Bhat (2000): *The indefinite-interrogative puzzle*

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1   The Puzzle

- Indefinites and interrogatives in many languages are either identical or derivationally related, e.g.:
    - Lakhota: same, but differentiated by a question particle that appears clause-finally in questions
    - Kannada: derivationally related (same base, but addition of suffix for specific/non-specific indefinite pronouns; CONJ or DISJ particle)
- Langs. can also sometimes use numeral 'one' or generic noun like person, thing, place, time, etc. for indefinite pronouns

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Main Q's → Is this a coincidence? How do we account for the similarity between indefinites and interrogatives? Is it the case that...

  i. the set of pronouns is the same but they are used differently, or
  ii. there are two sets of (homonym) pronouns that have different meanings

Bhat's Proposal: Interrogative and indefinite pronouns are similar because they share "lack of information"/indicate lack of knowledge about a particular constituent. Thus, there is one set of pronouns—indefinite pronouns.

- For a type [i.] proposal: there is an "information gap"; in interrogative use, the gap is "speakers inability to provide necessary information" (speaker trying to obtain info); in indefinite use, the gap is "his/her inability or unwillingness to do so"
    - further support: same set of pronouns is also used as pronouns of rel. clauses and exclamatory sentences, which also have an information gap
- For a type [ii.] proposal: interrogative pronouns are semantically more complex than indef. pronouns; interrogative pronouns denote a "request for information"—"statements that contain interrogative pronouns PRESUPPOSE statements that contain indef. pronouns", e.g.:

(1)   a.   *Who* left the door open?
        b.   SOMEONE left the door open.

    - Klima (1964): interrogative pronouns "incorporate" indef. pronouns (e.g. what = WH + something)

- Haspelmath (1997) points out problem: usually indef. pronouns are derived from interrogative (not the other way around); interrogatives are also difficult to analyze etymologically and are the slowest to change
    * on the other hand: there is no functional or semantic explanation for deriving indefinite from interrogative pronouns (p. 368)
    * suggests that derivation is from indefinite to interrogative (sets of pronouns and polysemous and the particles promote distinctive meaning)
- Interrogative and indefinite pronouns are part of a bigger paradigm with correlative, demonstrative and relative pronouns (might be useful to read Dechaine & Wiltschko's (2002) Decomposing Pronouns). Paradigms have:
    1. an element that denotes person, place, thing, type, etc.
    2. an element that denotes one of the "pronominal concepts", e.g. definiteness, anaphora, deictic distinctions, interrogation, etc.
- Langs. can differ in what they use and whether they conflate the paradigms or not
- "[...] two of the purposes that a language can have for using a general concept in a sentence, namely (i) obtaining additional information about that concept (interrogative use) and (ii) merely leaving the concept unspecified (indefinite use)." (p. 372)

2   The Notions of Indefiniteness and Interrogation

2.1   Indefiniteness

- Debate: are pronouns indefinite or definite?
    - Indef.+ interrogative pronouns usually considered "indefinite", while demonstrative + rel. as definite
    - However, English: *who, what, where*, etc. = indefinite while *what time, which man*, etc. = definite
    - Some consider all interrogatives are indefinite (cf. Huddleston 1984)
- Pronouns are coreferential with expressions (definite or indefinite) that come before them, while (in)definite articles are not necessarily (discussion p. 374?)

    (2)   a.   I have borrowed a book from a student. ?Please return the book to him.
           b.   You have something in your pocket. WHAT is it?
           c.   That boy sitting near the fire wants some food. WHO is he?

- You can say "What is this you have here, grandfather?", where the demonstrative is definite but the interrogative is indefinite, but both have same referent. How can this be?
    - Indef. + interrog. pronouns don't belong to the same level of identification as indefiniteness of NPs; the notion of indefiniteness in indef. + interrog. pronouns comes from the absence of some kind of non-verbal information (expressed through other devices)

2.2   Interrogation

- Two types of interrogative sentences:

1. Question scopes over whole sentence/predicate = polar or yes/no q (e.g. Did he go home?)
2. Question scopes over constituent = constituent or wh q (Where did he go?). This type is restricted to the constituent, which is indicated as "indefinite" (not enough information, lack of knowledge)

- For langs. that combine indefinite and interrogative use, it is important to find out:

  i. How does the lang. denote lack of information?
  ii. How do you request from someone to provide that information?
  iii. How do you restrict that request to a single constituent?

3   Solution to the Puzzle

- In constituent questions (e.g. Where did he go?), it is always assumed that the pronoun is "interrogative", regardless of form and whether the interrogative meaning is expressed elsewhere in sentence.

Solution: If we say that its an indefinite pronoun the puzzle goes away
→ constituent questions presuppose declarative sentences containing the corresponding indefinite pronouns. Only additional meaning is that is **(i)** asks for more info, and **(ii)** restricts request to particular constituent.
→ We can attribute these additional meanings to other aspects of the sentence (e.g. intonation, particles, mood)

3.1   Requests for Information

3.1.1   Intonation

- Can be the only strategy, e.g. Mandarin: interrogatives and indefinites are ambiguous, so intonation is the only difference; pronoun = indefinite in both meanings, but meaning of interrogation assigned to intonation alone
- Can also be used together with other strategies (e.g. verb movement or addition of particles)

3.1.2   Particles

- Affix or particle used with interrogative pronouns.[1]
- e.g. Lakhota: pronoun by itself = indefinite; pronoun + particle = constituent q; particle by itself = polar q

  − Doesn't make sense to call a pronoun "interrogative" in a question, because the pronoun is indefinite; the element that is *obligatorily* used with interrogation is the particle, not the pronoun.
  − However, the meaning that needs to be assigned to all sentences that use this an "interrogative/indefinite" pronoun is indefiniteness, not interrogativity.

