Why 'you' and 'I' are special

Stephen Wechsler
wechsler@austin.utexas.edu
The University of Texas

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Stephen Wechsler
wechsler@austin.utexas.edu
Dead Tongues

IVANFEST 2013!

Outline

I.   A universal: the Associative Plural Generalization

II.   Explanation: *de se* theory of person (Wechsler 2010)

III.   Further evidence for the *de se* theory

IV.   Why <u>must</u> the *de se* theory be right for all languages?

1PL and 2PL forms don't exclude others

	English	Indonesian
speaker	*I*	*saya*
addressee	*you*	*kamu*
speaker + speaker	*we*	*kami*
speaker + other	*we*	*kami*
speaker + addr.	*we*	*kita*
speaker + addr. + other	*we*	*kita*
addr. + addr.	*you*	*kalian*
addr. + other	*you*	*kalian*

1PL and 2PL forms don't exclude others

	English	Indon.	Unattested
speaker	*I*	*saya*	
addressee	*you*	*kamu*	
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speaker + other	*we*	*kami*	*kamu*
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The Associative Plural Generalization
7 'meta-persons'; but only 4 attested pronoun types

Possible		Attested
1+2	speaker(s) and addressee(s) only	'inclusive'
1+2+3	speaker(s), addressee(s), & other(s)	
1	speaker(s) only	'exclusive'
1+3	speaker(s) & other(s)	
2	hearer(s) only	'second person'
2+3	hearer(s) & other(s)	
3	other(s) only	'third person'

Absolute universals

U1. No language distinguishes [1+1] from [1+3].

U2. No language distinguishes [2+2] from [2+3].

U3. No language distinguishes [1+2] from [1+2+3].
    (Bobaljik 2008)

'However great the semantic plausibility, **the category 2+2 is not found grammaticalized in the languages of the world**.' (Cysouw 2003:75).

(Bobaljik, 2008; Cysouw, 2003; Greenberg, 1988; McGregor, 1989; Moravcsik, 1978; Noyer, 1992; Silverstein 1976)

Absolute universals

No plural pronouns denote 'addressees'
No plural pronouns denote 'speakers'
No plural pronouns denote 'speakers and addressees'

Why?

It is unexpected, on the standard Kaplanian view.

Kaplanian utterance context and character

context: a tuple of parameters:

$$c = \langle \text{sp, ad, loc, t, } \ldots \rangle$$

character: function from contexts to contents:

$$[\![\, I \,]\!]_c = \text{sp}(c)$$

$$[\![\, you \,]\!]_c = \text{ad}(c)$$

$$[\![\, here \,]\!]_c = \text{loc}(c)$$

$$[\![\, now \,]\!]_c = \text{t}(c)$$

Character of PL you: the set A of addressees?

$$[\![\ you.PL\ ]\!]_c = ad(c) = A$$

Major problem: no language on earth has such a pronoun.

$\Rightarrow$ Kaplan's theory fails to predict the facts.

(Character of PL you: a superset of the addressees?

$$[\![\ you.PL\ ]\!]_c \supseteq A$$

No. See Wechsler 2010. Or ask me during Q&A.)

My claim:

1st person (sg. or pl.) does not denote 'speaker';
2nd person (sg. or pl.) does not denote 'addressee'.

Outline

1. The claim is <u>possible</u>.

2. There is positive evidence for the claim.

3. Speculation: Why <u>must</u> it be true, given what we know about social cognition and developmental psychology?

The de se theory (Wechsler 2010)

Premise: A language is a system of rules that **speakers** and **addressees** should follow.

Rule for 2nd person pronouns:

- **Addressee** Rule for 2nd pers.: Addressees should self-identify as the referent of any 2nd person pronoun that they hear.

- **Speaker** rule: none (see Grice's cooperative principle)

Consequence: A speaker says *you* when he wants the addressee to apply the Addressee Rule for 2nd pers.

The de se theory (Wechsler 2010)

Premise: A language is a system of rules that **speakers** and **addressees** should follow.

