On the context layer of Bangla pronouns

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Abstract

This paper proposes an account of the formality agreement found in the Bangla pronounominal system, suggesting hierarchical values, rather than a binary one, for one of the formality determining features, (status). With evidence from data on child language acquisition of Bangla pronouns, which points towards a long delay in children's acquisition of the formal pronouns, the paper suggests that contexual featureal agreement must be posited as a post-syntactic phenomenon. This also helps explain why formality or other contexual featureal agreement are riddled with variation and subject to generational language change.

1 The context layer in the syntax

The earliest attempts at dissolving/expanding a functional projection/lexical projection into further layers were Abney (1987), which proposed that NPs have a functional layer above them, the D layer,[2] and Pollock (1989), which argued for a non-lexical head higher than V (now v), but distinct from I/T. Larson (1988) built multiple VP shells for verbs with more than one object. Rizzi (1997) dissolves the complementizer layer into a series of functional projections (ForceP, TopicP, FocusP), building a rich left periphery. Over the years many have argued for accommodating speech-act information in this rich left periphery. In modern parlance, the choice of the feature bundles that manifest the morphemes representing these speech-act elements is dependent on discourse/speech-context.

In fact, the first transformational grammars, too, had optional transformational rules that built the surface forms of interrogatives and imperatives (Chomsky 1957). Ross' (1970) performative analysis, quotative analysis and pragmatic analysis and his observations of hearer agreement in Arabic were some of the earliest ideas on introducing context in the syntax.[3] Other works in the seventies and eighties have also argued for representing context and speech participants in the syntax (Sadock 1974, Miyagawa 1987).

Miyagawa argues that the Japanese politeness affix *-masu* is raised at LF[4] to a position that governs the C containing the question particle *ka* in both *yes/no* questions and wh-questions.[5] He clarifies that this rasising is independent of question formation and rather the politeness affix has a "performative" function, marking the entire sentence for politeness.

In recent years, speech act layers have been proposed above CPs (Speas and Tenny 2003, Haegeman and Hill 2013). Speas and Tenny (2003)[6], unlike Ross (1970), argue that speech acts do not have a one to one relationship with specific forms and cannot be literal representations of specific speech acts. A sentence of any form, in theory, may be used to perform any speech-act. They attempt to unite the representation of sentience or point of view (animacy, subjectivity or experiencer-hood) and the representation of pragmatic properties under a single syntactic approach. They argue that there is compelling evidence from languages that represent speaker or hearer agreement that the roles 'speaker' and 'hearer' need to be represented in syntactic structure and not in discourse representation. Their speech act head projects a maximal structure with a specifier, a complement and an external argument[7] (see Figure 1 for the structure of the speech act phrase for declaratives).

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[2]There have also been arguments for extended nominal projections (see Cinque 1994, Bruge 2002, Giusti 2002).

[3]Other works include Lakoff (1968), McCawley (1968).

[4]Evidence that this raising happens at LF comes from Japanese wh-phrases in complement clauses, where they take wide scope at LF.

[5]In wh-questions the wh-phrase is also governed along with *ka*.

[6]The authors call the projection "the Speech Act Phrase", adopting from Cinque

[7]Movement of the head leads to two specifiers and one complement, forming the largest possible projection of a head.

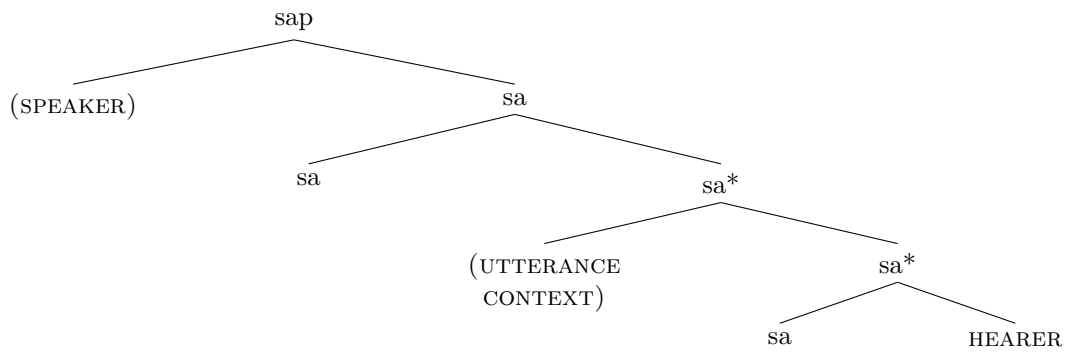

Figure 1: Speech Act Phrase for declaratives (Speas and Tenny 2003, p. 320).

