A typology of non-selective interrogative pronominals: formal and functional differentiation and issues in diachrony
Non-selective interrogative pronominals (NIPs): ‘who?’ & ‘what?’

(1)   a. **Who** is that man over there?
       b. **Who** gave you this?

(2)   a. **What** is this thing you have in your hand?
       b. **What** fell out of his bag?

vs. **selective** interrogative pronominals (SIPs), such as *which one?*
What can be interesting about NIPs?

(besides their syntax)
What’s interesting: semantics

- In English, both *who?* and *what?* can be used in questions about a person
Semantics & cross-linguistic diversity

- Russian vs. Standard Average European:
  - only ‘who?’ about a person
  - but ‘who?’ also about animals (even insects…)

- Grammars are usually silent on the semantics of the NIPs
  (actually, they tend to be misleading about it: abuse of the label “animate”)
Formal differentiation

- Why do we (English, Russian, Chinese…) actually have two different NIPs ‘who?’ and ‘what?’ after all?
  - questions are asked about something we don’t know, so why make it more difficult to ourselves than it has to be?
  - although common, this differentiation is actually not universal
Formal differentiation: less distinctions

- $\approx 5\text{-}7\%$ of the world’s languages do not make the distinction (based on the sample of ca. 1850 languages)


a. *Qui qu’est venu?*  
   *who that-is come*  
   ‘Who came?’

b. *Qui qu’tu manges?*  
   *what that-you eat*  
   ‘What are you eating?’

NB: Similar situation in Middle and Classical French (13\textsuperscript{th} to 17-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries) and several North American French creoles.
Formal differentiation: less distinctions

Modern French attributive *quel* ‘which, what (kind of) [N]?’ vs. predicative *quel* ‘what/who [is N]?’

a. *quel* est *cet* *arbres?*
   IPW.M.SG is DEM.M.SG tree[M.SG]
   ‘What tree is this/that? (lit.: ‘What is this/that tree?’)’

b. [A: Vous me conterez tout cela. Je m’attends bien à du nouveau; mais en vérité je n’en veux pas encore. Comme ce lavoir est petit! Autrefois il me paraissait immense; j’avais emporté dans ma tête un océan et des forêts, et je retrouve une goutte d’eau et des brins d’herbe.]
   *Quelle* est donc *cette* jeune *fille*
   IPW.F.SG is PTCL DEM.F.SG young.F.SG girl[F.SG]
   [qui chante à sa croisée derrière ces arbres?]
   [B: C’est Rosette, la soeur de lait de votre cousine Camille.]
...less than expected distinctions

- NIPs are commonly defective with respect to the morphosyntactic categories typically available for nominals in a given language:
  - no plural marking and/or agreement
  - no gender marking on the NIP and/or no variability of gender assignment
  - defective and/or reduced case paradigms
  - limitations on the accessible syntactic slots
  - etc.
Formal differentiation: more distinctions

- a few languages make more distinctions

Tucano (Eastern Tucanoan; Brazil & Colombia; Ramirez 1997:328-332)

- *noá* ‘who? (human SG or PL)’
- *yẽ’é* ‘what? (inanimate SG or PL)’
- *yamí* ‘what? (non-human AN.M.SG)’
- *yamó* ‘what? (non-human AN.F.SG)’
- *yamârã* ‘what? (non-human AN.PL)’
How can we define an NIP for purposes of cross-linguistic comparison?

1. N + I + P
Pronominal

- a morphologically non-bound substitute of a nominal, which itself does not need to be a nominal

- **substitute**: the interrogative pronominal X is used to inquire about a certain referent, which in the answer to the question will be expressed by the nominal Y.

