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Debunking the I above You illusion: You and I and the universal person hierarchy[1]

ABSTRACT: There is a long tradition in placing I above YOU in linguistics and grammar. In our Western grammatical terminology, I is the "first person". In the universal scale of agentivity, or "universal person hierarchy", I is placed before YOU. The goal of this paper is to examine the proof for ordering I and YOU in such a fashion. The universal character of local person marking in human languages, and existing proposals concerning the person hierarchy are reviewed. The kind of grammatical phenomena governed by the so-called "universal hierarchy": split ergativity, inverse systems, and pronominal marking, are discussed. First, we show that there are languages whose grammatical phenomena are governed by the other order, with YOU above I. Looking for the possibility that two person hierarchies share room within world languages, we then turn to the facts that support placing I above YOU, and demonstrate that this proof is non-existent. The egocentric perspective belongs to linguistics, and to certain habits of a Western school of thought, not to natural languages. The data examined here also shows that there are no languages where split ergativity or the inverse system would operate from a hierarchy placing 3rd persons above 2nd or 1st, thus confirming a 2, 1>3 hierarchy. As far as a hierarchy between singular persons or Speech Acts participants is concerned, the one for which there is clear evidence is the one where YOU outranks I: 2>I.
KEYWORDS: Person hierarchy; I; YOU; Inverse; Split ergativity.

RESUMO: Existe uma longa tradição em colocar a primeira pessoa EU acima de TU tanto na linguística quanto na gramática. Na terminologia da Gramática Ocidental, EU é a "primeira pessoa". Na escala universal de agentividade, ou "hierarquia universal de pessoa", EU está antes de TU. O objetivo deste artigo é examinar as evidências para o ordenamento de EU e TU dessa maneira. O caráter universal da marcação de pessoa local nas línguas naturais, as propostas existentes em relação à hierarquia de pessoa são revistas. O tipo de fenômenos gramaticais regidos pela "hierarquia universal": cisão ergativa, sistemas inversos e marcação de pessoa são discutidos. Primeiro, mostramos que há línguas cujos fenômenos gramaticais são regidos por outra ordem, com TU acima de EU. Observando a possibilidade que

hierarquia das duas pessoas partilhe características nas línguas, voltamos, então, para os fatos que colocam Eu acima de TU, e demonstra-se que essas evidências não existem. A perspectiva egocêntrica pertence aos linguistas, e a certos hábitos da Escola Ocidental de pensamento, e não às línguas naturais. Os dados aqui examinados também mostram que não há línguas em que a cisão de ergatividade ou o sistema inverso opere a partir de uma hierarquia colocando as terceiras pessoas acima da segunda ou da primeira, confirmando, dessa maneira, a hierarquia 2, 1>3. Em relação à hierarquia entre as pessoas locais do singular ou aos participantes do Ato de Fala, a evidência que fica clara é aquela em que TU está acima de EU, ou seja, 2>1.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Hierarquia de pessoa; Eu; TU; Inverso, Ergatividade cindida.

0. INTRODUCTION

There is a long tradition in placing I above YOU in linguistics and grammar.[2] In our Western grammatical terminology, I is the "first person". In the universal scale of agentivity, or "universal person hierarchy", I is placed before YOU. The goal of this paper is to examine the proof for ordering I and YOU in such a fashion, knowing that the "universal person hierarchy" is used and accepted to be true by many current linguistic theories.[3] We will start by discussing the universal character of local person marking in human languages, and review existing proposals concerning the person hierarchy. We then present the kind of grammatical phenomena governed by the so-called "universal hierarchy": split ergativity, inverse systems, and pronominal marking.[4] First, we show that there are languages whose grammatical phenomena are governed by the other order, with YOU above I. Looking for the possibility that two person hierarchies share room within world languages, we will then turn to the facts that support placing I above YOU, and demonstrate that this proof is non-existent. This leads us to conclude that when there is a hierarchy amongst the singular speech-act participants I and YOU, it is the YOU>I order that exists.

