

# "The Syntax of Phi"

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Phi Features  
( $\varphi$ )

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# NUMBER

Beyond singular-vs.-plural —

(A) singular-dual-plural

Harley + Ritter (2002)

	SINGULAR	DUAL	PLURAL
1st	ca'ya	geuca'ya	geuca'ga
2nd	na'ya	wena'ya	wena'ga
3rd	'aye'la	'awe'la	'awe'ga

TABLE 5. Tonkawa nominative pronouns (Hoijer 1933:122).

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Ⓑ singular - dual - paucal - plural

	SINGULAR	DUAL	PAUCAL	PLURAL
1st	ama	kapa	paŋkt	ipa
2nd	mi	kapwa	paŋkt	ipwa
3rd	nak	impak		puk

TABLE 7. Yimas pronouns (Foley 1991:111,126).

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⇒ Question:

Does every given language simply "choose"  
from among {singular, dual, paucal, plural}, freely?

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Greenberg (1963):

*Universal 34.* No language has a trial number unless it has a dual. No language has a dual unless it has a plural.

Harley & Ritter (2002):

A language will not have a paucal/trial number if it does not have a dual

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This kind of typological evidence is called  
implicational universals.

But there are other kinds, as well:

LET'S FOCUS ON:

		sg	dual	pl
McGinnis (2005)	Tonkawa	'ayela	'awela	'awega
	English	this	(these)	these
	UNATTESTED!	X	(X)	Y

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⇒  $\varphi$ -features are  
internally structured.

(pace, e.g., Anderson 1992)

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Question:

What kind of internal structure?

Desiderata:

Ⓐ dual "stems from" plural

Ⓑ dual does not "stem from" singular

(there are more...)

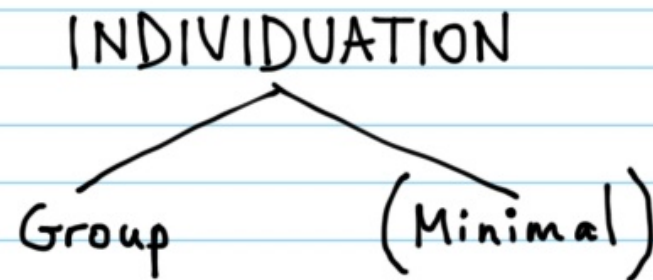
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## ⇒ PROPOSAL:

(a modified version of Harley & Ritter's 2002 proposal,  
incorporating McGinnis' 2005 observations)

Let's start, as we have, with number:



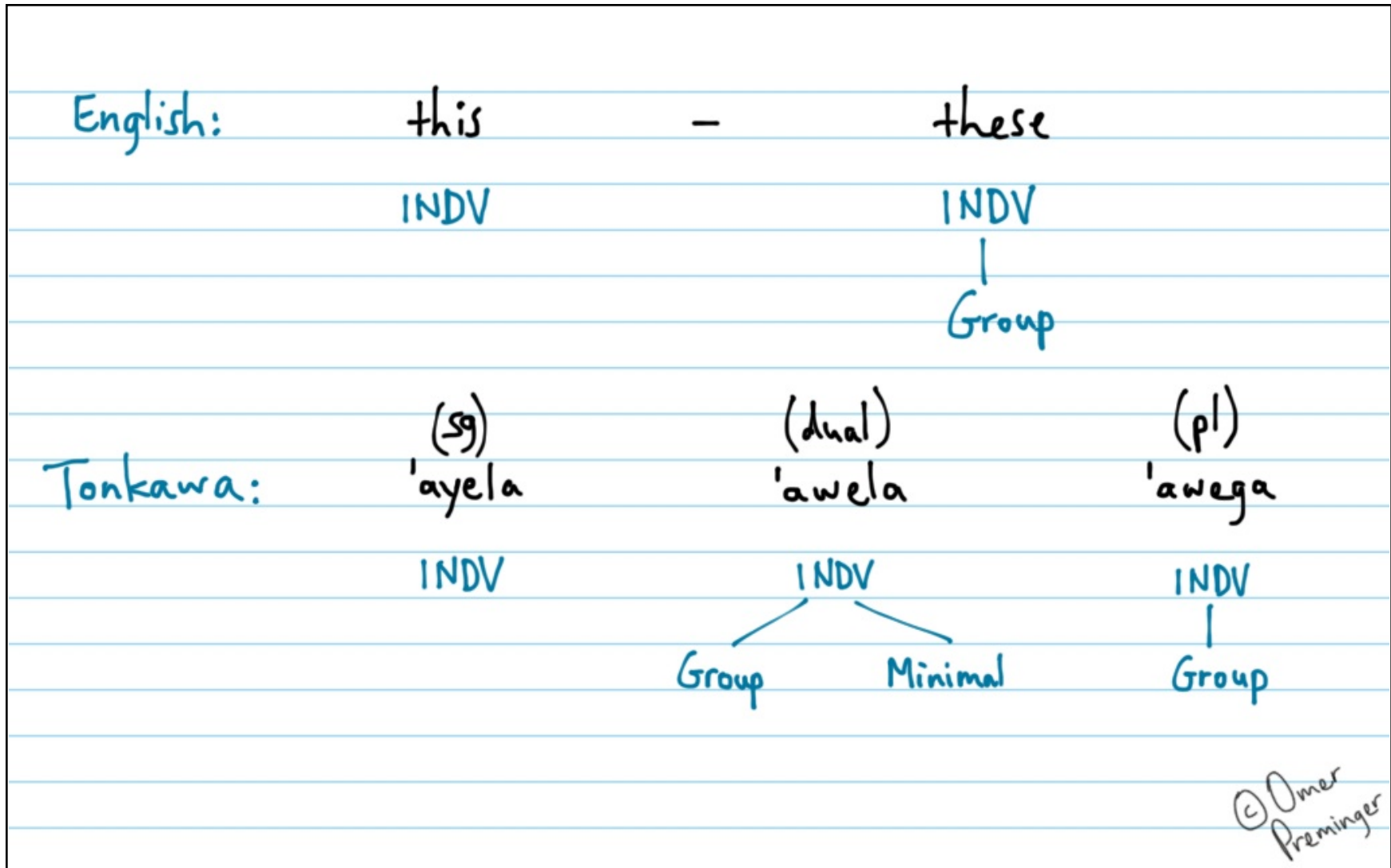
### NOTE (thanks, Zoe!)

Parenthesized nodes are optional —  
① need not be employed by every  
language.

② are the default interpretation of  
their parent node

③ cannot be the only daughter of  
their parent node

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Recall our desiderata:

Ⓐ dual "stems from" plural

Ⓑ dual does not "stem from" singular

1. Greenberg (1963):

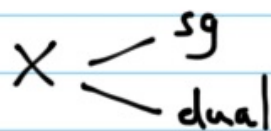
*Universal 34.* No language has a trial number unless it has a dual. No language has a dual unless it has a plural.

2.

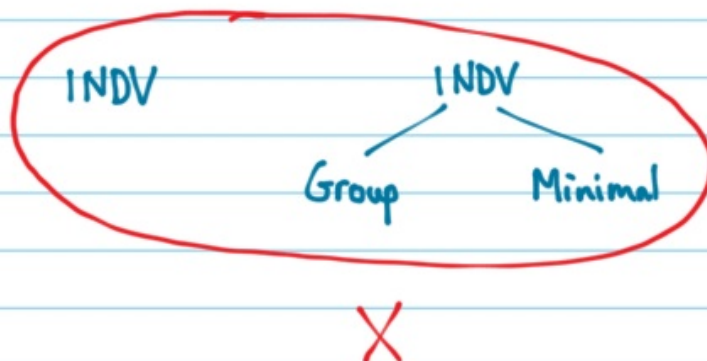
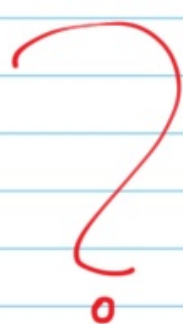
	sg	dual	pl
UNATTESTED!	X	(X)	Y

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Let's see how the **UNATTESTED** scenario would arise:



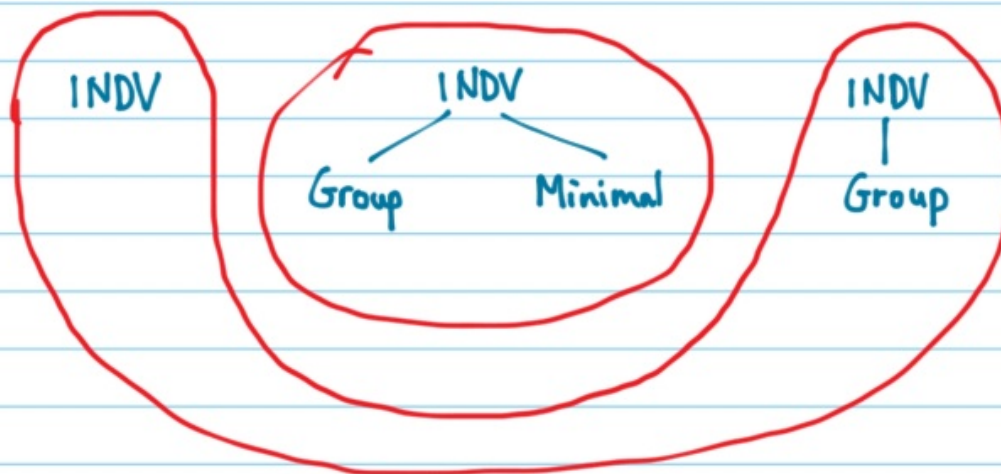
Y — pl



⇒ That's how a  $\varphi$ -feature geometry derives these facts.

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Note (thanks, Jeremy) that the following is predicted to be possible:



To the best of my knowledge, unattested. //

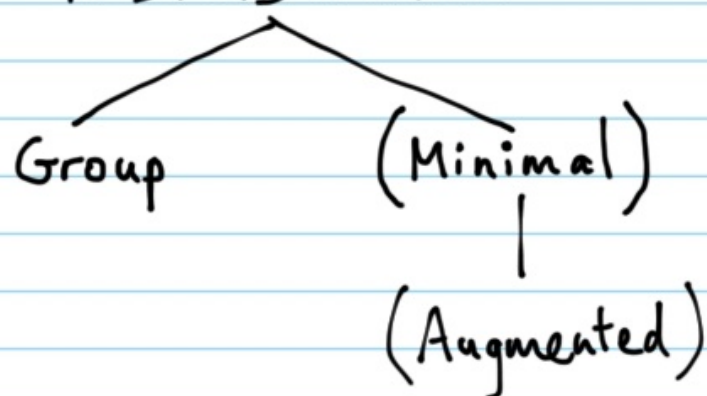
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What about paucal?

Recall — Harley & Ritter (2002):

A language will not have a paucal/trial number if it does not have a dual

## INDIVIDUATION



NB: Minimal and Augmented are underspecified as to whether they are "determinate" (dual, trial) or "indeterminate" (two or more, three or more)

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## PERSON

Ⓐ 1st/2nd person form a natural class,  
to the exclusion of 3rd person

- a. 3rd person agreement is often zero, 1st/2nd person agreement is overt.
- b. Many languages have no 3rd person pronoun—or at least no nominative form.
- c. Many languages have distinct 1st & 2nd person pronouns only; for 3rd person they use demonstratives.
- d. Closely related languages often have cognate 1st and 2nd person pronouns but 3rd person pronouns which are not obviously related.
- e. 1st and 2nd person are often similar in form and inflection but dissimilar from that of 3rd person.
- f. 3rd person is much more subject to objective subdivisions such as class, gender, and location.

(Forchheimer 1953:6)