Speech context has also been proposed as "context phrase" projections above the CP and in pronouns (Portner et al. 2019). Portner et al. clarify that they do not adopt the label "Speech Act Phrase" as they do not view this structural layer as encoding illocutionary force. They say the head of this layer encodes the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor and thus do not use the labels Hearer/Addressee for the c-head. Little *c*, thus stands for context. Little cP is defined as "...the layer of structure that interfaces with the context of utterance (in contrast to CP, which is the interface between a matrix and an embedded clause)" (Portner et al. 2019, p. 34). This execution seems to be better equiped at handling variation in the kinds of contextual features found to agree with elements in sentences in the various languages of the world, including pronouns.

Following Kim-Renaud and Pak (2006), Portner et al. elaborate on the STATUS feature, a feature that represents the hierarchical (or ordering) social relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, having values that map this hierarchy. They, therefore, use the hierarchical relations $<, \leq, =, \geq$ and $>$ between the Speaker (S) and the interlocutor-addressee (A). The other feature they assume is FORMAL. This is construed as a binary feature with values + or −. In this system, a combination of these feature values generates the different morphological realizations. (1) shows Portner et al.'s application of these two features to build the Korean utterance type particles.

(1) Portner et al (p. 14) example (28):
   a. [STATUS: S $\leq$ A], [FORMAL: +], [s-mood: DEC]→ *supita* (formal)
   b. [STATUS: S $\leq$ A], [FORMAL: −], [s-mood: DEC]→ *eyo* (polite)
   c. [STATUS: S $\geq$ A], [FORMAL: −], [s-mood: DEC]→ *e* (intimate)

Throughout, Portner et al. build on a crucial point of difference between context-oriented markers, like pronouns and honorifics, and utterance oriented markers, like speech style particles and allocutive marking. While context oriented-markers can be embedded, utterance oriented markers cannot. They study the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties of these two types of markers in Korean, and propose a syntactic and semantic analysis of the speech style particles and polite pronouns. In the syntax, they propose cP as a politeness encoding functional projection in the high periphery of only root clauses. The material in '*c*' encodes 'politeness' meanings that involve social relations between the speaker and the interlocuter. Little *c* is the syntactic position for utterance-oriented markers. Considering the fact that pronouns are context-oriented and embeddable, we would not expect them to have a c-layer. They go on to argue that second person pronouns enter into a operator-variable relation with the functional head c, thus legitimizing the presence of the c-layer.[8] Sentences that need an interlocutor-addressee contain a null element, Interlocutor, which merges in

[8]They build on Baker (2008) and Kratzer (2009) and say that first and second person pronouns (including fake indexicals) acquire the status feature when bound by an abstract operator.

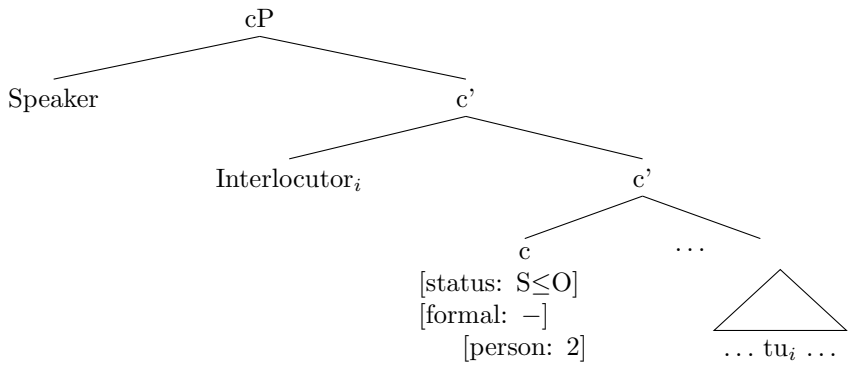

Figure 2: cP layer of the French second person pronoun tu (Portner et al. 2019, p. 31).