1. LOCAL PERSON MARKING IN HUMAN LANGUAGES

1.1. All languages have words for I and YOU and exhibit politeness strategies

All known human languages have morphemes for I and YOU. Wierzbicka (1976 and subsequent work) demonstrates that I and YOU are semantic primitives, i.e. lexical universals which cannot be reduced nor explained by other semantic primitives. She also demonstrates that I and YOU cannot be characterized by features of +/- speaker, which would be more primitive.[5]

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[2] For a critical discussion of this tradition see Cyr (1996) and references cited there. For the traditional position see Greenberg (1993).

[3] See for example Noyer (1992), and Hanson, Harley et Ritter (2000:109-I underline): " *[there are]...universal defaults for major organizing nodes, specifically 1ˢᵗ person for [Participant]*".

[4] I exclude from the present study person deixis (words like *here, there, this, that*), where I is the primary reference point. Deixis is not what initially motivated the person hierarchy. I leave this open for further research

[5] Wierzbicka (2002) proposes the following definition for the more complex, non-primitive terms, "speaker" and "addressee", using the semantic primitives SAY, PERSON and SOMETHING.

　　person X said something [X speaker]

　　person X said something to person Y [X-speaker, Y addressee].

All languages also have strategies to avoid using I and YOU. Think of using plural instead of singular, like French *Vous* (polite form for *Tu)* or the "royal *We* ". Another strategy is to use the third person (singular or plural) instead of YOU: for example in Spanish, *Usted* for *Tu,* in German, *Sie* for *Du.*

In Japanese and other Asian languages deeply influenced by court traditions, pragmatic restrictions apply to 1st- as well as 2nd person pronouns. There are deferential forms for I and YOU as well as contextual social and gender restrictions on how to use them. For example, women are taught from childhood to either identify themselves with polite 'womanish' forms of first person pronouns, or to avoid referring to themselves. The more familiar *Ore* (I) and *Kisama* (YOU) seem to be never used by females.
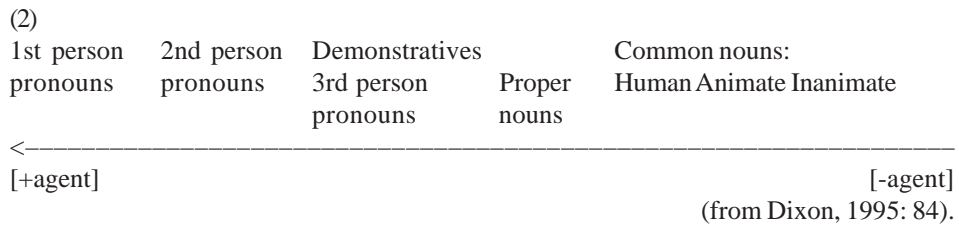
(1) First and Second person pronouns in Japanese (Ide 1991 from Onishi 1994)

		Men's speech	Women's speech
I	formal	watakusi	watakusi
		watasi	atakusi
	plain	boku/ atasi	watasi
	deprecatory	ore	--------
YOU	formal	anata	anata
	plain	kimi	anata
	deprecatory	omae	(omae)
		kisama	--------

In addition to these usage facts, which can be attributed to a universal tendency to be polite and to respect social conventions, some languages also exhibit grammatical facts with pure and simple distinctions on local person combinations. While a correlation might ultimately exist between pragmatic conventions and grammaticalization patterns, we will only examine here the last type of facts: the ones dealing with syntactic constructions and combinations of morphemes for local persons, the grammatical manifestations of the relations between I and YOU.

1.2. The universal scale of the person hierarchy

A claim often repeated in the linguistic literature since Silverstein (1976), to whom it is attributed, is that the following scale of agentivity is universal:

(2)

1st person pronouns	2nd person pronouns	Demonstratives 3rd person pronouns	Proper nouns	Common nouns: Human Animate Inanimate

<——

[+agent]   [-agent]

(from Dixon, 1995: 84).