Rule relevant to 1st person pronouns:

- **Speaker rule for 1st pers**.: Speakers should self-identify as the referent of any 1st person pronoun that they utter.

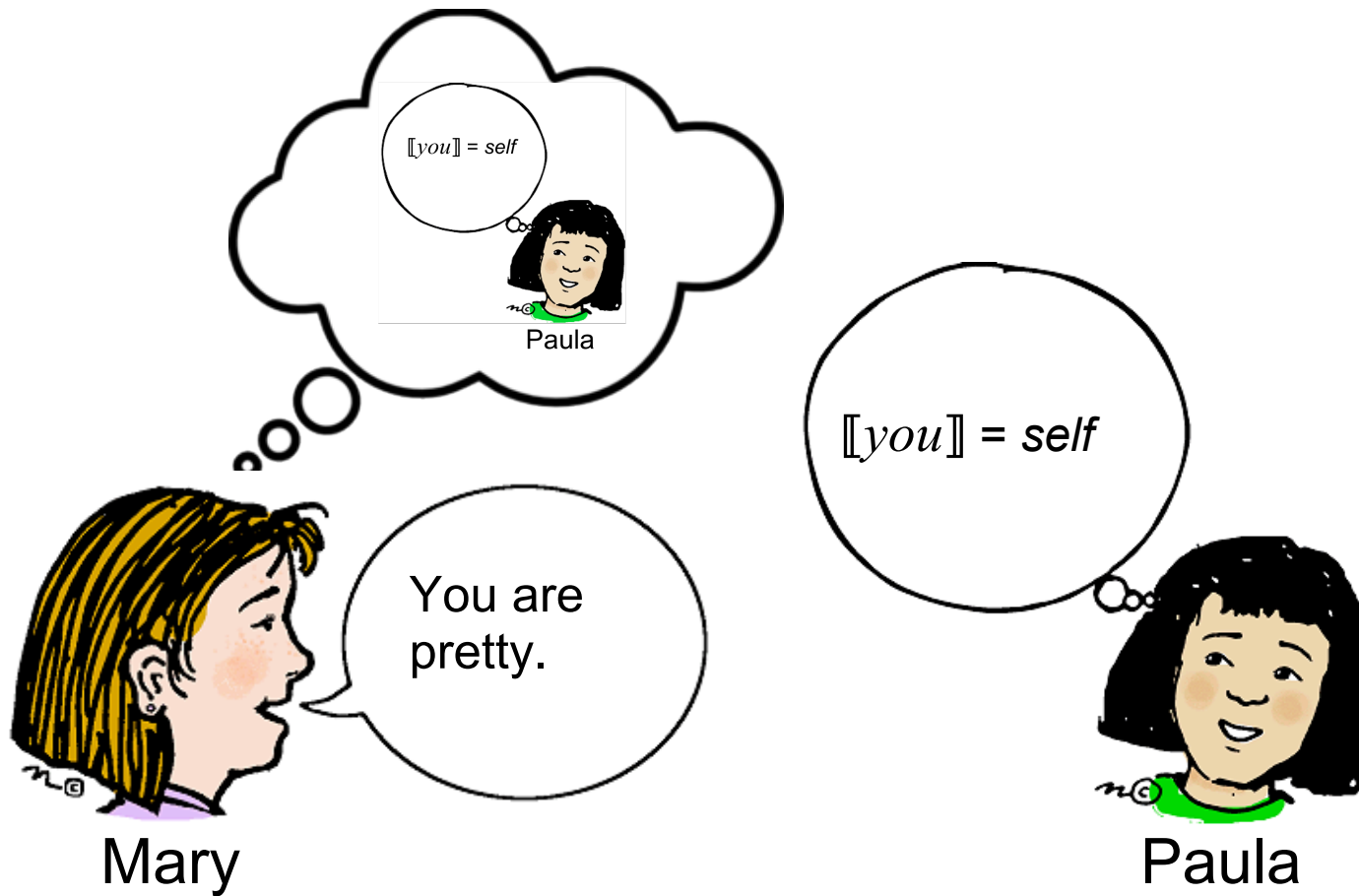- **Addressee** rule: none (see Grice's cooperative principle)