NIPs are a kind of **suspensive pronominals** (“pronoms suspensifs”, van den Eynde & Mertens 2003:70), since their referential specification is suspended

English attributive *which [N]?, what [N]?*
Pronominal

- morphologically-bound

Tapanta Abaza (Northwest Caucasian; Russia)
bound interrogative root -a

a. \( \text{w}̃\text{-z-ze-pʃa-wa-j-a} ? \)
   \( 2\text{SG.M[S]-PTCP.OBL-APPL-look-PTCP.IPFW-3SG.NON<HUM>.S-IPW} \)
   ‘What are you looking for? (lit.: ‘The one that you are looking for, it is who/what?’)’

b. \( \text{w}̃\text{-z-ze-pʃa-wa-d-a} ? \)
   \( 2\text{SG.M[S]-PTCP.OBL-APPL-look-PTCP.IPFW-3SG.HUM.S-IPW} \)
   ‘Who are you looking for? (lit.: ‘The one that you are looking for, s/he is who/what?’)’

Indo-European bound interrogative roots
* \( k^w_i- \), * \( k^w_o- \), * \( k^w_e- \), * \( k^w_a- \)
Pronominal

- a morphologically non-bound substitute of a nominal, which itself does not need to be a nominal

- conventionalized nominal phrases:

Pronominal

- a morphologically non-bound substitute of a nominal, which itself does not need to be a nominal

- conventionalized clausal constructions:

Apurucayali Asheninca (Arawakan; Peru; Payne et al. 1982:230)

(1) \( o-i-t-a-ri-ka \quad h-ant-i-ri? \)
3F-name-EP-NON\{FUT\}.REFL-REL-Q 3M-do-FUT-REL
‘What will he make?’

Tapanta Abaza (Northwest Caucasian; Russia; Genko 1955:105-106)

(2) \( d-z-a-č'əj-a? \)
3SG.HUM.S-PTCP.OBL-3SG.NON\{HUM\}.OBL-belonging.to[AOR]-3SG.NON\{HUM\}.S-IPW
‘who?’
**Interrogative**

- **interrogative construction**: a linguistic construction dedicated to eliciting information

- **constituent question** (content question, information question, etc.): a question that asks for an instantiation of variable $x$ for the presupposition *It is known that (possibly) HAPPEN/EXIST (...x...)*

- **interrogative proform** must have the function of a request for an instantiation of the nominal variable $x$ as one of its **conventionalized** functions
Selective vs. non-selective

- **selective**: the speaker perceives the choice as being restricted to a closed set of alternatives

(1) *Which (one) should I take? This, that, or maybe that?*

- **selective interrogative pronominals** = interrogative pro-deictic nominals (pro-nominal demonstratives)
Selective vs. non-selective

- **non-selective**: the speaker *perceives* the choice as being **free**

(2) *What* have you *liked* most *about* this *book*?
(3) *Who* do you *see* there?
Selective vs. non-selective

- the speaker perceives…: the border between selective and non-selective is not always clear-cut

- when the choice is asked to be made between entities of different kinds

French (Matthew 23:17)

- a. Insensés et aveugles! lequel est le plus grand, l'or, ou le temple qui sanctifie l'or? (Louis Second 1910)

- b. Insensés et aveugles que vous êtes! Qu'est-ce qui est plus important: what is more important l'or ou le Temple qui rend cet or sacré? (La Bible du Semeur)
Selective vs. non-selective

- **multifunctionality:**
  - common ‘who?’ for ‘which one (person)?’
  - common ‘which one?’ for ‘who?’
  - rare ‘what?’ for ‘which one (thing)?’
  - rare ‘which one?’ for ‘what?’

  a. *All these women here... and who/which is Mary?*
  b. *All these cars here... and which/what is yours?*
How can we define an NIP for purposes of cross-linguistic comparison?