What is of interest to us in this paper is the higher end of this scale. Does the first person really universally outrank the second person? Zwicky (1977) claims that there is a universal hierarchy of reference: 1>2>3, whereby 1 dominates 2 and both 1 and 2 dominate 3. Some linguists have claimed that this scale is universal because it is anchored in what Dixon (1979, 1995) calls "the egocentric nature of the way humans see the world". To cite Dixon (1979, 1995:84, I underline): *Most discourse, in any language, is oriented to the people involved in the speech act-* preeminently *to the speaker,* then *to the addressee, then to other specific people, referred to by demonstratives or third person pronouns, or proper names, or just by common nouns with human reference. Put very roughly, a speaker will think in terms of doing things to other people to a much greater extent than in terms of things being done to him. In the speakers view of the world, as it impinges on him and as he describes it in his language, he will be the quintessential agent.*

When the 1>2 hierarchy is not attributed to a natural tendency towards agentivity, it is to a natural tendency towards topicality. As Dixon himself points out, his view correlates with Kuno (1976: 433) "Speech Act Participant Empathy Hierarchy" which places the speaker above the addressee: Speaker > Hearer >Third Person (cited by Dixon 1995: 88). *It is easier for the speaker to empathize with himself (i.e. to express its own point of view); it is next easier to express empathy with the hearer; it is most difficult to empathize with the third party, at the exclusion of the hearer or himself.*

As shown by Cyr (1996), there is an argumentative tautology which runs from Aristotle to Russell in Philosophy, from Lyons to Greenberg in Linguistics, which ends up being considered by all like a natural truth: *JE est au centre de l'espace discursif du fait que le centre est le point de vue du JE.* (*I is at the center of discourse space because the center is the perspective of I*) (Cyr 1996: 45).

However, sufficient counter-examples to the above claim that I is above YOU can be found. First, in Algonquian languages which exhibit the opposite hierarchy with YOU above I (Bloomfield 1946, Wolfart 1973, Jolley 1983, Cyr 1996). Jolley (1983) for example, overtly challenges Zwicky's claim on the basis of Algonquian data which clearly show a 2>1>3 person hierarchy (see section 2.2). Then, in the dissident voices of Delancey (1981) and Wierzbicka (1981).

Wierzbicka (1981) challenged Dixon's (1979) claim that the speaker is a "quintessential agent" and that "human nature" explains a 1>2 person hierarchy.[6] She demonstrated, by establishing the agent-to-patient ratio in plays and narratives that a speaker seems more interested in what other people are doing to him or her than in what he or she is doing to other people.

(3) Summary of Wierzbicka (1981) statistics for thematic roles assigned to the first person in transitive sentences with animate arguments:

	First person Agent	First person Patient
Plays	227	286
Autobiographies	97	179
TOTAL:	334	465

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[6] DeLancey (1981) objected as well, claiming that there were both second and first person precedence.

From these numbers, she concludes that *the speaker regards himself as the quintessential 'victim' or the quintessential experiencer,* rather than the quintessential agent. (Wierzbicka 1981:46).

Moreover, Silverstein, to whom the 1>2>3 person hierarchy is attributed, never made the claim himself that 1 was above 2. Rather, he notices that: *"there is a question of which <ego> or <tu> is the higher of the person features as is raised by the facts of split ergative systems, some of which distinguish first person (<ego>) from all the rest, others which distinguish second person (<tu>) forms from all the rest."* (Silverstein 1976:118). So according to Silverstein, we might expect both possibilities of 1>2 and 2>1.

This of course raises the following question: Is the hierarchy putting the "first" person (I) above the "second" person (YOU) an empirical finding or a simple hypothesis?

2. IS THE 1>2 HIERARCHY UNIVERSAL?

The facts presented to support person hierarchies between local persons have to do with split ergativity and inverse systems. After surveying these phenomena, we will look at data, coming from my own work on East Cree, which sustain a 2>1 hierarchy. However, a careful review of a rather abundant linguistic literature will force us to conclude that the proofs for a 1>2 hierarchy cannot be found.

