# Definite ingredients of indefinite pronouns

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There is a long tradition that recognizes an affinity between indefinite and interrogative pronouns. Katz and Postal (1964) analyze *who* as underlyingly composed of *wh+some+one*. Semantically, both can be represented as sets of alternatives under generalized disjunction (cf. Kratzer and Shimoyama (2002); Szabolcsi (2014), a.o.). Indeed Japanese morphology displays (1a) with disjunction *ka*, cf. Swiss German (1b).

(1)   a. Japanese: dare-**ka**   ; nani-**ka**   ; dare-ga VP-**ka**
        b. Swiss German: **öp**-er   ; **öp**-is   ; **w**er VP
                                ‘someone’ ‘something’ ‘who VP’

This paper unifies two seemingly separate issues which, at first blush, do not seem to fit in very nicely with this picture. (A) morphologically, it often looks like the indefinite contains the interrogative pronoun (cf. Latvian *kas ‘who’* and *kaut kas ‘someone’*, from Haspelmath (1997)), rather than vice versa (Bhat, 2000); and (B) in some languages it looks like interrogative pronouns contain a definite personal pronoun, rather than an indefinite one, e.g., German *wer* consisting of *w+er ‘wh+he’*, cf. *d-er* $\supseteq$ *er* (Wiltschko, 1998).

In the tradition that views personal pronouns as determiners / definite descriptions (Postal, 1966; Elbourne, 2005), German *er ‘he’* is essentially equivalent to *der “Mann”*, with *d ‘the’* and *Mann ‘man’* phonetically absent. It is tempting to relate these two absences - syntactically. I propose that, in the derivation of the personal pronoun *er*, *man* (a light variant of *Mann*) moves to the left of *d*, across *er* (2). The result, I propose, is a situation in which only *er* is pronounced, in some contexts, including naked pronominal *er*, but also Swiss German *öp-er ‘someone’*. In the close-by language German, on the other hand, *er* can be un-pronounced and *man* and *d* are overt, as in *je-man-d ‘someone’*. Hence, on this analysis, both German *jemand* and Swiss German *öper* contain the same *[man [d [er]]] ‘man the he’*, differing in (non-)pronunciation of *er* vs *man d* repsectively.

(2)
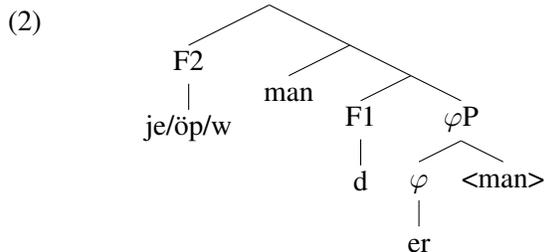
(3)   Swiss German:

        a.   w**er** het geschter agglütä?
               who has yesterday called

        b.   geschter het öp**er**   agglütä.
               yesterday has someone called

Whereas Japanese contrasts indefinite and interrogative pronouns by +/- *ka*-movement, German has analogous +/- *wer* movement, as one option, and (cf. Swiss German) non-moving *jemand/öper* vs moving *wer*, as another. Note that in (2) the structure of the personal pronoun as well as the structure of the interrogative pronoun is a proper subpart of the structure of the indefinite pronoun. An interrogative like *wer ‘who’* contains the same *er* as the indefinite *öper ‘someone’*, plausibly with *w* in F2. Indeed, if a question, in a Hamblin/Karttunen manner, is a generalized disjunction over the corresponding assertion alternatives (Szabolcsi et al., 2014), *who came?* should correspond to a set of conjoined *he came*, running through all contextually relevant assignments for *he*, and analogously for declaratives containing an indefinite.

Given that there likely are stringent constraints on morphosyntactic variation, both in terms of structure and in terms of ingredients (Bobaljik, 2012), the above evidence for an analysis of both interrogative pronouns and indefinite pronouns as containing, as a component, a structure associated with definite personal pronouns is significant, both for the concrete analysis of pronominal counterparts of *who* and *someone* in any language and more abstractly as a probe into the depth of morphosemantic composition.

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