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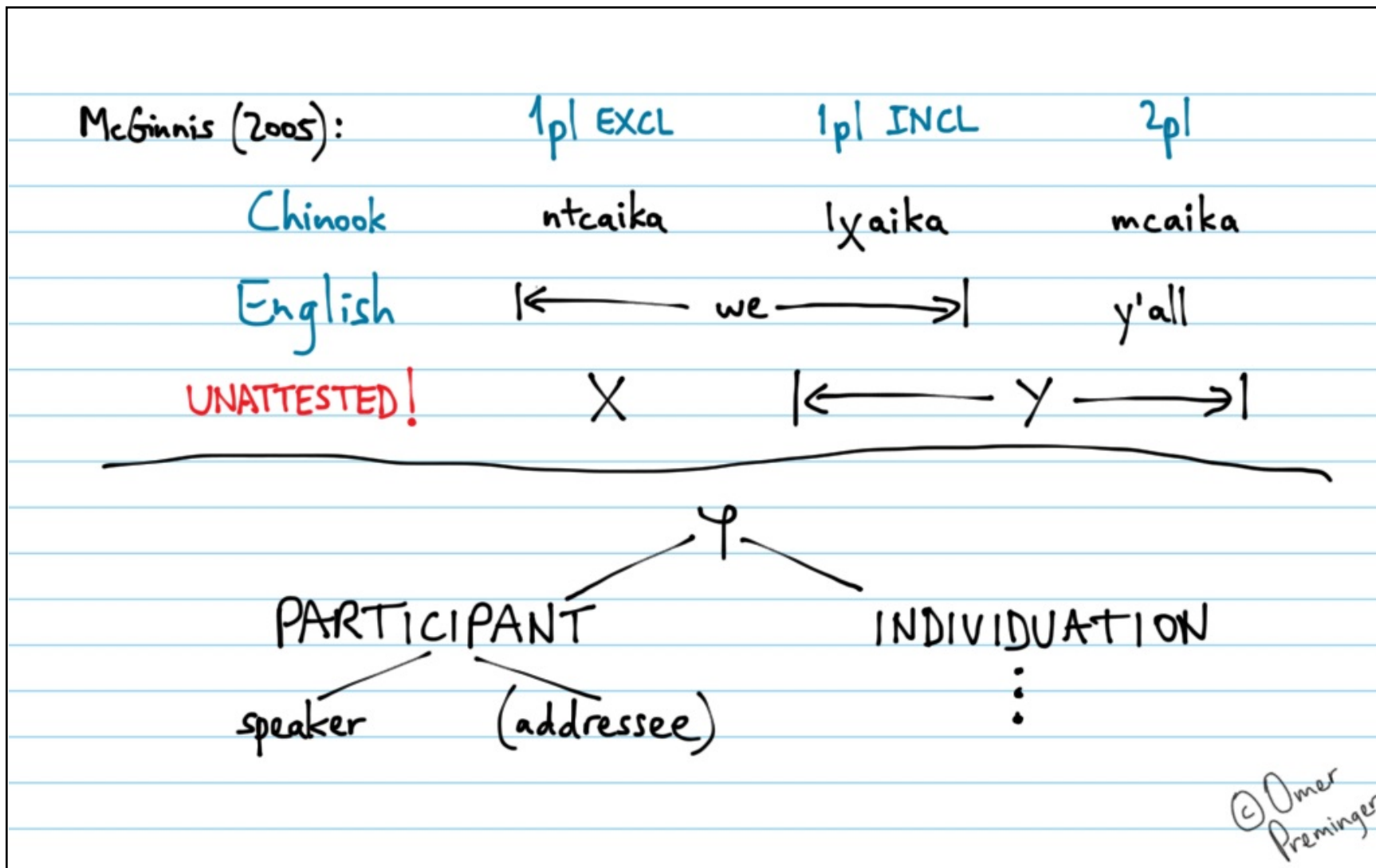
Ⓑ beyond 1st/2nd/3rd — clusivity:

	SINGULAR	DUAL	PLURAL
1st exclusive	<del>naika</del>	<del>ntaika</del>	<del>ntcaika</del>
1st inclusive		<del>txaika</del>	<del>lycaika</del>
2nd	<del>maika</del>	<del>mtaika</del>	<del>mcaika</del>
3rd	<del>axka</del> (f.)	<del>ctaxka</del>	<del>taska</del>

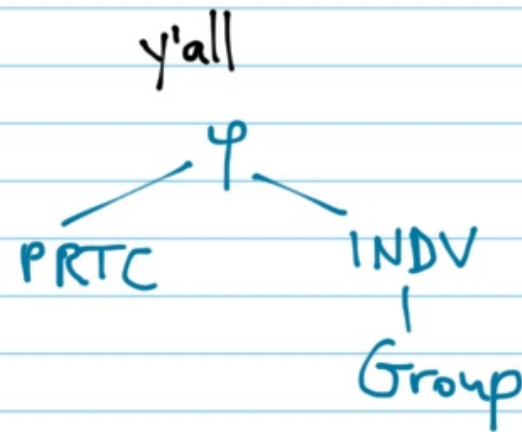
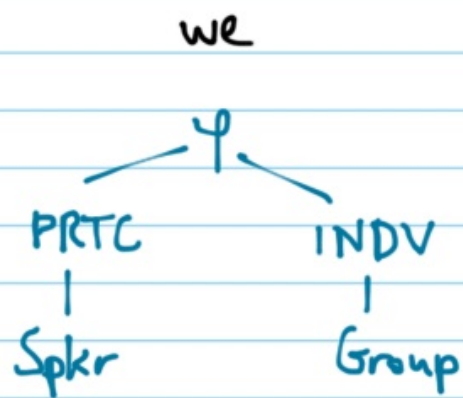
TABLE 6. Chinook pronouns (Boas 1911b:626).