2.1. Split ergativity and inverse systems

Split ergativity is a phenomenon found in ergative languages. English, for example, can be considered an accusative language because the subject pronoun of a transitive verb (A) bears the same case as the subject of an intransitive verb (S): nominative. The object of a transitive verb (O) bears accusative case. This can be seen with the pronouns *she* and *her* in (4) and (5).

(4)   **She**   came back.
       3+NOM (S)   came back

(5)   **She**   sees **her**.
       3+NOM (A)   sees 3+ACC (O)

Dyirbal, on the other hand, is called an ergative language because the object of a transitive verb (O) bears the same case as the subject of an intransitive verb (S): absolutive. The subject of a transitive verb (A) bears ergative case.

(6)   yabu   banaga-nʸu
       Mother+ABS (S)   return-NONFUT
       'Mother returned'

(7)   yabu   ŋuma-**ŋgu**   bura-n
       Mother+ABS (O)   father-ERG (A) see-NONFUT
       'Father saw mother'   (from Dixon 1995:10)

Split-ergativity is when a language mixes nominative-accusative and absolutive-ergative types of intra-clausal marking. For example, in Dyirbal, as shown in table (8), first and second person pronouns are marked with a nominative-accusative marking, while all nouns and 3rd person pronouns have an ergative-absolutive marking. Depending on the language, this split can be conditioned by the nature of the verb, the semantic nature of the NPs, tense/aspect/mood, or the type of clause: main or subordinate clause.

(8)   Dyirbal: (Dixon 1995: 86)

	1&2	3	Proper Nouns	Common Nouns
A	-	-ŋgu	-ŋgu	-ŋgu
S	-	-	-	-
O	-na	-	-	-

In the Dyirbal example, the split is located between the first and second person on one hand and the third person on the other hand. It is because such splits exist that linguists have postulated the existence of person hierarchies. So, for Dyirbal, we would have the proof of a hierarchy 1, 2 >3, nouns. If the universal person hierarchy which ranks I, the first person, above YOU, the second person, really exists, we should expect to find split ergativity between I and YOU.

Before continuing, let us take a look at the other type of phenomenon that justifies the existence of the concept of person hierarchies: inverse systems. In an inverse system, a morpheme on the verb indicates the direction of transitivity, changing neither the location nor the form of personal marking on the verb.

(9)   **ni-**waapam-**a**-a-u   (East Cree)
        1-see.TA. DIRECT.1/2-3
        'I see her/him'

(10)   **ni-**waapam-**ik(w)-**u
        1-see.TA. INVERSE.1/2-3
        'S/he sees me'

The fact that the direct as in (9), is used when 1 acts on 3, and that the inverse as in (10), is used when 3 acts on 1, is taken as proof that there is a person hierarchy where I is placed above HE or SHE. If the universal hierarchy is such that I is above YOU, we should expect to find inverse when YOU acts on I.

2.2. Proof that 2>1 exist

Algonquian languages offer us a proof that YOU>I exist (see for example Wolfart 1973, 1996; MacKenzie 1972, Baraby 1998, MacKenzie et al. 2010, Hamilton et al 2010). The following examples are from East Cree. They show that it is the second person and not the first that is placed higher in the hierarchy governing the choice of direct or inverse

morphology in transitive sentences. In the direct, like (11), the person hierarchy (2>1) is directly aligned with the scale of agentivity, so that the patient cannot outrank the agent on the person hierarchy. If the patient is higher than the agent on the person hierarchy, like in (12), then inverse has to be used. Furthermore, the personal prefix in initial position cannot outrank the other argument of the sentence, as shown by the ungrammatical examples in (13).

(11) **Direct (>):**   chi-waapam-in
                    2-see.TA-2>1
                    'You see me'

(12) **Inverse (<) :** chi-waapam-**it-**in
                    2-see.TA-2<1
                    'I see you'

(13)   *ni-waapam-in   *ni-waapam-**it-**in
     1-see.TA-1>2   1-see.TA-1< 2

This applies all the way down, to all persons. Some forms do not have personal prefixes (in the conjunct order) but there is inverse marking whenever I acts onto YOU (1>2) (see MacKenzie et al. 2010). The table in (14) summarizes the person combinations involving I and YOU, for which direct or inverse are used, and also shows that inverse must be used whenever a third person acts on an I or a YOU. Inverse is also used when an inanimate agent acts on an animate one (see Dawe-Sheppard & Hewson 1990, for a study on Micmac inanimate inverse). The distribution of inverse and direct, illustrating the kind of person hierarchy exhibited by the Cree language[7] is given in table (15).