Consequence: An addressee hearing a 1st person pronoun assumes the speaker has applied the Speaker Rule for 1st perss.
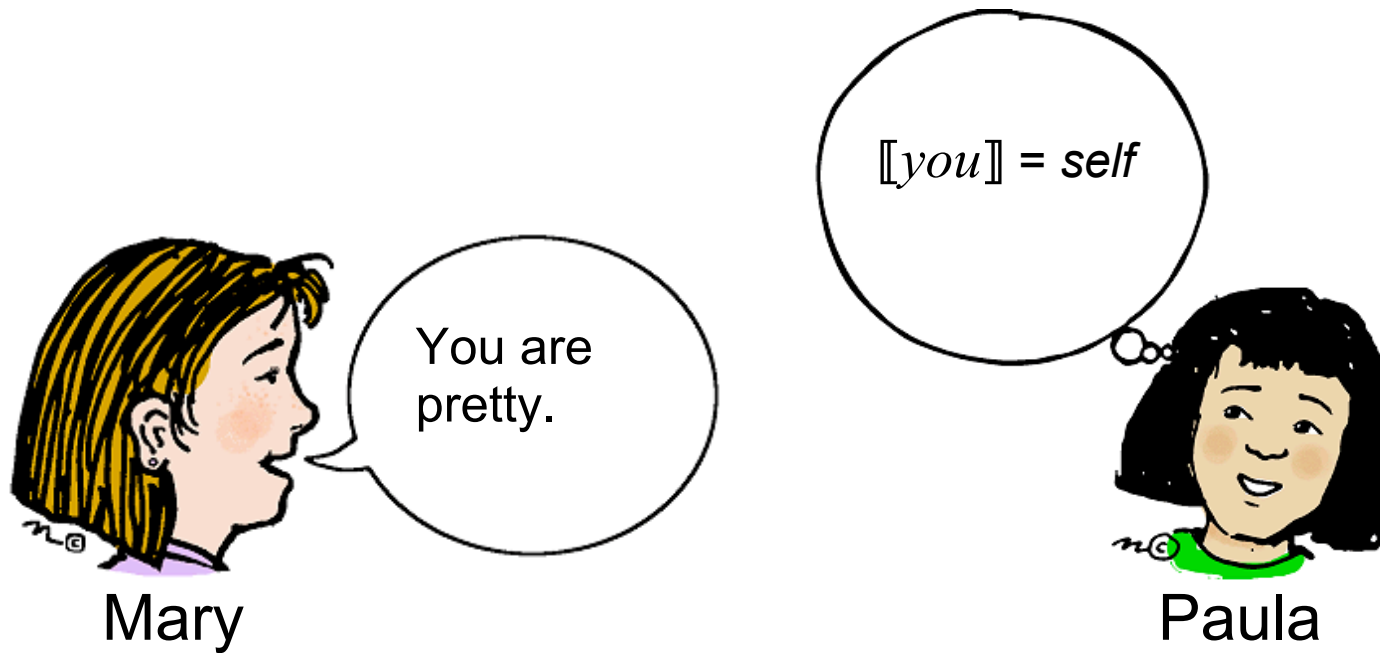
Mary

Paula

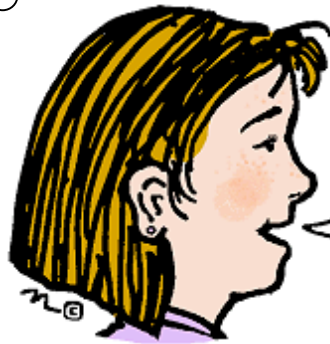Addressee Rule for 2nd pers.: self-identify as the referent of any 2nd person pronoun that you hear

⇒ Paula self-ascribes prettiness.

