

## Can we like me?

### On the (im)possibility of partial argument coreference

Michael Cysouw (with Javier Fernandez), Workshop “Between you and me”, Nijmegen 07-06-2010

- (1) <Shadowman 235> I just read a thread on that forum, they don't like us...  
<Wifout Teef> **I like us.** :D<sup>1</sup>
- (2) We don't know Bob, ok? **We know me. We like me.** Please let me be happy.<sup>2</sup>
- (3a) When I get motivated, **I am going to prepare us** a fabulous picnic.<sup>3</sup>
- (3b) My best friend, Nikki, prayed a lot with me and **we prepared me** mentally.<sup>4</sup>
- (4a) Every time I closed my eyes **I saw us** winning.<sup>5</sup>
- (4b) **We saw me** on TV! Yeah! I couldn't bear to watch myself (most actors can't) but Mom said I did good.<sup>6</sup>
- (5) En tout cas **je nous voyais** comme deux rois dans la glace, et **je nous amais**, je ne vois pas de Malheur à le dire. Thomas aussi nous regardait ...<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Attested on <<http://www.bungie.net/Forums/posts.aspx?postID=25321802>>, accessed 25 August 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Attested in the *Friends* episode “The one with five steaks and an eggplant” from 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Attested on <<http://missingslipper.blogspot.com/2008/02/being-loveable.html>>, accessed 25 August 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Attested on <<http://jolithomeart.blogspot.com/2008/08/higher-power.html>>. See also “**we prepared me for my new form of artistic expression**” as attested on <<http://www.bmezine.com/scar/A40214/scrscars.html>>, both pages accessed 25 August 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Attested on <<http://www.independent.ie/sport/rugby/every-time-i-closed-my-eyes-i-saw-us-winning-i-couldnt-help-thinking-i-cant-see-us-losing-1393848.html>>. See also “**I kept looking at the empty rooms and seeing the events that had taken place there. [...] I saw us exchanging Christmas and birthday presents; I saw us eating pasta and watching Amadeus.**” as attested on <<http://www.esotericrabbit.com/blog/?p=616>>, both pages accessed 25 August 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Attested on <<http://www.indypaws.com/post/index/16862>>. See also “**In five minutes we have to remember to look for this moment when we saw me moving my head slightly.**” as attested on <<http://www.nat.org/blog/?m=200510>>, both pages accessed 25 August 2008.

<sup>7</sup> “In any case, I saw us ... ” (translation MC & JF), as attested in Christian Rochefort, *Printemps au Parking*, Paris, 1969: 222.

- (6) **Puedo volver a vernos**, parados en medio de una calle a las cuatro de la mañana ...<sup>8</sup>
- (7) En écrivant ces lignes, je revis notre dernière reencontré à Honfleur. [...] **Je nous revois** à table.<sup>9</sup>
- (8a) \*we voted for me
- (8b) we elected me
- (9a) Connie informed me last time, after **we voted for me** to be a representative on that board, that there was another gentlemen who was supposed to have been listed.<sup>10</sup>
- (9b) When we conjoined our band with Tom's and Matt's band, **we voted for me** to play keyboard.<sup>11</sup>
- (10a) I would like to create a document collating each of our projects to date. **If each of us can provide me** with a concise and pithy outline of your work ...<sup>12</sup>
- (10b) **Each of us can focus attention on me** or on you.<sup>13</sup>
- (11a) \***Nous m'avons acheté** des billets. (We have bought tickets for me.)
- (11b) **Je nous ai acheté** des billets. (I have bought tickets for us.)

<sup>8</sup> Attested in Henry Miller, *Tropico de Capricornio*, Buenos Aires, 1962: 68. Note that in the original English version a different construction is used: “**I can see again the two of us standing in the middle of a street at four in the morning ...**”, Henry Miller, *Tropic of Capricorn*, Grove Press, 1961: 65.

<sup>9</sup> “While writing these lines, I remembered our last meeting at Honfleur. [...] I saw us again sitting at the table.” (translation MC & JF), as attested in an article by Henri Jeanson published in *Canard Enchaîné* 2611, 1970: 1.

<sup>10</sup> Attested on <<http://www.vanderburghgov.org/Index.aspx?page=969>>, accessed on 26 August 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Attested on <<http://www.freewebs.com/frostbyte1/biographies.htm>>, accessed on 26 August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Attested on <<http://silenceandotherways.wordpress.com/2006/09/25/exhibition-review/>>, accessed 26 August 2008.

<sup>13</sup> This example is attested in a philosophical article on the concept of mind (Scott 1971: 30).

