The First-Person Plural Pronoun “Vi” in Danish: Tracking its Reference
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This paper presents a study on the reference of the first person plural pronoun “vi” in the Danish language. I am retrieving my data from the Danish Queen Magrethe’s Nytår’s Tale (New Years Speech). Its purpose is to question the role of the pronoun in discourse: how can its reference be tracked and does it mimic the range of uses for the third person pronouns? It is generally believed that the first-person plural pronoun is likewise anaphoric, but instances such as the first discourse utterance reproduced below, suggest that the reference of the pronoun may be more deictic and depend heavily on the context of the situation and the speaker.

1) Vi kan ikke forlade 2015 uden at tænke over, hvad året har bragt.
   We cannot leave 2015 without thinking about what the year has brought

I will be analyzing its deictic characteristics and assess whether the pronoun participates as expected in the Centering Theory. These transitions would then assess whether the first-person plural pronoun is anaphoric, deictic, or a bound variable. I predict that the results will, for the most part, comply to the rules of the Centering Theory. In order to produce those results, the first-person plural pronoun “vi” should provide several easily tracked transitions, such as continue, retain, and smooth-shift, and would support the theory that the pronoun is anaphoric. However, there are instances in which the pronoun does not produce a shift of reference that can be saliently tracked. When transitioned with a rough-shift, the pronoun is reliant on speaker context and is, instead, a deictic element. These results give insight as to the role of the first-person pronoun throughout discourse, and provide a comparison between this pronoun and highly anaphoric third person pronouns.

Sources