the specifier of the c-head. The pronoun when bound by Interlocuter, mediated by the c as the lambda abstractor, ends up reflecting c's feature values i.e. the speaker-interlocutor relationship (see Figure 2 for their proposed structure).

Here we adapt Portner et al.'s hierarchy-representing features to represent the relations between participants in a speech-act and the participant features that build Bangla pronouns. We also propose, building on Portner et al, that *all* Bangla pronouns have a c(ontext) layer such that the specifier of the c-head binds the pronoun.[9] Considering arguments for a rich left periphery and the structure mapping found between the CP and DP domains, positing a rich layer above DPs/NPs is not unreasonable. We then evaluate this model against acquisition data. We attempt to examine if proposing agreement within the c-layer in the narrow syntax can adequately and economically account for the variation in the appearance of formality features in children's pronouns.

2 Marking social relationships in Bangla

Social relationships between a speaker, addressee and the "third person" are known to be encoded in many languages via pronouns, honorifics, allocutive marking and other speech-act markers. Bangla second and third person pronouns are known to be sensitive to the social relationship between the speaker, the addressee and the other.[10] [11] Literature on Bangla pronouns, Sengupta (2000), refers to them as having degrees of "honorificity", with the second person pronoun having the prevalent degrees "fam", "neut" and "Hon"[12] while the third has the binary "- Hon" and "+ Hon". This account of pronouns does not posit honorificity as a *feature* per se.

[9]Reinhart (1983) and subsequent work (Reinhart and Reuland 1993, Reinhart 2000, 2006, Reuland 2011) has established that all pronouns are translated as variables in the C-I interface and thus must be operator-bound.

[10]Throughout the paper, the third person is also alternatively referred to as the "other".

[11]There is evidence to suggest that Bangla can also be argued to have a c-layer above its CPs. This comes from work on Bangla evidentiality (Bhadra 2017). In fact, there is also evidence of Bangla having utterance-oriented markers (*re* and *go)*. These agree with the addressee in formality (L1 and L2 respectively) and do not permit being embedded. They can be argued to be high up in the right periphery of the matrix clause filling a c-head.

(i) Bangla utterance-oriented markers *re* and *go*

a. tui kobe atʃbi re / *go?
2SG.L1 when come.FUT.L1 re / *go
'When will you come?'

b. tumi kobe atʃbe go / *re?
2SG.L2 when come.FUT.L2 go / *re
'When will you come?'

[12]Sengupta (2000) does not provide expansions for these.

Here, we posit formality as a level with three relative values, L1, L2 and L3, with L1 being relatively the least formal and L3 being relatively the most formal.[13] In the third person, where respect is only marked on two levels we recycle the same terms for the levels, positing the L2 and L3 politeness levels.[14] The three levels of pronouns, in object position, are illustrated for the second person in (2) and for the third person in (3).[15]

(2) a. ami **toke** bari dʒete bollam. (addr. is speaker's sibling/friend)
1SG 2.**L1**.SG.ACC home go.Nf tell.INDF.PST.1
'I asked you to go home.'

b. ami **tomake** bari dʒete bollam. (addr. is speaker's parent/sibling/friend)
1SG 2.**L2**.SG.ACC home go.Nf tell.INDF.PST.1
'I asked you to go home.'

c. ami **apnake** bari dʒete bollam. (addr. is speaker's teacher/acquaintance)
1SG 2.**L3**.SG.ACC home go.Nf tell.INDF.PST.1
'I asked you to go home.'