(14)

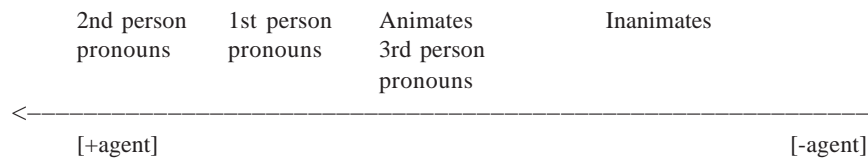|	East Cree (Southern)	English
	DIRECT	
2-->1	chi-waapam-in	you see me
2-->3	chi-waapam-aau	you see him/her
1-->3	ni-waapam-aau	I see him/her
	INVERSE	
1-->2	chi-waapam-**it-**in	I see you
3-->1	ni-waapam-**ik-**u	s/he sees me
3-->2	chi-waapam-**ik-**u	s/he sees you

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[7] To avoid complicating the matter here, I omitted the Obviative Third Person. See Junker (2004) for a discussion of the person hierarchy and obviation.

(15)

	2 O	1 O	3 O
2 A	-	DIRECT	DIRECT
1 A	INVERSE	-	DIRECT
3 A	INVERSE	INVERSE	DIRECT
3 (inanimate) A	INVERSE	INVERSE	(INVERSE) -

Therefore, the person hierarchy, for languages like Cree, should be rewritten as in (16), with the second person placed above the first one.

(16) The person hierarchy for languages like Cree:

2nd person pronouns	1st person pronouns	Animates 3rd person pronouns	Inanimates

<──

   [+agent]   [-agent]

This 2>1 hierarchy also determines which preverbal clitic is used for 'first' person inclusive forms:

(17)   *We* inclusive: **chi-**waapamaanuu
                           2-see.TA-2+1 PL>3
                           'we (you included) see her/him'

    We exclusive: **ni-**waapamaanaan
                           1-see.TA-1PL>3
                           'we (but not you) see her/him'

    You plural: **chi-**waapamaawaau
                           2-see.TA-2PL>3
                           'you-all see her/him'

The use of the 'you' prefix form for 'we inclusive' is true for all Algonquian languages. In fact, looking at the forms, it seems more appropriate to talk about a "*You-all* inclusive (of I)" rather than a "*We* inclusive (of YOU)". According to Rhodes (1994), some Algonquian languages only exhibit the inverse morphology in the independent order. This suggests that inverse systems also parallel split ergativity in that they are sometimes restricted to certain types of clauses.

Outside the Algonquian language family, Gerdts (1988) provides a more indirect evidence that a 2>1 person hierarchy governs the choice of transitive clauses in the Salishan language Halkomelem, of Western Canada.[8] The choice of transitive clauses in Halkomelen is governed by the following rule: *an object must not outrank its subject more than one step on the hierarchy*. So while you can say all the sentences in (18), you cannot say (19) "He clubbed you", a combination where the object (*you*) is outranked two steps up on the presumed 2>1>3 hierarchy by the subject (*He*).

(18)   ni   č   q'ʷaqʷ-əθamʔš   (from Gerdts 1988: 31, ex 57)
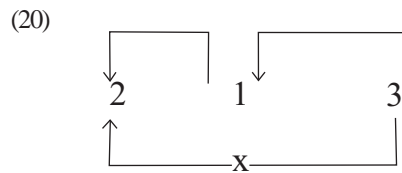   aux   2sub   club   –tr+obj
         'You clubbed me'

         ni   č   q'ʷaqʷ-ət   kʷθə   Bob   (58)
         aux   2sub   club –tr   det   Bob
         'You clubbed Bob'

         ni   cən   q'ʷaqʷ -əθamə   (55)
         aux   1sub   club   -tr+2obj
         'I clubbed you'

         ni   cən   q'ʷaqʷ -ət   kʷθə   Bob   (56)
         aux   1sub   club   -tr   det   Bob
         'I clubbed Bob'

         ni   q'ʷaqʷ-əθamʔš-əs   (59)
         aux   club   -tr+1obj-3erg
         'He clubbed me'