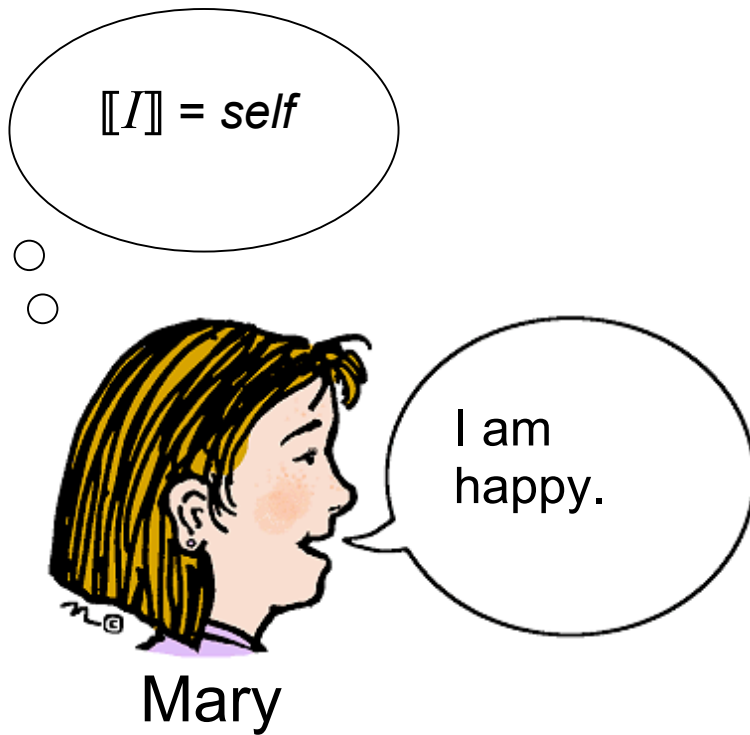A speaker says *you* when she wants the addressee to apply the Addressee Rule for 2nd pers.

Speaker Rule for 1st pers.: Self-identify as the referent of any 1st person pronoun that you utter.

The addressee assumes that the speaker is applying the Speaker Rule for 1st pers.

Summary

- Speaker Rule for 1st pers.: Speakers should self-identify…

- Addressee Rule for 2nd pers.: Addressees should self-identify…

- Gricean pragmatics (social cognition) does the rest.

The notions 'speaker' and 'addressee' are not part of descriptive content, so 1pl and 2pl cannot be restricted to just speakers/ just addressees.

(Wechsler 2010)

Comparison

Standard rules (Kaplan 1977)**:**

A 1p pronoun refers to the speaker in the context.

A 2p pronoun refers to the addressee in the context.

The de se rules (Wechsler 2010):

Speakers should self-identify with a 1p pronoun.

Addressees should self-identify with a 2p pronoun.

Related proposals

- Wechsler 2010

- Kripke 2011

- Sainsbury 2011

- Folescu and Higginbotham 2011

Frege on thinking vs. saying 'I'

'Now everyone is presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he is presented to no one else.'

Dr. Lauben **thinks**: "I have been wounded"

But: 'only Dr. Lauben himself can grasp thoughts determined in this way. … He cannot communicate a thought which he alone can grasp.' So when

Dr. Lauben **says** "I have been wounded"

'he must use the " I " in a sense which can be grasped by others, perhaps in the sense of "he who is speaking to you at this moment"…' (Frege 1910, *The Thought*)

Kripke on Perry on Frege on demonstratives

'Surely, one must give an analysis of first person sentences where 'I' is univocal, whether used in talking to oneself … or in diary entries … or in communicating with others. If it is the sense determined by its subject's first person acquaintance with herself, how can it be used to communicate to someone else? Here is one possibility. The hearer is aware that each person, including the hearer herself, uses 'I' to refer to herself by direct self-acquaintance. Hence, knowing what this is in one's own case and taking it to be the same way for others, one understands what the first person statement is, even though it has a sense that is, strictly speaking, incommunicable to the hearer.'

Kripke (2011) 'The First Person'

Further evidence

The de se theory: 1p/2p are (cognitive) **reflexives**:

Mary thinks/says 'I': Mary thinks of herself.

Mary hears 'you':   Mary thinks of herself.

⇒ predicts: homophony with reflexive pronouns

Standard Kaplanian theory:

1p refers to the speaker
2p refers to the addressee

⇒ predicts: homophony with nouns 'speaker', 'hearer'

1p/2p ~ reflexive homophony

Balinese *awak* (1 / 2 / refl)*, dewek* (1 / refl); Japanese *zibun*.