2. Semantics of NIPs: additional parameters
Entity type

- PERSON vs. NON-PERSON (THING)

“...we have the possibility of sometimes treating inanimate entities as persons and, perhaps less often, human beings as non-persons, in one sense or another”

(Dahl & Fraurud 1996:62)
“animacy is just one of the many distinctions that can be made along the scale of SELF vs. OTHER”

(Janda 1996:325)
Type of reference

- **identification**: direct reference
- **classification**: reference via a concept
Expected answer

- **proper name**: a lexeme “assigned to an *ad hoc* referent in an *ad hoc* name-giving act” (Van Langendonck 2007:6)

- **common noun**: a description
(1) [Persons A and B see person X. Person B appears to be familiar with X. Person A asks:] *Who is this?*

a. [B:] *It’s John.*
b. [B:] *It’s my brother/ my doctor.*
c. [B:] *It’s the doctor.*
d. [B:] *It’s a doctor.*

(2) [Persons A and B see thing X. Person B appears to be familiar with X. Person A asks:] *What is this?*

a. [B:] *It’s my boomerang/ my neighbour’s cherry-tree.*
b. [B:] *It’s a boomerang/ a cherry-tree.*
c. [B:] *It’s the boomerang/ the cherry-tree.*
NIPs: from a typological perspective

For purposes of cross-linguistic comparison, NIPs, ‘who?’ and ‘what?’, are best defined through their functions in terms of prototypical (or canonical) combinations of values of three parameters (cf. Idiatov 2007):

- entity type
- type of reference
- expected answer
NIPs: from a typological perspective

Figure 1. Conceptual space for delimiting the prototypical functions of non-selective interrogative pronominals

Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<th>Parameters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENTITY TYPE</td>
<td>PERSON</td>
<td>THING</td>
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<tr>
<td>TYPE OF REFERENCE</td>
<td>[ANIMATE &lt; INANIMATE &gt; ABSTRACT]</td>
<td>CLASSIFICATION</td>
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<td>EXPECTED ANSWER</td>
<td>IDENTIFICATION</td>
<td>(REFERENCE VIA A CONCEPT)</td>
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<td>(DIRECT REFERENCE)</td>
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<td>PROPER NAME</td>
<td>(DESCRIPTION, APPELLATIVE)</td>
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<td>WHO?</td>
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<td>WHAT?</td>
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Interrogative pronominal
[person + classification + common noun] (KIND-questions)

Russian

(1) A on *kto* voobsche? Vrach?
and he *who* actually doctor

‘What is he actually? A doctor?’

English vs Russian: preference to different parameters

English: TYPE OF REFERENCE → what?-dominance

Russian: ENTITY TYPE → who?-dominance
[thing + identification + proper name] (NAME-questions)

Kgalagadi (Niger-Congo, Bantu S30; Botswana; Kems Monaka, p.c.)

(1) [A:] *libizho la lehelo lo ke* **anye?**
name of place this is **who**

[B:] *ke Hughunsi*
is Hukuntsi

‘[A:] **What** (lit.: ‘who?’) is the name of this place?
[B:] It’s Hukuntsi (a village name)’

English: ENTITY TYPE → what?-dominance

Kgalagadi: TYPE OF REFERENCE & EXPECTED ANSWER → who?-dominance
Figure 2. Conceptual space for non-selective interrogative pronominals

- **WHO?** [person + identification (+ proper name)]
  - TYPE OF REFERENCE (& EXPECTED ANSWER)
  - ENTITY TYPE
  - [person + classification (+ common noun)]
  - TYPE OF REFERENCE (& EXPECTED ANSWER)

- **WHAT?** [thing + classification (+ common noun)]
  - ENTITY TYPE
Some complications:

- a language may choose a different strategy in different contexts even when the combinations of values in these contexts are the same

Vietnamese (Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Viet-Muong; Vietnam; Thu Thi Anh Nguyen, p.c.)

[A:] Mary là gì/*ai của bạn?
Mary is what/*who of you

[B:] Chỉ ấy là chị đâu của tôi
she is sister-in-law of me

‘[A:] What is Mary to you? [B:] She is my sister-in-law.’
Some complications:

- many languages treat non-human living beings similarly to humans in various respects and some also use ‘who?’ in questions about them (*ANIMATE-questions*)

Russian

(1) **Kto** eto tebja ukusil? Osa?