(3) a. ami **oke** bari dʒete bollam. (ref. is speaker's sibling/friend)
1SG 2.**L2**.SG.ACC home go.Nf tell.INDF.PST.1
'I asked her/him to go home.'

b. ami **onake** bari dʒete bollam. (ref. is teacher/acquaintance/a stranger)
1SG 2.**L3**.SG.ACC home go.Nf tell.INDF.PST.1
'I asked her/him to go home.'

Bangla verbs agree with the subject, but only in the PERSON feature. Formality falls under a feature-geometry with the PERSON feature as its superset. In the second and third persons, a single morpheme represents both the PERSON and the FORMALITY features.[16] When the subject is L3, the verbal agreement marker is *-en*, irrespective of whether it is in second or third person. Therefore, the verb co-varies with the second or third person subject in the level of formality between the speaker and the entity denoted by the subject. This is shown in (4), (5) and (6).

(4) Verbal agreement when subject in first person:

a. **ami** belun dʰore daɽije atʃtʃ**-i**.
1SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.1
'I am standing holding a balloon.'

(5) Verbal agreement when subject in second person:

a. **tui** belun dʰore daɽije atʃtʃ**-ish**.
2.L1.SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.2.L1
'You are standing holding a balloon.'

b. **tumi** belun dʰore daɽije atʃtʃ**-o**.
2.L2.SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.2.L2
'You are standing holding a balloon.'

c. **apni** belun dʰore daɽije atʃtʃ**-en**.
2.L3.SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.L3
'You are standing holding a balloon.'

(6) Verbal agreement when subject in third person:

[13] "L1", "L2" and "L3" are terms for descriptive purposes. It would be their component features that would participate in the grammar.

[14] Whether one says that the system uses L1 and L2, or L2 and L3, or L1 and L3, is a choice that is of little consequence to the output, and what matters is that theoretical choice is consistent and takes cognisance of the fact that the levels are relative to one another and that moving from L1 to L3 marks ascent of formality.

[15] Nf glossing abbreviation for "non-finite".

[16] Along with also encoding tense value, in some tenses.

a. **o** belun d^{h}ore daɽije atʃtʃ**-e**.
3.L2.SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.3.L2
'You are standing holding a balloon.'
b. **uni** belun d^{h}ore daɽije atʃtʃ**-en**.
3.L3.SG balloon hold.Nf stand.Nf be.PROG-PRS.L3
'You are standing holding a balloon.'

When the third person subject is a person denoted by a proper noun, a kinship term or a pseudo-kinship term, we see that the verbal agreement varies with respect to whether the subject is treated by the speaker with L2 formality or L3 formality (see 7 for an illustration).

(7) a. **baba** boltʃtʃ**-en** dʒe baɽi dʒab**-en**.
Father say.PRS**-L3** that house go.FUT**-L3**
'Father is saying that he will go home.'
b. **baba** boltʃtʃ**-e** dʒe baɽi dʒab**-e**.
Father say.PRS**-L2** that house go.FUT**-L2**
'Father is saying that he will go home.'

A feature representing a social relationship would vary at the community, family, generational or individual level. It could also vary based on the evolution of the relationship between two individuals. This is true for the Bangla formality feature too. For example, some people may refer to their parents using L2 formality, while using L3 to refer to their parents-in-law (refer back to 7 for an illustration). People who are friends to begin with and then enter into marriage may consciously/sub-consciously decide to switch from L1 to L2. The dynamic nature of the formality feature makes it almost impossible to formalise and build a uniform theoretical account of, one that would adequately explain all the variation speakers exhibit. And even if we do build a formal account of it, as attempted here, accommodating its valuation in the narrow syntax is problematic. When a feature is susceptible to a high level of variation, it must be a suspect non-formal feature that does not participate in the narrow syntax.