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[1]Particle could also appear in polar questions.

3.1.3　Mood

- Langs. use special interrogative verbs + particles in constituent questions (consider these verbs grammaticalized; developed from earlier verb + particle constructions)
- e.g. interr./indef. pronoun only gets meaning when used with a verb in its interrogative form

3.1.4　Derived interrogatives

- Langs. allow indefinite pronouns to attract an interrogative particle to make a derived interrogative pronoun

3.2　Restricting to a Constituent

- Langs. that differentiate between interrogative and indefinite pronouns can use interrogative pronouns for signaling that question is only about a particular constituent; those that don't differentiate need the use of other devices
- e.g. shifting pronoun to sentence initial position, placing focus on pronoun, using focus particles or constructions
- Usually if focused, these pronouns aren't used in sentences other than constituent q's

3.2.1　Shifting pronoun to sentence initial position

- Like wh-movement in English
- e.g. Haspelmath (1997): Classical Gk or Modern German: pronouns sentence initially = interrogative; when indefinite need to cliticize to something so cannot be sentence initial

3.2.2　Placing pronoun in focus

- Shifting pronoun to sentence initial position = placing it in focus
- Lakhota: sentences with indef. pronoun and interrogative particle are ambiguous between a constituent q or a polar q → stressing the pronoun = constituent q; focus on something else = polar q

3.2.3　Focus constructions

- Shift EMPH/Q-particle to element you want to focus
- Use a cleft or relative clause construction (e.g. Abkhaz requires verb to be in non-finite, relativized/pseudo-clefted, form)

3.2.4　Combining focus & interrogation

- Languages can combine interrogation & focus and use a single device for denoting both of them.
- In such cases, the device used in constituent questions (Q intonation + particles) is different from the one in polar questions (e.g. using distinct intonations for polar/constituent questions; using distinct Q-particles)

3.2.5 Non-marking vs. Double-marking Languages

- In some languages additional devices for interrogation and focus are lacking, which gives rise to ambiguity (same pronouns used for statements and constituent questions)
- Usually if langs. have different pronouns for constituent questions and statements, then they don't need additional devices to mark anything. However, some languages DO use additional devices (double marking) (e.g. interrogative words are always followed by a focus marker/interrogative particle).
- This doesn't discredit author's main argument, because "[...] double marking is a frequently employed device in a language. What is being suggested here is that regarding languages of the former type also as double-marking the notion of interrogation unnecessarily leads to puzzles and pardoned and is therefore to be avoided." (p. 389)

4 Derivation of Indefinite Pronouns

- Re-examining the claim that in these languages indefinite pronouns are derived from interrogative ones
- Types of derivation:
  1. Uses a DISJ particle to provide specific indefinite meaning (e.g. somebody = who-or)
  2. Uses a CONJ particle to provide non-specific indefinite meaning (e.g. anybody = who-also)
- "derivation" = misleading because in Kannada attached to whole NP (e.g. which house-or), not the pronoun
- No need to regard this as "derivation" of indefinite pronouns from interrogative; instead, in the view that all pronouns are indefinite, let's just say that indefinite pronouns can sometimes be followed by CONJ or DISJ particles
  - Further support: Haspelmath (1997) there's no reason why this "derivation" should happen (interrogative to indefinite). Instead, "the derivation of specific and non-specific indefinite pronouns from underlying indefinite bases is easier to explain because [] there is a close relationship between universal quaint and logical conjunction [] and between existential quantification and logical disjunction [] " (p. 390)
- This marking occurs in langs. that have no distinction between specific and non-specific indefinites

4.1 Languages that differentiate btwn. specific & non-specific indefinites

- Bare interrogatives = specific
- DISJ added for specific indefiniteness[2]
- CONJ added for non-specific indefiniteness

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[2]Disjunctive particles may be used in polar questions as well as constituent questions as a question marker in some languages (e.g. Japanese).

4.2   Languages that don't differentiate btwn. specific & non-specific indefinites[3]

- Use particles
- Sometimes the "derived" pronouns (from interrogatives) can be used for specific or non-specific purposes. However in that case there must be another device to disambiguate them (e.g. in Bengali placing 'which' before 'what-EMPH' has a non-specific unambiguous meaning)
- Langs. that don't differentiate have a tendency to "coalesce the derived indefinite pronouns into compact words" → lose the "identity" of the CONJ/DISJ particles because those aren't really important in distinguishing the uses[4]

4.3   Additional distinctions

- Langs. can also add other particles to distinguish other interrogative uses (e.g. negation in English as a negative marker or non specific marker) or something that only concerns the knowledge of the speaker
  - These are easier to explain if we connect them indefinite, rather than interrogative use
  - Sometimes pronouns used in constituent q's and relative pronouns also look the same (e.g. like in English)
    * If we say that its an interrogative, then we can't explain why it's also used in relative clauses (since that's not asking for information)
    * If we say that it's an indefinite pronoun (i.e. denoting a general concept) then it's no longer a puzzle; rel. pronouns are used to refer back to a specific head noun, so they don't need to be specific themselves
  - Langs. that have similar interrogative pronouns and rel. pronouns also have similar interrogative and indefinite pronouns; langs. that don't do the latter instead use demonstrative pronouns
    * English uses both demonstrative and interrogative pronouns as relative pronouns (this needs to be studied further)

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[3]In paradigms
[4]Haspelmath 1997 disagrees; see section above.