(19)   *ni   q'ʷaqʷ-əθamə-s   (61)
         aux   club   -tr+2obj-3erg
         'He clubbed you'

(20)

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[8] Gerdts (1988) suggests that Halkomelem violates the Silverstein (1976) hierarchy in two ways: not only 2 > 1, but also common nouns > proper nouns.

The fact is that a relatively large number of languages[9] provide data showing that the second person is above the first in the hierarchy. Therefore, rather than seeing phenomena conditioned by a 2>1 hierarchy as odd exceptions, I suggest that we accept that there are several ordering possibilities. Let us now turn to the proofs for the ranking of I above YOU.

2.3. Evidence for 1>2

The sources cited by Dixon (1995) for supporting the I>YOU hierarchy concern mainly South American Native languages. Thus, Cavineña, a Tacanan language from Bolivia, offers examples of split ergativity between first and second person (Camp 1985; Guillaume 2000, 2008). In (21a), the subject (A) is a second person and the object a first person. A bears ergative case and O absolutive. In (21b), though, the two arguments of the verb (A) and (O) both bear absolutive case.

(21)   a. 2 acting on 1PL (A=2: ergative, O=1PL: absolutive)
             Riya-ke   **wekaka mi-ra**   **e-kʷana**   isara-nuka-wa
             this-which day   **2-ERG(A)**   **1-PL+ABS (O)**   greet-again-recent=past
             'Today you spoke to us again'

         b. 1PL acting   on 2 (A=1PL : absolutive, O=2: absolutive)
             Yusurupai   mi-ke   e-kʷana...
             thank   2-word=form+ABS (O)   1-PL+ABS (A)
             'We thank you...'   (Camp 1985:45)

But the crucial data is missing. Here the first person is plural, not singular. To consider *We* like a plural *I* is an illusion. *We* never means a first person only, it can mean either (1+2+3), or (1+3) or (1+2). Some languages make these distinctions, some do not (there is no first person inclusive- exclusive distinction reported so far for Cavineña). Which person is taken into account in the "we" of examples in (21)? The first or the third? Guillaume (2008)'s grammar of Cavineña provides a detailed account of bound pronoun ordering, however, like Camp, the only examples of YOU and I interactions all involve plural first persons. Similarly case restrictions involving plural first persons are reported for Tsimshian (Mulder 1994) and Yukulta (McConvell 1976 and Keen 1983). But can one use *We* as proof for a hierarchy about *I* ? Wierzbicka (1976, 1996) demonstrated that only the pronouns I and YOU were universals as semantic and lexical primitives. *We* has a more complex meaning (for an analysis, see Goddard 1995) and cannot be simply assimilated to I in order to serve as proof. The forms and meanings of *We* can vary a lot across languages. In fact, even the use of *we* can vary a lot within a single language, while this does not happen with *I*. Thus,

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[9] Beck (2001) makes the hypothesis that some apparently contradictory facts from Totonac from High Necaxa, a language spoken in Mexico, could result from a 2>1 hierarchy. He shows that the proofs for a 1>2 hierarchy in Totonac are based on examples containing plurals. He concludes:
... the apparent 1>2 ranking turns out to be, in an oblique way, the consequence of an overall tendency to favour 2 over 1 that has become grammaticalized in a number of different ways in the morphosyntax of the language.

it is frequent to see languages use a third person for the first plural and vice-versa. In French for example, *on* can mean *nous (we)* as shown by the number and gender agreement (feminine plural) of the past participle in (22a). Or else, *nous (we)* can be used in cases where it really means *tu (you)*. It is clear that the mother who says (22b) has no intention to feed herself pablum, only her baby.