Let us look at some examples of language variation and change, that we know not to represent in the narrow-syntax. The kinship address term for mother's brother and husband/boyfriend, is one and the same, *mama*, in some sociolects of Tamil.[17] However, this does not mean that in order for a speaker of the community to interpret the word *mama* as "husband/boyfriend", when the context demands such, this information regarding the referential value of *mama* need be represented in the narrow syntax. This disambiguation would be done post-syntactically. Likewise, in South Asian, neighbours and family friends are referred to using kinship address terms. Person X's older male neighbour, who refers to X's father as *dada* 'older brother', in Bangla, will be called *kaka* 'father's younger brother' by X. Younger generations, especially those in urban spaces, have now shifted from these Bangla kinship address terms to English ones. Therefore, a younger speaker may refer to such a neighbour as *uncle*. The narrow syntax will represent neither the referential value of *kaka*, given a particular context (i.e. either as the kinship address term or as the pseudo-kinship address term), nor the language change that has ensued.

Therefore, positing the referential value of such elements, including formality features, as narrow syntactic participants risks introducing language-specific properties into the syntax, something that would compromise on the economy principle and the character of CHL (Computational system of Human Language), and make language acquisition and language change complex.

However, this does not mean that the three levels of formality in Bangla can be interchanged in all contexts. There are context-dependent restrictions to their use. Consider (8) below.

(8) The speaker is a person who generally refers to their father using L2.

[17] This has roots in a tradition of these communities practising cross-cousin marriage.

a. #**baba**$_i$ boltʃtʃ**-en** dʒe **uni**$_i$ baɽi dʒab**-en**.
Father say.PRS**-L3** that 3SG.L3 house go.FUT**-L3**
'Father is saying that he will go home.'
b. #**baba**$_i$ boltʃtʃ**-e** dʒe **o**$_i$ baɽi dʒab**-e**.
Father say.PRS**-L2** that 3SG.L2 house go.FUT**-L2**
Intended: 'Father is saying that he will go home.'
c. **baba**$_i$ boltʃtʃ**-e** dʒe **baba**$_i$ baɽi dʒab**-e**.
Father say.PRS**-L2** that father house go.FUT**-L2**
'Father is saying that Father will go home.'

When referring to a person older than the speaker (or higher in social stature), the L2 pronoun is too informal/impolite. The L3 pronoun could be too formal/polite, like in case of a kin relation or a pseudo-kin relation. With none of the two third person pronouns being appropriate, the only option in such a context is to use the kinship term/pseudo kinship term or proper name to refer to the person.[18] This is illustrated in (8), where the referrent is a kin relation. Further, L3 in Bangla, in both the second and third persons, can never be used to refer to someone younger than the speaker, like for example, a child.

3 Building a context layer for Bangla pronouns

Following Portner et al. (2019), the proposal here suggests that the analysis can be extended to third person pronouns as well, since they too, like first and second pronouns, are interpretted as variables in the C-I interface (Reinhart 1983, 2006, Reuland 2011). Thus, the specifier of the c-head, in case of a third person pronoun, will house a null Referent rather than an Interlocuter.

The three levels of formality, which produce three and two distinct pronouns in the second and third persons, respectively, are built out of two features, STATUS and FORMAL. Here too, STATUS is the dynamic feature that marks the hierarchical relationship between the speaker and addressee, while FORMAL conveys whether the relationship is formal or not. (9) elaborates on the three levels of pronouns (and corresponding verbal agreement) that is generated by the combination of the values of these two features.

(9) a. **L1** – STATUS: [S(peaker) $\geq$ A(ddressee)], FORMAL: – , i.e. S & A are int(imate)/fam(iliar) or/and S is eq(ual)/sup(erior)/ol(der) to A
b. **L2** – STATUS:[S $\leq$ A/O(ther)], FORMAL: – , i.e. S & A/O are int/fam or/and S is eq/sup/ol to A/O
c. **L3** – STATUS:[Speaker $\leq$ Addressee/Other], FORMAL: + , i.e. S & A/O are non-int/non-fam or/and A/O is eq/sup/ol to S

However, in a context like (10), neither L1 nor L3 is felicitous. (11) and (12) illustrate two conversations that together shows that in such a context (exemplified by 12), only the noun used to refer to the Other (and, of course, the reflexive) can be used, since L1 is too impolite, and L3 is too formal and distant, an observation also made above using (8-c).