**who** this you bit wasp

‘[Looking at a swelling on someone’s hand clearly caused by an insect bite:] **What** stung you? A wasp?’
‘Who?’/‘what?’-dominance in cases of non-canonical combinations of values: a typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>NAME-questions [thing + identification (+ proper name)]</th>
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‘Who?’/‘what?’-dominance in cases of non-canonical combinations of values: a (full) typology

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NAME-questions
Questions for proper names

such a question may or may not involve an interrogative pro-word (IPW)

Bamana (Mande; Mali)

(1) ̀́ Itόgɔ̀?
2SG name.ART
‘What’s your name?’

constructions involving an IPW with a non-canonical combination of values: [thing + identification + proper name] (NAME-questions)

constructions involving an IPW

• [IPW is X’s name?] an equation between an IPW and X’s name
• [IPW is X (by name)?] an equation between an IPW and X (by name)
• [IPW is X(’s name) named/called?] a non-equational construction with a verb of naming/calling
[IPW is X’s name?]

Kgalagadi (Niger-Congo, Bantu S30; Botswana; Kems Monaka, p.c.)

(1)  [A:]  *libizho la lehelo lo ke anye?*  
     name of place this is who

     [B:]  *ke Hughunsi*  
     is Hukuntsi

     ‘[A:]  **What** (lit.: ‘**who**?’) is the name of this place?  
     [B:]  It’s Hukuntsi (a village name)’
• [IPW is X (by name)?]

Tuvaluan (Austronesian, Remote Oceanic, Nuclear Polynesian; Tuvalu)

(1)  
   a.  ko-oi    tou      fenua?  
       FOC-who  2SG.POSS   island  
       ‘What’s your home island?’ or ‘What’s your native country?’ (lit.:  
       ‘Who (is) your island?’) (Besnier 2000:422)  
   b.  ko-oi    t-tino    naa?  
       FOC-who  DEF.SG-person  that  
       ‘[Addressed to someone in the dark:] Who is there? (lit.: ‘Who (is) that  
       person?’)’ (Besnier 2000:424)
- [IPW is X named/called?]

German

(1) **wie** heißt **er**?

*how* is.named *he*

‘What’s his name? (lit. ‘How is he named?’)

(2) Semelai (Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Aslian; Malaysia)

a. **kadeh**  **glor?**

*who*  *be.named*

‘What are (you) called?’, ‘What is your name?’ (Nicole Kruspe, p.c.)

b. **kadeh**  **na-təʔen?**

*who*  *DEM-to.down*

‘Who is the one (coming) down?’ (Kruspe 1999:293)
“Avoidance” strategies

- in the case of a non-canonical combination of values, the use of both ‘what?’ and ‘who?’ can be avoided altogether

- ‘how?’

  German

  (1) *wie* heißt *er?*
  *how* is.named *he*
  ‘What’s his name? (lit. ‘How is he named?’)

  Arabela (Zaparoan; Peru; Rolland Rich, p.c.)

  (2) [A:] *taa-te quia sesa-ni?* [B:] *John*
  *how* -Q 2SG name-Q PROP
  [A:] What is your name? (lit.: ‘How is your name?’) [B:] John’
“Avoidance” strategies

- in the case of a non-canonical combination of values, the use of both ‘what?’ and ‘who?’ can be avoided altogether

  - ‘where?’

  Standard (Eastern) Hausa (Afro-Asiatic, West Chadic; Nigeria)

  (1) *ìnaa suuna-n-ka?*

  ‘What is your name? (lit.: ‘Where is your name?’)’ (Paul Newman, p.c.)
“Avoidance” strategies

- in the case of a non-canonical combination of values, the use of both ‘what?’ and ‘who?’ can be avoided altogether

- ‘which one?’