(22)   a. **On** est parti<u>es</u>   ensemble   (Maillard 1994:61)
            3   is   left-FEM-PL together
            'We left together'

        b. **Nous** allons manger de la bonne blédine   (de Fornel 1994:190)
            we are-going to-eat of the good pablum
            'We/You are going to eat some good pablum'

In Tupinambá, a Tupi-Guarani language (Rodrigues 1978), the form *ya-*, used for the "*we*" (1+2+3), can also be used for the third person (3 only). The prefix *o-* is used for 1+2+3 as well as for 3. A real proof for the 1>2 hierarchy should use a first person singular, not a first person plural.

Another apparent proof for the 1>2 hierarchy is Kuikúro. Franchetto (1990) cited by Dixon (1995), asserts, that in Kuikúro, a Carib language from Central Brazil, "the use of an ergative construction in interactive moods depends on a 1>2>3 person hierarchy. The table in (23) summarizes the Kuikúro data, with my comments added in bold.

(23) Ergative in Kuikúro: from Franchetto (1990: 417, with my comments added)

interactive moods	A (the subject of a transitive) is first person singular or first plural inclusive 1 and (1+2+3):	A is second person or first plural exclusive: 2 and (1+3)	A is third person:
But:	ergative not allowed **when acting on 3! Data on 1>2 is missing.**	ergative optional **the only example of 2>1 involves a purposive case on 1, 1 is not a direct object ('you shall tell the story to me')**	ergative obligatory
descriptive moods	ergative obligatory for all types of A		

Franchetto also observes that most Carib languages are sensitive to the fact that local persons are involved together in an event. A close look at the data available shows that none of these languages can offer a proof for a 1>2 hierarchy. When the first and second person appear in the subject and object role, Carib languages vary: either the verb agrees with the subject, regardless of person (1 or 2), or a prefix (1+2) normally used for intransitive subjects, marks that both 1 and 2 are engaged in a transitive relation: *Apparently the language is simply sensitive to the fact that a first and second person are involved in*

a situation. Whether that situation is intransitive with first and second person acting cooperatively in an S role, or whether the situation is transitive and one speech act participant is acting upon the other, is not directly reflected in the verbal cross referencing system. (Franchetto 1990: 423).[10]

My last hope to find a real proof for the 1>2 hierarchy was in Seki's work, also cited by Dixon, 1995, as an example supporting the existence of 1>2. However, this proof, like the other examined above, fails under closer scrutiny. In Kamaiurá, a Tupí-Guaraní language, A and O can be coded on the verb in many different ways, depending on person combinations:

- A set of morphemes (I) marks only the subject A. See (24a, c, and e) in the table below.
- Another set of morphemes (II) marks only the object O. See (24b, d).
- A set of portmanteau morphemes marks certain person combinations of A and O. See (24f, g).

(24)	participant		coded on the verb by:			
	A	O	Set I	Set II	Portmanteau	
a.	1, 2	3	A			
b.	3	1,2		O		
c.	3	3	A			
d.	2	1		O		—> **evidence for 1>2?**
e.	1excl.	2 sg	A			—> **evidence for 1>2?**
f.	1sg	2sg			A/O	—> **Why not just A?**
g.	1	2pl.			A/O	—> **Why not just A?**

(from Seki 1990, p. 383. My comments added in bold)

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[10] Note that Franchetto actually claims that there is a 1>2>3 person hierarchy at play in declarative sentences in Kuikúro. This claim is based on the difference in marking between on one hand persons 1, (1+2) and 2, and on the other hand persons (1+3) and 3, as shown in the table below:

1 SG, 1 INCL (1+2), 2	1 EXCL (1+3), 3
Nomiative	Non-nominative system
(Cross reference system is such that prefixes for A are the same as prefixes for S. No cross-ref for O when SAP are in A role).	*(When SAP are in P role, tripartite system with no cross-ref for A, special set of prefixes for O).*

However, again, the data that would support 1>2 are missing. There are no examples of 1SG acting on 2, nor of 2 > 1SG, only of 1SG acting on 3SG. So while there is support for a hierarchy between local and non-local participants, the idea of hierarchy amongst local participants is an overgeneralization. The particularity of these languages is rather, as observed by Rodrigues (1990) for Tupinambá, that the first person exclusive has more in common with the third person than with other categories.