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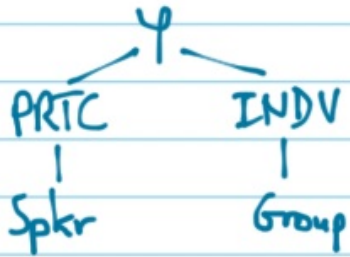
English:



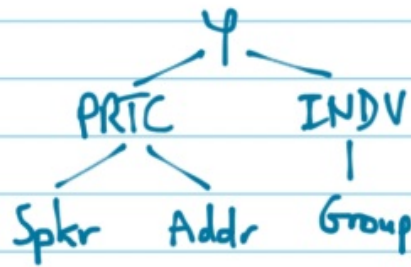
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# Chinook

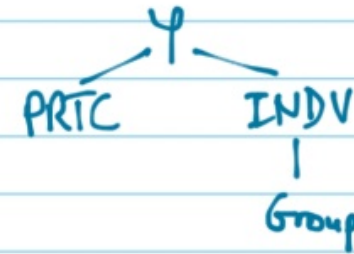
(1pl Excl)  
ntcaika



(1pl INCL)  
lycaika



(2pl)  
mcaika

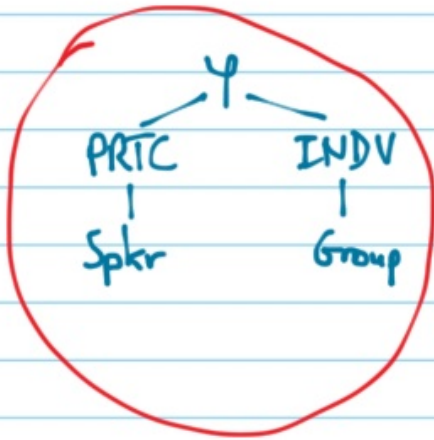


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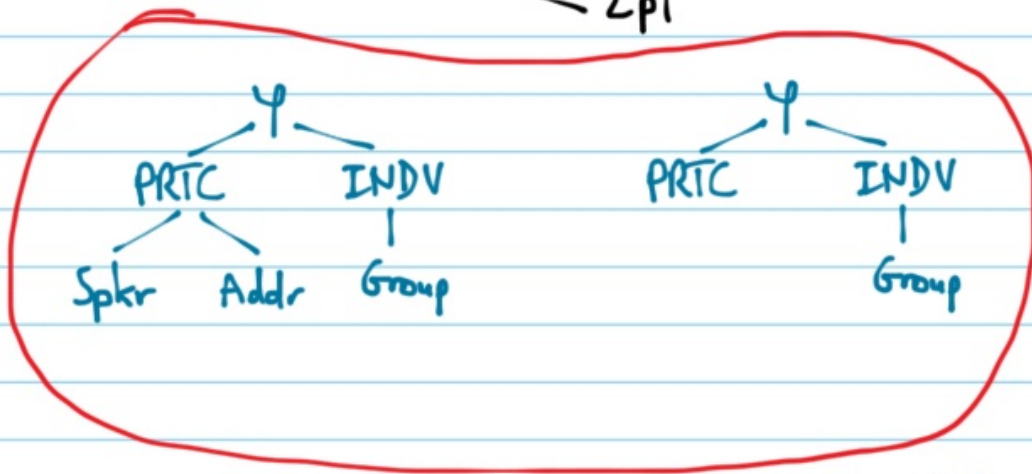
Let's see how the UNATTESTED scenario would arise:

X — 1pl EXCL

Y — 1pl INCL  
    — 2pl



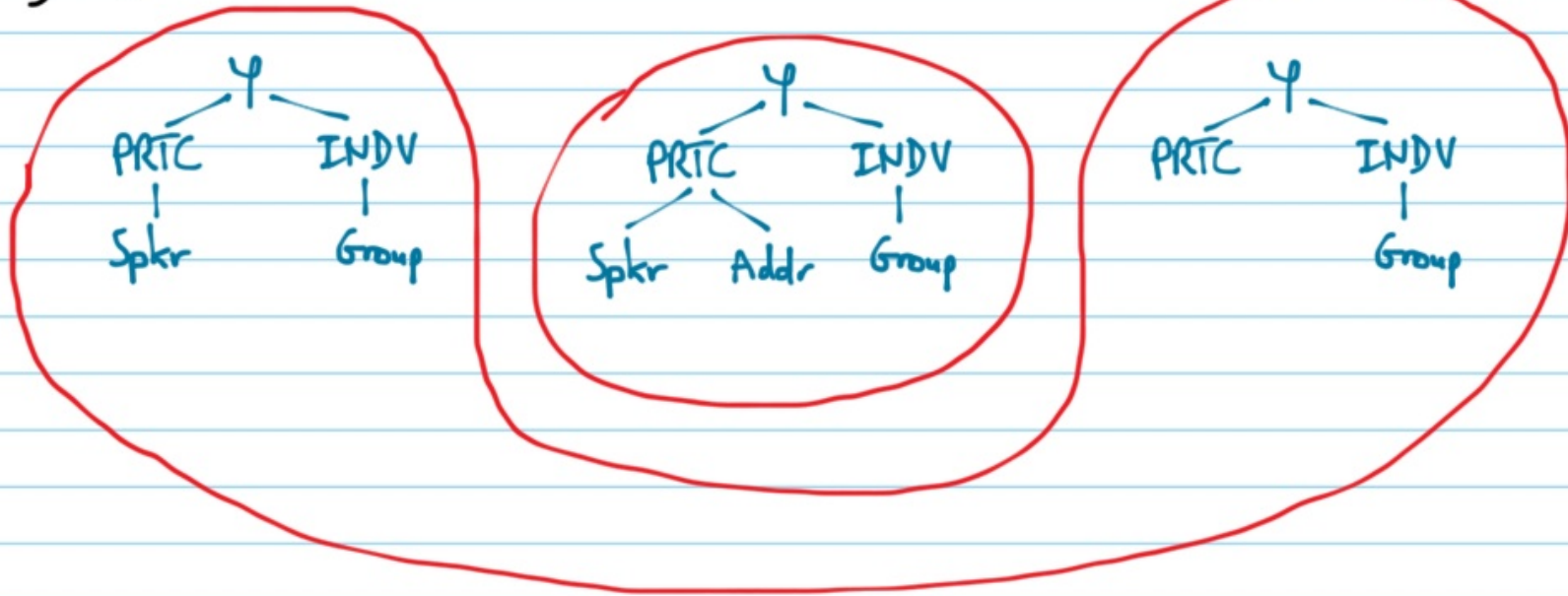
X



Y

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Again, the system as stated also allows:



Again, to the best of my knowledge, unattested.

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Another example, this time from a language without a dual:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1st ex	au	a?na
1st in	kixko!	kixka:ro
2nd	amo:ro	amiiyaro
3rd	moxko	moxka:ro

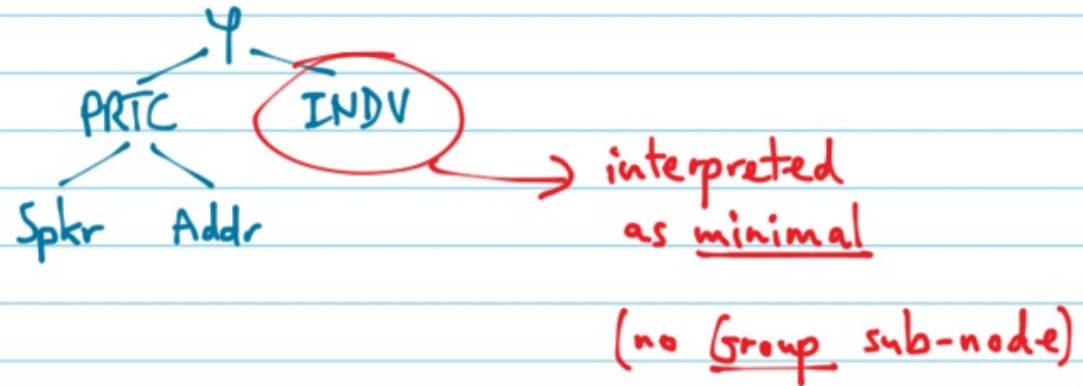
TABLE 4. Kalihna pronouns (Hoff 1968:277).