1. Da   keto, awak   ngancan kelih …
   NEG   that   1/2   AV.get   mature
   'Don't be like that, you are getting mature…'

2. Awak wang   tani,   kangguang ja dadi   kutun pundukan
   1/2   person farmer accept   PT become louse rice.field.edge
   'I am a farmer, I am happy to be a louse in the rice-field'

3. Nyoman bas matilesang   awak pesan .
   name   too humble   self   very
   'Nyoman humbled himself too much'

Standard Kaplanian theory:

1p refers to the speaker
2p refers to the addressee

$\Rightarrow$ predicts: 1p/2p homophony w/ nouns 'speaker', 'hearer'

Unattested?

Evidence for the *de se* theory

- the Associative Plural Generalization

- 1p / 2p homophonous with <u>reflexives</u>

Not mentioned today:

- 2p with multiple addressees

- pronoun reversal in children Theory of Mind deficit: autism (Wechsler 2010)

- conjunct/disjunct systems (Wechsler under review)

Why <u>must</u> the *de se* theory be right for all languages?

What prevents a child from accepting the standard

Kaplanian hypothesis instead?

Does Kaplanian character model psychological states?

According to Perry (1977) and Kaplan (1977), we use the **character** (not content) to individuate psychological states, in explaining and predicting action.

Different content, same character: 'When you and I have beliefs under the common character of 'A bear is about to attack me', we behave similarly. We roll up in a ball and try to be still.' (Kaplan 1977)

Yes, 'we behave similarly', as viewed from the objective perspective of the semanticist. But language users do not have that perspective.

Character fails to individuate psychological states

The language user must use **empathy** to connect two **very different** experiences:

- **uttering** 'A bear is about to attack me' (fear!)
- **hearing** 'A bear is about to attack me' (concern)

In most approaches to semantics this difference is systematically suppressed.

The compositional semantics of 'I' and 'you'

(1) I am hungry

H = your experience of **thinking** or **sincerely uttering** (1): a certain rumbling in the belly.

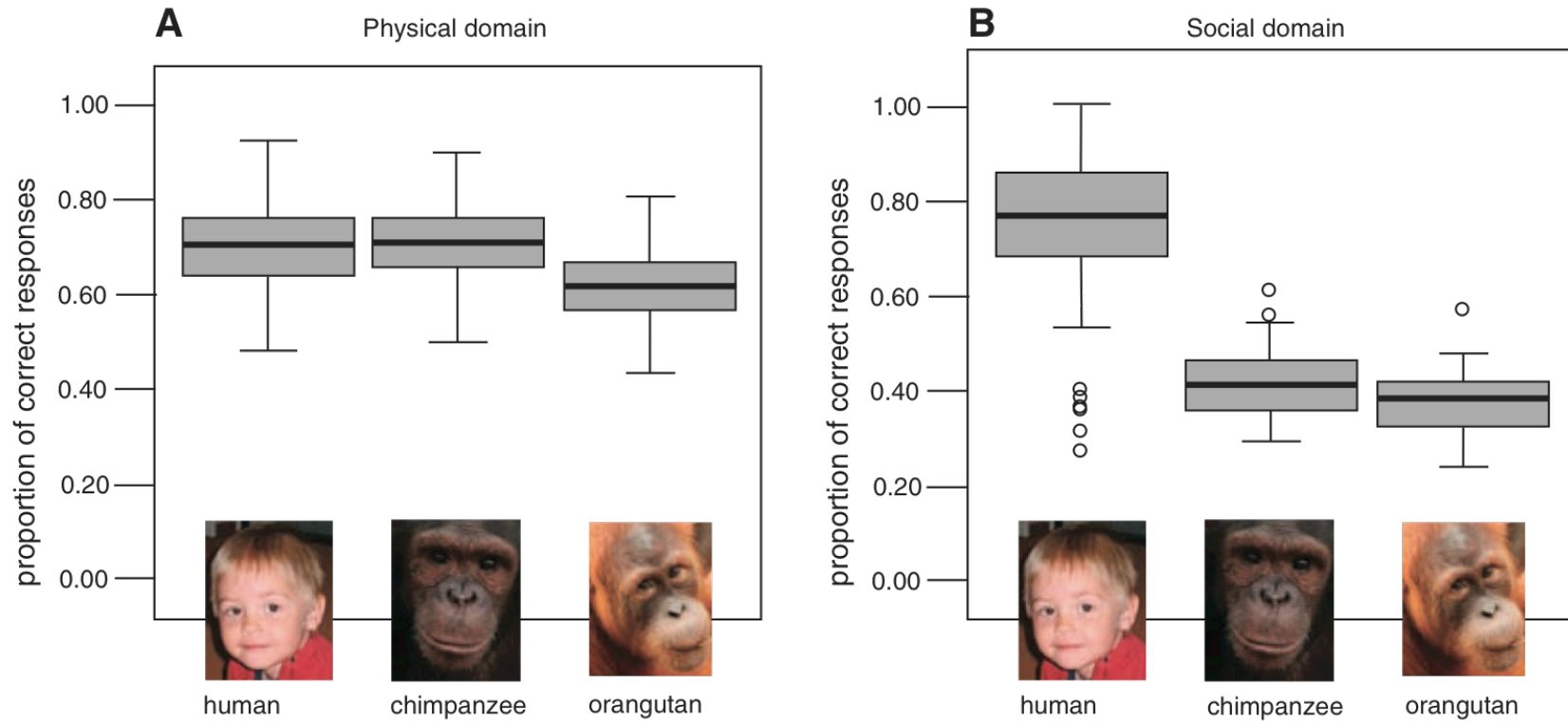*G* = your experience of **hearing** someone else utter sincerely (1), and believing them.

