

Kees de Schepper

You and me against the world?

First, second and third person
in the world's languages

An oft-heard misconception about the grammatical category of person is that the main division in this category is between first and second person on the one hand and third person on the other. "First and second vs. third" is, however, not the only pattern regarding person that can be found in the languages of the world. It all depends on the topic that is investigated. Topics investigated in this dissertation include vocatives, imperatives, argument marking, binding, quantifiers, evidentiality, number, identity shift and sign language.

Furthermore, these person patterns fall into two classes: 1) rigid patterns, which are universal and deal with speech-act participants directly; and 2) person hierarchies, which allow for variation between languages and deal with the grammatical category of person. This division shows that it is important to determine for each topic whether it deals with speech-act participants (speaker, addressee and other) or person (inclusive, first, second and third person).

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