed, the speaker can refer to himself or herself not only by the 1st person as in (1) but also by the 2nd person as in (2), both in assertions and in questions.

(1)   a. *I am an idiot.*   b. *What's wrong with me?*   ("*I*-talk")

(2)   a. *You are an idiot.*   b. *What's wrong with you?*   ("*You*-talk")

Holmberg showed that *I*-talk and *You*-talk cannot be mixed, cf. (3), except for propositional attitude predicates, cf. (4). Also, the subject of verbs expressing affect has to be 1st person, cf. (5).

(3)   a. *You can do it if you try.*   b. *I can do it if I try.*
       c. *#You can do it if I try.*   d. *#I can do it if I try.* (as self-talk)

(4)   a. *I don't know why every time you make the same stupid mistake.*
       b. *I knew you can do it.*

(5)   *#You / I can't take this anymore!*

Holmberg distinguishes between two aspects of the Self, one "controlled by the mind, with thoughts and feelings", which is referred to by *I*, the other "not under direct control of the mind" and "engaging in activities which are not wholly predictable", which can be referred to by *you* or *I*. Holmberg does not relate this distinction to psychological studies of the Self but there is an obvious relation to William James' distinction between the "I" and the "Me". I will call these two aspects the "Outer Self" OS and the "Inner Self" IS. However, contrary to Holmberg I argue that the IS is the holder of subjective feelings, as in (5)
         Ritter & Wiltschko (2021) related Holmberg's observations to the syntactic structure of self-talk They distinguish between "thinking out loud" (as in *I*-talk) and "having a conversation with oneself" (as in *You*-talk) and argue that vocatives and imperatives only occur in the latter type of self-talk, cf. (6)(a,b).

(6)   a. *Martina, stop putting yourself / #myself down!*   b. *#Martina, I can't take this anymore.*

Ritter & Wiltschko relate the two kinds of self-talk to parts of the structure of other-directed talk in the neo-performative model of Wiltschko (2021), which distinguishes a GROUNDSPKRP for speaker-assumptions and a c-commanding GROUNDADRP for addressee-assumptions. This predicts that whenever 2nd person reference is possible in self-talk, 1st person reference is possible as well, and that interactional parts of grammar like certain discourse particles that are part of the RESPP are ruled out in self-talk.

(7)   [RESPP Resp-Set [GROUNDADRP Addressee [GROUNDSPKRP Speaker [CP (proposition)]]]]
                                 [--------- *I*-centered self-talk ------------]
                      [-------------------- *you*-centered self-talk -----------------------]
        [----------------------- regular conversation --]

In this presentation I will take up this general idea but propose a different mapping to syntactic structure based on Krifka (2023). It assumes the following layers for assertions and questions:

(8)   a. Assertion: [ActP • c:=s[CommitP j commits to j:=c[JudgeP j judges [TP proposition]^{j,s,a}]^{s,a}]]
       b. Question: [ActP ? c:=a[CommitP c ⊢ commits to j:=c[JudgeP j judges [TP proposition]^{j,s,a}]^{s,a}]]

Beyond the propositional layer TP, there is a JUDGEP that makes accessible a judge parameter j, a COMMITP that expresses that a committer c vouches for the truth of the JUDGEP where c is set to j, and an ACTP that sets the speaker s to the committer in the case of assertions, and to the addressee in case of regular questions.
         I-talk, I argue, is characterized by the reduced representation without COMMITP, where the speaker s is set to the IS and the addressee is absent, cf. (9)(a), whereas *You*-talk has the full representation, cf. (b):

(9) a. *I*-talk: $[_{\text{ActP}} \bullet / ?_{\ j:=\text{IS}}[_{\text{JudgeP}} j \text{ judges } [_{\text{TP}} ...]^{j,\text{IS}}]^{j,\text{IS}}]$

   b. *You*-talk: $[_{\text{ActP}} \bullet_{\ c:=\text{OS}}[_{\text{CommitP}} c \text{ commits to }_{j:=c}[_{\text{JudgeP}} j \text{ judges } [_{\text{TP}} ...]^{j,\text{OS,IS}}]^{\text{OS,IS}}]]$

   $[_{\text{ActP}} ?_{\ c:=\text{IS}}[_{\text{CommitP}} c \text{ commits to }_{j:=c}[_{\text{JudgeP}} j \text{ judges } [_{\text{TP}} ...]^{j,\text{OS,IS}}]^{\text{OS,IS}}]]$

Speech acts are modelled as updates of the Common Ground CG, which in self-talk is the attention focus of the speaker. In *I*-talk, the IS just makes the perspectivized propositions part of the attention focus, as in (1)(a), but also in predicates of personal taste, in exclamatives and other expressives, cf. (10). I will argue that expressive talk has the reduced structure $[_{\text{ActP}} [_{\text{JudgeP}} [_{\text{TP}} …]]]$ even in other-directed conversation.

(10) a. *This is awful.*   b. *How nice!*   c. *What an ugly dog!*   d. *Shit!*

Questions like (1)(b) are interpreted as self-directed deliberative questions that lead to a representation of the CG (here: the attention focus) as containing an unresolved issue. Such questions also occur in regular conversation (cf. Krifka 2022 for their representation in a model of the CG with continuations).

In *You*-talk, the Self splits into a more objective OS that incorporates rational and societal norms and a more emotive, personal IS. The syntactic representation contains the COMMITP and hence utilizes a device that incorporates the social aspect of assertions and questions, the establishment of commitments, with the peculiar property that speakers establish commitments to themselves (cf. Geurts 2018 and Peirce, as discussed in Tuzet 2006). This is the case of objectified self-talk as in (11)(a) but also when addressing oneself as IS in (2)(a), (3)(a), (4)(a,b). Questions like (2)(b) restrict the intended continuation of conversation like in regular discourse but are interpreted as deliberative questions, as the OS and IS are the same person.

(11) a. Computing: *26 plus 7 is ... 33.*   b. Looking for car: *It must be parked around that corner.*

Ritter & Wiltschko's claim about the absence of a RESPP layer is due to the referential identity of speaker and addressee, as there is no purpose for expressions that regulate conversational exchange. However, such expressions do occur as different temporal stages of the self may argue with each other:

(12) After leaving house: *The windows are still open! I'm such an idiot … No, wait… I closed them.*

 I will reflect on a number of additional points, like the occurrence of inclusive *we* in in *You*-talk and the interpretation of vocatives, which do not have the function of a calls but of addresses, in the sense of Zwicky (1976), insofar as they have additional meanings like expressing compassion, admiration or reprimands.

Self-talk is a linguistic genre that is difficult to investigate objectively because it relies heavily on intuitions. I will support many of my claims by examples from interior monologues from literature, especially by the 1900 novella *Leutnant Gustl* of the Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler. In particular, the novella contains ample passages of *You*-talk in which an OS, which can be identified with Siegmund Freud's 'Super-ego' as a represenative of societal norms, converses with the IS. It also allows to identify hitherto unrecognized types of self-talk, like imagined other-talk.

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