  H and *G* are relatable **only via empathy**.

A child must begin to relate:
  • her own self-ascription of P
  • others' self-ascription of P

Social cognition

Herrmann, Esther, Josep Call, María Victoria Hernández-Lloreda, Brian Hare, and Michael Tomasello. 2007. "Humans Have Evolved Specialized Skills of Social Cognition: The Cultural Intelligence Hypothesis." *Science* 317 (5843): 1360–1366.

Ontogenesis of self-referential pronouns: a sketch

- Self-identification: distinguishing self from other (Piaget).

- Personal pronouns: the cognitive experience of self-identification is symbolized by the communicative act of **producing** of a sound (1p) or **hearing** a sound (2p).

- Theory of mind development: joint attention (6-12 mo); recognize intentionality & desire in others (13-24; or earlier); understanding how things look from others' perspectives (37-48); pass false belief tasks (49-60).

- Intention-reading: the hearer understands 'I', and speaker knows the effect of 'you' on the hearer, through **empathy**.

Recap

The experiences that a child learns to associate with **hearing** versus **uttering** a sentence containing a particular personal pronoun are very different.

Empathy connects those disparate experiences: the child draws a connection between her own self-ascription of a property and self-ascription by others.

But the child uttering or hearing a 1st person pronoun is not in the objective position needed to observe regularities such as 'whether uttered or heard, the 1st person pronoun refers to the speaker.' (Mutatis mutandis for 2nd person and 'the addressee'.)

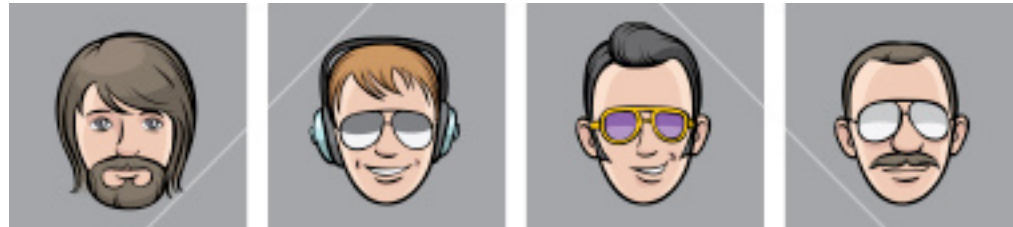As a result, **the empathy based hypothesis** always wins.