(10) Proper noun/Kinship term/Pseudo-kinship term – STATUS:[S $\leq$ O], FORMAL: – (eg. S & O are int/fam or/and O is ol/sup to S).

(11) a. STRANGER TO LITTLE GIRL:
dadu ki kortʃtʃ^h-en.
grandpa what do-PROG-PRS.L3
'what is grandpa doing?'
b. LITTLE GIRL:

[18] Bangla allows "Principle C violations".

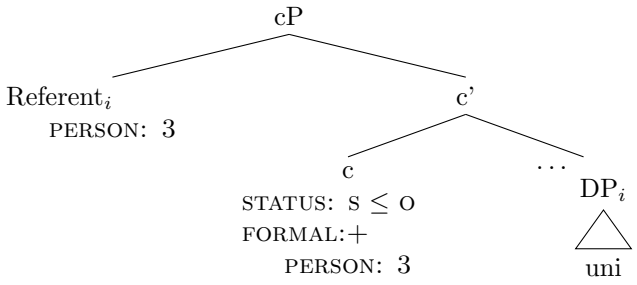

Figure 3: cP layer of Bangla third person pronouns.

dadu$_i$ onar$_i$ tʃoʃma kʰudʒ.tʃtʃʰ-en.
grandpa 3.L3.SG.GEN glasses search.PROG-PRS.L3
'Grandpa$_i$ is looking for his$_i$(form.) glasses.'

(12) a. WOMAN:
dadu ki kortʃtʃʰ-e
grandpa what do.PROG-PRS.L2
'what is grandpa doing?'

b. WOMAN'S DAUGHTER:
dadu$_i$ dadu-r$_i$ / #onar$_i$ tʃoʃma kʰudʒ.tʃtʃʰ -e / # -en
grandpa grandpa-GEN / 3.L3.SG.GEN glasses search.PROG -PRS.L1 / -PRS.L3
'Grandpa$_i$ is looking for Grandpa's$_i$ / #his$_i$ (form.) glasses.'

Modifying the structure proposed in Portner et al (2019, p. 31), Figure 3 is proposed here for pronouns; here we illustrate it with bangla *uni* 'he' (3.L3.SG.NOM).

Following Portner et al. (2019) and Baker (2008),[19] we suggest that the features STATUS and FORMAL of the pronoun agree with the *c* head post-syntactically. The operator-variable binding relation between the *c* head and the pronominal DP anchors the pronoun to the given context in the C-I interface, which means that even if there is a mismatch in the morphological identity of the formality features of the actual referent that the pronoun/verb agrees with, the referent is still being evaluated under the right context.

4 Acquiring the formality feature

As part of a larger study on the acquisition of the binding theory in Bangla, five semi-structured elicitation tasks were designed to study the acquisition of third person pronouns and reflexives in twenty Bangla speaking children aged 2;0 to 6;11. In three tasks every predicate that tested for a pronoun was repeated in two tokens, once to elicit the L2 pronoun and once to elicit the L3 pronoun. The data from these tasks, including the two that were not designed to get the child to produce the L3 pronoun, show that the majority of the children never produce the L3 pronoun, or the corresponding verbal agreement, neither voluntarily, nor when prompted by the researcher in a context that demands it.

Task 1 or the "object task" was designed to elicit direct object position pronouns and reflexives. Participants were first shown and introduced to two introductory pictures building a relation between

[19]Baker(2008) calls this agreement (distinct from Agree) "operator-variable agreement". Since "operator" and "variable" are terms used to describe about (semantic) binding and operators and variables only manifest in the C-I interface, we will rather use the term "post-syntactic agreement" or just "agreement" to refer to this.

two characters, say, 'a boy', and 'his mother'. They were then shown a picture that depicted an action (also potentially reflexive) such that the character in the second picture ('his mother') was the agent and the character in topic ('the boy'), from the first picture, was the theme. The target elicitation upon asking a wh-question (assuming question-answer congruence) was 'his mother is tickling him'. This task had three predicates ('tickle x', 'paint x', 'give a kiss to x'), each repeated thrice in separate tokens, once each to elicit the reflexive, the L2 pronoun and the L3 pronoun. There were thus nine tokens in this task.