  Amharic (Afro-Asiatic, West Semitic; Ethiopia; Seyoum Mulugeta, p.c.)

  (1) səm-əh yättənnaw näw?
  name-2SG which.one.M.SG COP.M.SG
  ‘What is your name? (lit.: ‘Which one is your name?’)’

- predicative ‘which?, what kind of?’

  French

  (2) quel est son nom?
  which[M.SG] is his name
  ‘What is his name? (lit.: ‘Which is his name?’)’
NAME-questions: ‘who?’ vs. ‘what?’

- when no avoidance strategy is recurred to in the case of a non-canonical combination of values, we have either ‘what?’-dominance or ‘who?’-dominance

Namia (Sepik-Ramu, Sepik, Yellow River; Papua New Guinea; Becky Feldpausch, p.c.)

(1) [A:] ne-k(a) ilei tal(a)? [B:] John
    2SG-POSS name who PROP
[A:] What is your name? [B:] John’
**NAME-questions: personal proper names**

- clearly, the **most common context** with ‘who?’-dominance in NAME-questions in the languages of the world

Map 1. The distribution of languages allowing ‘who?’ in NAME-questions about personal proper names
NAME-questions: proper names of domestic animals

Angami Naga (Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Kuki-Chin-Naga; India; Giridhar 1980:36)

(1) a.  nâ zâ šūpùò gâ?
   your name who Q
   ‘What is your name?’ (lit.: ‘Who is your name?’)

   b.  nâ fê zâ šūpùò gâ?
   your dog name who Q
   ‘What is the name of your dog?’ (lit.: ‘Who is the name of your dog?’)

- a given linguistic community must have domestic animals and these must be
  considered to be important enough to be given proper names

- possible only in languages where ‘who?’ can be used in NAME-questions about
  personal proper names

- through the assimilation of domestic animals to humans in some respect, i.e.
  their personification
NAME-questions: proper names of places

- **much less common** and very much restricted both geographically and genetically

- [Who is X (by name)?]: Oceanic branch of Austronesian & the Bantu language Ngombe

(1) Tuvaluan (Austronesian, Remote Oceanic, Nuclear Polynesian; Tuvalu)

a. *ko-oï*  *tou*  *fenua?*
   
   `FOC-who 2SG.POSS island`
   
   ‘What’s your home island?’ or ‘What’s your native country?’ (lit.: ‘Who (is) your island?’) (Besnier 2000:422)

b. *ko-oï*  *t-tino*  *naa?*
   
   `FOC-who DEF.SG-person that`
   
   ‘[Addressed to someone in the dark:] Who is there? (lit.: ‘Who (is) that person?’)’ (Besnier 2000:424)
NAME-questions: proper names of places

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(1) [A:] *libizho la lehelo lo ke anye?*
    name of place this is who

[B:] *ke Hughunsi*
    is Hukunsi

‘[A:] *What* (lit.: ‘who?’) is the name of this place?*
[B:] It’s Hukunsi (a village name)’

- [Who is X’s name?] and [Who is X named?]: for all named places, irrespective of their relation to humans

Poligus Evenki (Altaic, Northern Tungusic; Konstantinova 1968:73)

(2) *əɾ biːra ŋiː gəɾbiː:-n?*
    this river[NOM] who name-3SG.POSS

‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) is the name of this river?’
NAME-questions: temporal proper names

- According to Van Langendonck (2007:225-231), **temporal names** indicating points or periods in time, such as *Monday* or *May*, can function as **proper names**.

- [Who is X (by name)?]: Nuclear Polynesian subgroup of Austronesian (only for the names of **months**)

Tuvaluan (Austronesian, Nuclear Polynesian, Samoic-Outlier; Tuvalu; Besnier 2000:423)

(1) a. *ko-oi te maasina e fano ei koe?*
   FOC-who DEF.SG month NON⟨PST⟩ go ANAPHORIC 2SG
   ‘What month are you leaving in?’ (lit.: ‘Who is the month you are leaving?’)

   b. *ko te maasina o oi e fano ei koe?*
   FOC DEF.SG month of who NON⟨PST⟩ go ANAPHORIC 2SG
   ‘What month are you leaving in?’ (lit.: ‘It is the month of who that you are leaving?’)