(12a) Et oui, **nous m'avons acheté** un blouson pour préparer l'hivers dit rude (-50°C).<sup>14</sup>

(12b) Au passage, **nous m'avons acheté** une baguette magique.<sup>15</sup>

(13a) **Ihr habt dich** als Fahrer **angegeben**.<sup>16</sup>

(13b) Er hat deinen freund geschlagen. Und **du hast euch verteidigt**.<sup>17</sup>

(14) They were all really upset when **they heard him** singing out of tune—John himself most of all.

(15) - singular subject + plural object >>> plural object + singular subject

- coreferent first person pronouns >>> coreferent non-first person pronouns

- collective interpretation of plural pronoun >>> distributive interpretation of plural

- time/space dissociation between coreferent participant >>> no dissociation

- indirect object >>> direct object

Even (Tungusic, D. Matić, p.c.)

(16a) \**Bi: mundu teti:-ge-wun ha:rat-ti-w*  
ISG.PRON 1EXCL.PRON.DAT coat-DESIG-POSS-1EXCL buy-PAST-1SG

(16b) \**Bi: muttu teti:-ge-t ha:rat-ti-w*  
ISG.PRON 1INCL.PRON.DAT coat-DESIG-POSS-1INCL buy-PAST-1SG

(16c) *Bi: me:rdur teti:-ge-wur ha:rat-ti-w*  
ISG.PRON REFL.DAT.PL coat-DESIG-POSS.REFL.PL buy-PAST-1SG

'I bought us coats (for me and the others).'

<sup>14</sup> "And further, we have bought a blouse for me to prepare for the heavy winter (-50°C)" (translation MC & JF), as attested on <<http://www.lutece-milwaukee.com/article-13568874-6.html>>, accessed on 25 August 2008.

<sup>15</sup> "On the way, we bought a wonderful baguette for me." (translation MC & JF), as attested on <<http://farfadus.nice-forum.com/farfadus-f16/alphaice-parapluie-lover-t43.htm>>, accessed on 25 August 2008.

<sup>16</sup> "You both have indicated you (sg.) as the driver." (translation MC & JF), as attested on <<http://www.car2.de/2008/06/21/verstaendnisfrage/>>, accessed on 25 August 2008.

<sup>17</sup> "He has beaten your friend. And you (sg.) defended both of you." (translation MC & JF), as attested on <<http://board.raidrush.ws/archive/t-328896.html>>, accessed on 25 August 2008.

Lezgian (Nakh-Dagestanian, Haspelmath 1993: 414)

(17) *Mizafer čpi-n k'wal.i-z ata-j-la ...*  
NAME 3PL.REFL-GEN house-DAT come-AOR-CONV  
'When Mizafer came to their house ... (i.e. the house belonging to him and others)'

Basque (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 624)

(18) \**gu aipatu gaitut*  
we mention AUX  
'I mentioned us.'<sup>18</sup>

(19a) *nos compr-é unos helados*<sup>19</sup>  
IPL.PRON buy-1SG.PAST some icecream

(19b) \**izozki-ak erosi n-i-gu-n*  
icecream-PL.ABS buy 1SG.SUBJ-ROOT-1PL.OBJ-PAST  
'I bought us some icecream.'

(20a) *a mí me exclui-mos de la expedición*  
PREP 1SG.PRON.OBL 1SG.PRON.OBJ exclude-1PL from the excursion

(20b) \**txango-tik barzertzen na-u-gu*  
excursion-ABL exclude 1SG.OBJ-ROOT-1PL.SUBJ.PRES  
'We exclude me from the excursion.'

<sup>18</sup> The translation of (16), as provided by Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina (2003) is not correct. It should be in the present, not in the past.

<sup>19</sup> See also the example "*Llegamos tarde poco después de las 6pm así que no pudimos entrar. En su lugar nos compré helados de un vendedor cerca, solo \$10 (0.70 euros) cada uno.*" as attested on <<http://www.brit-journal.com/fmw/1741/The+Weekend.html>>, accessed on 27 August 2008.

(21a) *os compra-ste helados*  
 2PL.PRON buy-2SG.PAST icecream  
 (21b) \**izozki-ak erosi zen-i-zki-zue-n*  
 icecream-PL.ABS buy 2SG.SUBJ-ROOT-PL.OBJ-2PL.IOBJ-PAST  
 ‘You (sg.) bought you (pl.) some icecream.’