⇒ How can a pronoun be both "1st INCL" and "singular"?!?

Ideas?

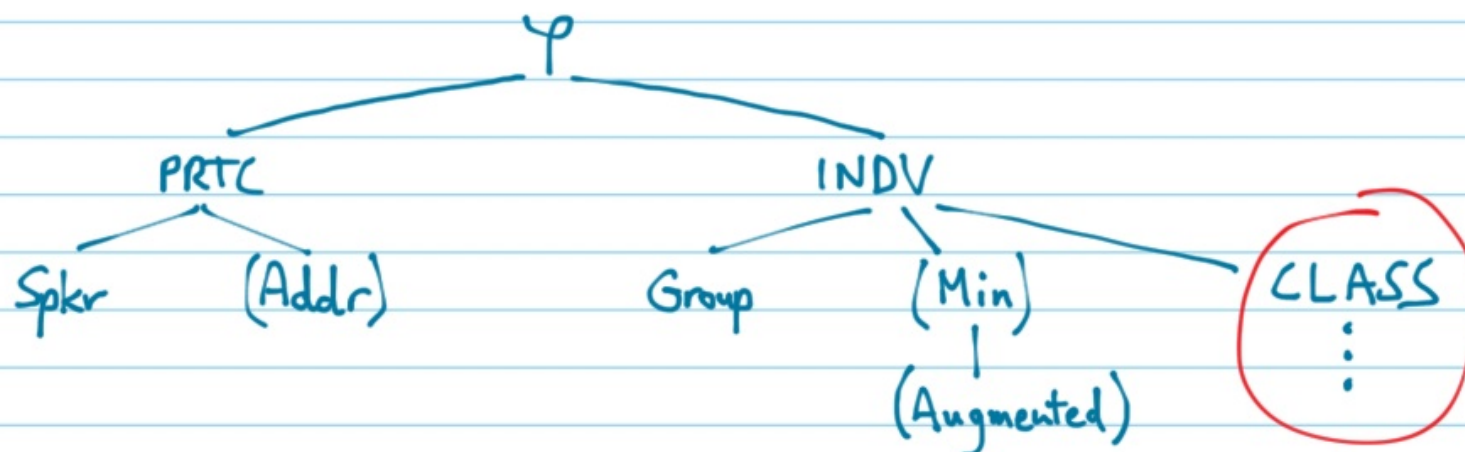
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Recall that what we call "singular" is really minimal:



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⇒ Our big ol'  $\varphi$ -feature geometry:



Why put gender/noun-class under INDV?

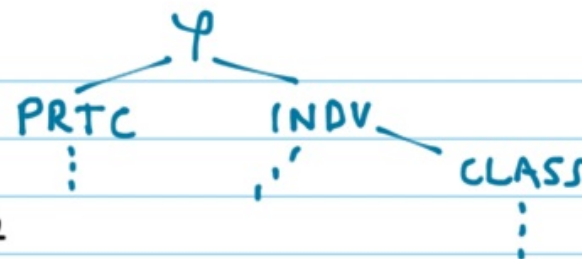
GENDER/NOUN-CLASS

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## Two reasons:

① As it stands, PRTC collects all the discourse-dependent features, and INDV all the discourse-independent ones.



② Greenberg (1963):

*Universal 36.* If a language has the category of gender, it always has the category of number.

H+R also discuss other evidence which they see as supporting their geometry, which we will not discuss here — e.g.:

- f. 3rd person is much more subject to objective subdivisions such as class, gender, and location. (Forchheimer 1953:6)

*Universal 37.* A language never has more gender categories in nonsingular numbers than in the singular.

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Questions?

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