Tasks 2 and 3 were the "possessive tasks", designed to elicit possessive pronouns or the possessive reflexive. Task 2 targeted inalienable possessions and Task 3 alienable ones. In Task 2, predicates selected were of the type 'scrubbing x's foot', 'pouring water on x's body', 'combing x's hair' etc. The target sentences were, therefore, of the type 'the grandpa is scrubbing self's/his (L3) foot', 'the boy is scrubbing self's/his (L2) foot'. In Task 3, children were first shown two context building introductory pictures, the first one a character, say, 'a boy'. and the second a possession of the character, say, 'the boy's bag'. The final picture depicted the character doing something to the possession, say putting something into his bag, eliciting 'the boy is packing self's/his bag', or 'the boy is putting things into self's/his bag'. Task 2 had four predicates: 'pour water on x's body', 'scrub x's foot', 'comb x's hair', 'massage x's head'. Task 3 had six tokens: 'pack x's bag', 'wear x's shoes', 'give x's colour pencil to the girl', 'hold x's balloon', 'keep x's hat on the table', and 'hold x's sister's hand'. Each predicate was repeated twice, once to produce the reflexive/L2 pronoun and once to produce the reflexive/L3 pronoun, therefore, resulting in eight tokens for Task 2 and twelve tokens for Task 3.

The tasks reveal that children use the felicitous pronoun (L2) when talking about youger characters like 'boy', 'girl', *dada* 'older boy', *didi* 'older girl'. This is shown in (13) and (14) below.

(13) Context: Picture of a boy's mother giving him a kiss.

a. RESEARCHER:
or ma ki kortʃtʃʰe.
3SG.L2.GEN mother what do.PROG-PRS.3.L2
'What is his mother doing?'

b. CHILD (bch19, 6;10):
oke kiss ditʃtʃʰe.
3SG.L2.DAT kiss give.PROG-PRS.3.L2
'(She) is giving a kiss to him'

(14) Context: Picture of a girl pouring water/milk on her own head.

a. RESEARCHER:
dakʰo to kar matʰa.je ɖʰaltʃtʃʰe.
see.L2 to whose head.LOC pour.PROG-PRS.L3
'Have a look at whose head (she) is pouring (the milk).'

b. CHILD (bch12, 3;2):
or matʰa.je.
3SG.L2.GEN head.LOC
'On her head.'

Further, they also use the correct proper nouns/reference terms for older referents (see 15 and 16).

(15) Context: Picture of a king wearing his own shoes (contrasted with a picture of a fairy wearing a fireman's shoes).

a. RESEARCHER:

ar radʒa?
and king
'and the king?' ('what about the king?')

b. CHILD (bch10, 6;6):
radʒa-r dʒuto pore.
king-GEN shoes wear.Nf
'(The king)$_i$ is wearing the king$_i$'s shoes.'

(16) CHILD (bch18, 5;8)

dida$_i$ didar$_i$ pensil ditʃtʃ^h-e.
grandma grandma.GEN pencil give.PROG.PRS.L2

'Grandma$_i$ is giving Grandma$_i$'s pencil.'

However, when switching to the pronoun repository they do not use the appropriate pronouns. The older characters in the picture sets, like grandfather, grandmother, *aunty* (woman) and *uncle* (man) are not referred to using the L3 pronoun. This is illustrated in (17) and (18). In (18), the child does not produce the L3 pronoun even when the researcher in her question uses it to refer to the character in the picture.