Rapa Nui (Austronesian, Nuclear Polynesian, East; Chile; Du Feu 1996:22)

(2) *ko-ai te ava’e ko tara hao hai vanaga tire?*
   FOC-who ART month FOC January INS language Chile
   ‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) is January in Spanish?’

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NAME-questions: temporal proper names

- [Who is X (by name)?]: Nuclear Polynesian subgroup of Austronesian (only for the names of **months**)

- the names of months are the only kind of temporal names that belongs to the special **morphosyntactic class of proper names** marked by a “personal article”

\[
i \quad a \quad \text{hora iti} \quad \text{‘in August’} \\
\text{in PERSONAL} \quad \text{August}
\]

\[
i \quad te \quad \text{mahana piti} \quad \text{‘on Tuesday’} \\
\text{in SPECIFIC} \quad \text{Tuesday}
\]
NAME-questions: names of “folk genera” (species)

Subiya/Kuhane (Niger-Congo, Bantu K50; Namibia & Botswana; Ndana Ndana, p.c.)

(1) a. *i-zìna lye lyì samu njìni?*
   AUG-name of this tree COP.who
   ‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) is the name of this tree?’

   b. *i-lyì samu lyì sumpwa ni?*
   AUG-this tree it.is.called who
   ‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) is this tree called?’

(2) Libido (Afro-Asiatic, Highland East Cushitic; Ethiopia; Joachim Crass, p.c.)

   a. *ka hakk’an summi ’aye?*
   this tree.GEN name.NOM who
   ‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) is the name of this tree?’

   b. *ka hakk’a ’aye yaka’o?*
   this tree.ACC who they.say
   ‘What (lit.: ‘who?’) do they call this tree?’
NAME-questions: pure autonyms

- Pure autonyms are **metalinguistic names**, i.e. linguistic expressions that refer to themselves, such as *stand for* and *about* in the phrase *the words* ‘*stand for*’ and ‘*about*’ (cf. Van Langendonck 2007:246-249).

- In many respects autonyms behave like proper names and should be considered as “a **subclass of proper names** in their own right” (Van Langendonck 2007:95, 246-249).

Hadendowa Bedawi/Beja (Afro-Asiatic, North Cushitic; Sudan)

(1)  oo-tam  ?aab  eedna  t-’arabyeet-iib?
    ART.M.SG.ACC-sorghum.ball  who.ACC  say(IPFV.3PL  ART.F.SG-Arabic-in
    ‘What is *sorghum ball* in Arabic? (lit.: ‘Who do they call *sorghum ball* in
    Arabic?’)’ (Martine Vanhove & Mohamed-Tahir Hamid Ahmed, p.c.)

Libido (Afro-Asiatic, Highland East Cushitic; Ethiopia; Joachim Crass, p.c.)

(2)  a.  libitt’isan  “sheep”-a  ’aye  yaka’o?
    Libido.language.in  “sheep”-ACC  who  they.say
    ‘What is *sheep* in Libido? (lit.: ‘Who do they call *sheep* in Libido?’)’
NAME-questions: some generalizations

- ‘who?’-dominance hierarchy in NAME-questions: personal proper names (& proper names of domestic animals) < place names < (temporal proper names) < names of folk genera < pure autonyms

- with every step to the right, the number of languages involved reduces drastically, i.e. with a magnitude of several times

- on the world-wide scale, there are 3 major foci of ‘who?’-dominance in NAME-questions:
  
  • Bantu and Cushitic languages in Africa
  • Austronesian languages in Asia and the Pacific
  • Pama-Nyungan languages in Australia
Explaining the use of ‘who?’: personal proper names

Namia (Sepik-Ramu, Sepik, Yellow River; Papua New Guinea; Becky Feldpausch, p.c.)

