Reflexives are [person](s) too!

This abstract argues that reflexives in languages like French, Southern Tiwa and Icelandic pattern like 1st/2nd person for the Person-Case Constraint (PCC, Bonet 1991). This has consequences for the featural composition of reflexive anaphors, which are argued to be specified for [person]. ♦ The PCC states, in its strong variant, that in a ditransitive, where both internal arguments are realized as phonologically weak elements, the direct object must be third person. This is the case in French for instance, which bans DAT > *1/2.ACC combinations in clitic clusters. Interestingly, in French, se reflexives pattern with 1/2 person for PCC effects, thus banning DAT > *REFL.NOM combinations in clitic clusters. Se and 1st/2nd clitics are disallowed in combinations with any dative object (local or 3rd).

(1) Elle *se/*te lui/me présente.

She *REFL/*2SG.ACC 3SG/1SG.DAT introduce

*She introduces herself/to you to him/me entirely.*

PCC effects stem from a configuration where two arguments check their features against one functional head F°. Most analyses converge that the dative object checks the [person] feature of F°, leaving it unable to subsequently check any [person] features on the accusative/nominative object: the direct object must have Ø-person (3rd person). ♦ French is not the only language in which a reflexive weak element is subject to the PCC. Southern Tiwa has a special form of agreement for reflexives in monotransitive predicates, as shown in (2) (like other languages such as Swahili (Woolford 1999) or Chichewa (Baker 2008)). However, once an indirect object enters the structure, reflexive agreement syncretizes with 3S-agreement, and requires the incorporation of the object reflexive be ‘self’ (3), in what would appear to be a repair strategy.

(2) Te- mú- ban.

1S:RX see- PAST

*I saw myself.* (Rosen 1990:691-2)

(3) Ka- be- 8’arape- hi.

1S:2S:3S- self-pray FUT

*I will pray (lit. myself) for you.*

These examples suggest that reflexive agreement is subject to the PCC. Just as Southern Tiwa bans *IO>1/2.DO combinations, it apparently bans *IO>REFL.DO combinations. ♦ These observations can be connected to data at the root of the Anaphor-Agreement Effect (Rizzi 1990, Woolford 1999). Based on data from Italian and Icelandic, Rizzi argues that “Anaphors do not occur in positions construed with agreement.” In Italian and Icelandic, that amounts to a ban on nominative anaphors, typically in DAT-NOM constructions, as only nominative arguments are goals for agreement (4). Icelandic DAT-NOM constructions are constrained by a person restriction. In the presence of a dative subject, an agreeing nominative object has to be third person: DAT > *1/2.NOM, as illustrated in (5).

(4) *Mariu leiðist sig.

Mary.DAT find.boring REFL.NOM

Mary finds herself boring.

(5) *Henni leiddumst við.

her.DAT find.boring.1PL. 1PL.NOM

She finds us boring.

Anagnostopoulou (2003, 2005) identifies these person restrictions in Icelandic to PCC effects. The PCC, extended to reflexives, could thus explain the ban on nominative sig in Icelandic DAT-NOM constructions (against the idea of a morphological gap, e.g. Maling 1984). ♦ These observations raise several conclusions and issues. First, if we hold [person] features to be responsible for the PCC, the fact that cross-linguistically varied reflexives are subject to the PCC suggests that at least some reflexives are specified for [person] (unlike other 3rd persons and against the widely held view that anaphors are φ-deficient). Second, the fact that so-called anaphoric agreement is also subject to these restrictions raises the question of the featural specification at its root. Last but not least, it seems that the Anaphor-Agreement Effect could be connected to the PCC. This highlights, in particular, the ties between person features and the inability of anaphors to occur in φ-agreeing positions.