(17) Context: Picture of an old woman looking into her bag.

a. CHILD: (bch27, 5;5)
dida$_i$ or$_i$ bɑg-ʈa-te kitʃ^{h}u dek^h-tʃtʃ^h-e
Grandma 3Sg.L2.Gen bag-Clf-Loc something see-Prog-Prs.L2
'Grandma$_i$ is looking at something in her$_i$ (informal) bag'

(18) Context: Picture of a man (introduced formally) being given a kiss on the cheek by his daughter.

a. RESEARCHER:
onar$_i$ meje ki kor-tʃtʃ^h-e ek^{h}ane?
3.L3.SG.GEN daughter what do-PROG-L2 here
'What is his$_i$(form.) daughter doing here?'

b. CHILD (bch04, 6;2):
or$_i$ meje oke$_i$ ador kor-tʃtʃ^h-e.
3.L2.SG.GEN daughter 3.L2.SG.ACC love do-PROG-PRS.L2
'His$_i$ (inform.) daughter is showing her affection towards him$_i$ (inform.).'

5 Attempting to re-envision formality agreement

It is worth pondering on why it is that children do not make any errors in person and number features, in their pronoun production, but seem to be almost immune to the precense of formality as a feature. The same question can be asked of noun class features. It has been observed that children appear to have a higher error rate when assigning a gender noun class feature value to Hindi nouns, than they do for person and number value assignment.[20] In the Bangla child data too, person errors are nil.[21]

Since children produce L2 pronouns in contexts where they are felicitous, is it prudent to conclude that they have knowledge of the felicitous use of the L2 pronoun? The fact that children use the L2 pronoun in contexts where it is *infelicitous*, i.e. in cases where they should instead have

[20] Personal communication with Benu Pareek.
[21] We cannot comment on number since number was not a variable in our study.

produced either the L3 pronoun, or the proper noun/kinship term/pseudo-kinship term to refer to the character, is evidence that when they use the L2 pronoun in the right context, they are not doing so for the right reasons. They do not know that the L2 pronoun is a level-2 pronoun, implying that they do not have knowledge of the features that make up the pronominal levels. The L2 pronoun is the only third person pronoun in their grammar and they overgeneralise its function to all contexts, L2 and L3.[22] In short they are unaware of the formality denoting system of Bangla.

However, we cannot also conclude that because children do not produce the L3 set of pronouns, they have not acquired pronouns, and in extension Principle B of the Binding Theory. This is because a mismatch in formality agreement does not lead to ungrammaticality. There are no crashes in the syntax when formality agreement fails. Features like formality are of no consequence to the C-I interface. Formality mismatches cause infelicity, rather than ungrammaticality. This is evidence that the pronominal agreement system is not dependent on the syntactic operation Agree, but is rather dependent on post-syntactic agreement of either the kind discussed by Baker (2008) or that discussed by Bobaljik (2008). The idea that formality agreement is not dependent on Agree has been expressed using a slightly different flavour in the typological literature. About multiple "honorific" agreement, Corbett (2006) says that each honorific can be analysed as determined by prgmatics and that "...they agree only in the sense that they are being used in the same pragmatic circumstances..." (p. 137). Kibort (2010) in her discussion of morphosyntactic features that are determined through "agreement", rather than "government",[23] includes the feature "respect". From typological data she concludes that "respect" is a feature whose participation in agreement is "rare", while its in participation in government is "not attested".

The long delay in the acqusition of formality in Bangla speaking children further corroborates a post-syntactic agreement hypothesis. However, research on the acquisition of formality in other languages would be required to construct the global picture and examine if this is true only for Bangla or is a cross-linguistic phenomenon. Further, whether Bangla children have not acquired the formality feature at all, it being a morpho-pragmatic feature rather than a morpho-syntactic feature, and whether their pronouns are constructed out of a reduced set of features (say, just person and number) is also a matter of further exploration.

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[22] What is also interesting is that the absence of the L3 pronoun entails the absence of the L3 verbal inflection in the children's sentential data.

[23] Case is considered as a feature determined by "government"; this may be translated as "Agree" in Minimalist parlance. It is worth mentioning here that Kibort actually considers both, features that are involved in agreement and those that are involved in government, to be "relevant to the syntax". About "government" and "agreement" she says "...while the feature value of the target of agreement is determined by the feature value of the controller, the feature value of the governee is determined just by the presence of the governor....while a controller of agreement bears the feature value it requires of its target (the feature values are expected to 'match'), a governor does not bear the feature value it requires of its governee" (p. 68).

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