(22a) *te va-is a retratar en el jardín*  
 2SG.PRON go-2PL PREP photograph in the garden  
 (22b) \**lorategi-an erretratatu-ko zaitu-zue*  
 garden-LOC photograph-FUT 2SG.OBJ-2PL.SUBJ  
 ‘You (pl) are going to photograph you (sg) in the garden.’

(23) *Etxarri-n oroitzen gait-u-t*<sup>20</sup>  
 Etxarri-LOC remember 1PL.OBJ-ROOT-1SG.SUBJ  
 ‘I remember us in Etxarri.’

(24a) *ni-k ispilu-a-n neure burua ikusten d-u-t*  
 1SG-ERG mirror-DET-LOC 1SG.REFL head see 3SG.OBJ-ROOT-1SG.SUBJ.PRES  
 ‘I see myself in mirror.’

(24b) *gu-k ispilu-a-n geure burua ikusten d-u-gu*  
 1SG-ERG mirror-DET-LOC 1PL.REFL head see 3SG.OBJ-ROOT-1PL.SUBJ.PRES  
 ‘We see ourselves in the mirror.’

(24c) \**ni-k ispilu-a-n geure burua ikusten d-u-t*  
 1SG-ERG mirror-DET-LOC 1PL.REFL head see 3SG.OBJ-ROOT-1SG.SUBJ.PRES  
 ‘I see us in the mirror.’

<sup>20</sup> Attested on <<http://www.gara.net/idatzia/20060414/art160214.php>>, accessed on 25 August 2008.

Dutch (Germanic, Indo-European)

(25a) **We zijn mij** dan **gaan inschrijven** in de highschool!<sup>21</sup>

(25b) **We hebben me** hier eerst **aangemeld**, en zijn daarna omdat we nog zoveel tijd overhadden naar de dolfijnenshow wezen kijken!<sup>22</sup>

Spanish (Romance, Indo-European)

(26a) me vamos a matricular

(26b) vamos a matricularme

(27a) A fin de mes le pagan a mi viejo y **me vamos a comprar** el PC.<sup>23</sup>

(27b) Mira, **vamos a comprarme** unos calcetines que tengo frío en los pies, y luego tomamos un Taxi.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> “We went to enrol me in highschool” (translation MC & JF). Attested on <[http://www.bloggen.be/isa\\_belle/archief.php?ID=26](http://www.bloggen.be/isa_belle/archief.php?ID=26)>, accessed on 27 August 2008.

<sup>22</sup> “We first enrolled me here, and then we went to watch the dolphin show, because we had so much time left.” (translation MC & JF). Attested on <<http://marliekenaarcura.waarbenijj.nu/reisverhalen/marliekenaarcura/Nederlandse+Antillen/32e+dag/?&module=site&page=message&id=2540962>>, accessed on 27 August 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Attested on <[http://www.fotolog.com/matsuri\\_xan/53446002](http://www.fotolog.com/matsuri_xan/53446002)>, accessed on 27 August 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Attested on <<http://mujeresdefuego.blogspot.com/2007/11/irse-al-agua-un-millon-de-personas.html>>, accessed on 27 August 2008. See also “*Después, ya que no podemos ir de playita ni piscina con Laura, nos vamos a comprarme zapas.*”, as attested on <<http://irene2006-2007.blogspot.com/2008/07/el-viernes-despus-de-unos-das-de-relax.html>>, both pages accessed on 27 August 2008.

Serbocroatian (Slavic, Indo-European, D. Matic, p.c.)

(28a) *kupio sam kaput nama*  
bought AUX.1SG coat.ACC 1PL.PRON  
'I bought us coats.'

(28b) *kupio sam nam kaput*  
bought AUX.1SG 1PL.CLIT coat.ACC  
'I bought us coats.'

(29a) *mi volimo mene*  
1PL.PRON like.1PL 1SG.PRON  
'We like me.'

(29b) ?*mi me volimo*<sup>25</sup>  
1PL.PRON 1SG.CLIT like.1PL  
'We like me.'

(30) independent pronouns

→ person marking clitics

→ separativistic bipersonal inflection

→ cumulative ('portmanteau') bipersonal inflection

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<sup>25</sup> An example of exactly this sentence is attested on <<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=285736647>>, accessed on 14 October 2008: "Mislim da imam vishe lichnosti (**mi me volimo** =D) i da se prilagodjavam svemu zadržavajući neko svoje mishljenje." (I think that I have two personalities (we love me =D) and I adjust to everything by holding on to my opinion). Again note the smiley that is added, which indicates that the author of this phrase realizes that there is something comically about saying "we love me" (cf. examples 1, 2, and 23).