The facts in (24a, b, c) indicate a hierarchy between the local persons and the third person: 1,2 > 3. Seki observes that if two participants have the same value, it is the set I with A marking that is used, as in (24c). The facts in (24d and e) could indicate a 1>2 hierarchy, although (e) could also be interpreted like (c) as indicating same value. It is not clear in (24d) if the pronouns are singular or plural. Even if we take (24d and e) to indicate a 1>2 hierarchy, the use of a portmanteau morpheme for (f and g) undermines the evidence provided by (d). Even in the clearest cases for 1>2, there are avoidance strategies.

2.4. Avoidance Strategies

Heath (1991, 1998) claims that languages, for pragmatic reasons, avoid establishing a hierarchy between local persons. He inventories a remarkable number of such avoidance strategies:

(1) marker disguised by partial phonological distortion
(2) one of the two markers expressed by isolated suppletive allomorph
(3) one of the two markers (elsewhere non-zero) expressed by zero
(4) number neutralization
(5) 1st or 2nd marker merged with (or replaced by) 3rd-person marker
(6) entire combination expressed by unanalyzable portmanteau
(7) entire combination expressed by zero (special case of portmanteau)
(8) inclusive 1+2 marker replaces 1st or 2nd marker, or entire combination
(9) merged 1or 2 markers is part of both 1<—>2 and 2 <—>1 combinations
(10) subject and object markers compete for a single slot
(11) co-occuring 1st and 2nd markers are widely separated
(12) combinations with identical segments differ in tones

All the problems we had identifying any proofs for a 1>2 hierarchy can be explained by strategies 4, 5, 6 and 8. According to Heath, there is no hierarchy at all between discourse participants. He attributes this to the fact that, universally, the relation between I and YOU is sensitive and depends on strong social ties. However, the facts examined in this paper point toward a different conclusion.[11]

3. CONCLUSION: YOU IS ABOVE I

We opened the previous section with the following question: Is the 1>2 hierarchy universal? The answer is NO. Not only is the 1> 2 hierarchy not universal, clear evidence for it, involving singular I and YOU, was not found in the literature cited to support it. The lack of proof for the existence of a I>YOU hierarchy in natural language that governs split ergativity and inverse systems phenomena, rather suggests that natural languages do

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[11] Hamilton et al. (2010) demonstrated that there was no pragmatic skewing in East Cree, the language where we found proof for the 2>1 hierarchy.

everything possible to avoid an ordering of local person which would put I above YOU. It seems to be a linguists' illusion, resulting from patterns of Western thought placing I at the center of the universe of discourse. Looking back at the debate that took place 30 years ago, it appears that Wierzbicka was right. The egocentric perspective belongs to linguists, and to certain habits of a Western school of thought, not to natural languages.

On the other hand, contrary to Heath's claim that there is no hierarchy at all between local persons, there is significant proof that a hierarchy can exist where YOU is above I. If we had more precise data on transitive sentences implying singular local persons (1SG and 2SG), several other languages might bring us more proof in favor of 2>1.

The data examined here also shows that there are no languages where split ergativity or the inverse system would operate from a hierarchy placing non-local persons above local ones. The 2, 1>3 hierarchy is thus confirmed. As far as a hierarchy between local persons or Speech Act participants is concerned, the one for which there is clear evidence is the one where YOU outranks I: 2>1.

So, until there is proof to the contrary, the so-called universal scale of agentivity or person hierarchy has to be revised.

The revised universal person hierarchy

YOU >	I	SAP >	NON-SAP	
2nd person pronouns	1rst person pronouns	Demonstratives 3rd person pronouns	Proper nouns	Common nouns: Human Animate Inanimate

< —————————————————————————

[+agent]   [-agent]

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