A Proposal for Character Assassination

Eliminate character. Replace it with a serious theory of social cognition.

Thank-you!

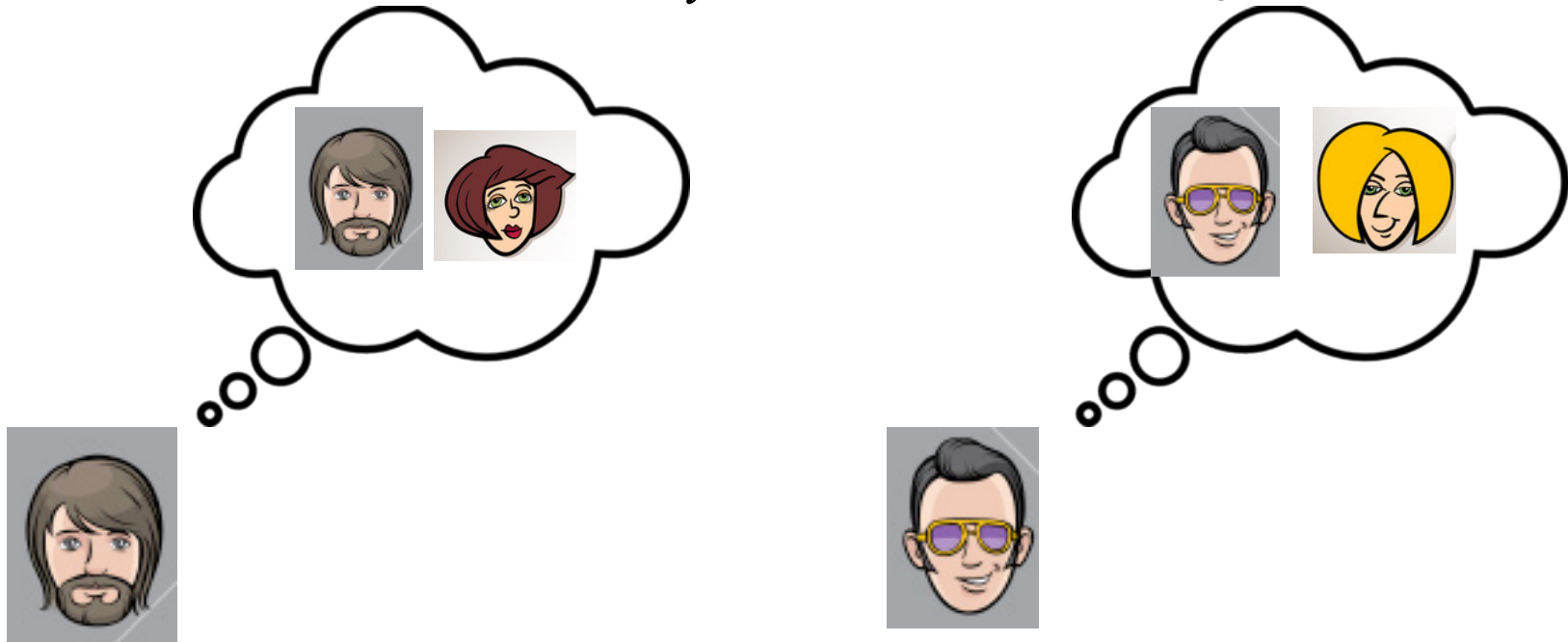# Appendix: 2PL with multiple addressees

Set of addressees:

Hey guys. You all are recently married. So tell me your stories.

How did you meet? (you + your spouse who is not present)

How did you meet? (you & your spouse who is not present)

Each addressee interprets $[\![\,you.\mathrm{PL}\,]\!]$ as including self

A 2pers. pronoun is for self-identification by addressees.

2PL with multiple addressees

Set of addressees:

Did 2PL refer to the set of addressees?   No.

Did 2PL refer to a superset of the addressees?   No.

Did 2PL induce self-identification **by** each addressee? Yes!