(1) [A:] ne-k(a) ilei tal(a)? [B:] John
    2SG-POSS name who PROP
    [A:] What is your name? [B:] John’

- It is the categorical presuppositional meaning of the proper name expected as an answer, viz. the fact that it is a proper name of a person (or a personified entity), that is metonymically taken into account
Explaining the use of ‘who?’: toponyms, etc.

- An explanation appealing to the categorical presuppositional meaning of proper names cannot be extended to account for the use of ‘who?’ in questions for names whose categorical presuppositional meaning is not a person (or at least a personified being, as in the case of domestic animals, deities and the like), such as toponyms, temporal names, folk genera and autonyms
Explaining the use of ‘who?’: toponyms, etc.

- A **synchronic explanation** of the use of ‘who?’ is due to the proper name status, **propriality**, of these nouns.
  - questions for personal proper names involve the use of ‘who?’ due to the categorical presuppositional meaning of the personal proper names
  - the language has a clear morphosyntactic class of proper names containing both personal and non-personal nouns
  - by analogy, questions for non-personal proper names also involve the use of ‘who?’

- This explanation may work for the Austronesian languages with a special **morphosyntactic class of proper names** marked by a “personal article”

- Elsewhere, such explanation is much more problematic due to the very abstract nature of its semantic basis, viz. propriality, which is supposed to override the **semantic clash** between the very concrete categorical presuppositional meanings of the personal and non-personal proper names.
Explaining the use of ‘who?’: toponyms, etc.

- **A diachronic explanation**: the use of ‘who?’ is due to a concurrence of certain developments in the evolution of the IPWs

  - on an earlier stage, a selective (or locative) interrogative indifferent to the semantic opposition person vs. non-person was used in questions about (personal & non-personal) proper names to avoid the use of ‘who?’ and ‘what?’ (avoidance strategy)
  
  - this selective (or locative) interrogative has developed into ‘who?’, as is not uncommon cross-linguistically
  
  - as a result, questions for (personal & non-personal) proper names involve the use of ‘who?’
Cushitic (a branch of Afro-Asiatic)

- avoidance strategies are not uncommon in NAME-questions in Afro-Asiatic

  Standard (Eastern) Hausa (Afro-Asiatic, West Chadic; Nigeria)

  (1) inaa suuna-n-ka?
      where name-of-2SG
      ‘What is your name? (lit.: ‘Where is your name?’)’ (Paul Newman, p.c.)

  Amharic (Afro-Asiatic, West Semitic; Ethiopia; Seyoum Mulugeta, p.c.)

  (1) səm-əh yätəɲɲaw nāw?
      name-2SG which.one.M.SG COP.M.SG
      ‘What is your name? (lit.: ‘Which one is your name?’)’

- Beja ‘who?’ ʔaːb (ACC), ʔaw (NOM) is a reflex of Proto-Cushitic *ʔayy- ‘which
  one?’.

  Compare also Saho (East Cushitic) ay ~ a: ‘who?, what?, which [N]?, what (kind of) [N]?,
  Proto-Cushitic *ʔay(y)u-da ‘where?’, (primarily) South Omotic ʔay ‘who?’, (primarily) North
  Omotic ʔay-(b-) ‘what?’, and Proto-Semitic *ʔay ‘where?’.
Bantu (a branch of Niger-Congo)

- **avoidance strategies** are not uncommon in NAME-questions in Bantu and Niger-Congo

  Eton (Niger-Congo, Bantu A71; Cameroon; Van de Velde 2008:179)

(1)  pèpá wɔ àŋgábé 'dwé yá?
    |pèpá ú-ɔ à-ŋgá-bé d-dé já|
father 1-your 1-RP-COP 5-name how
‘How was your father called?’

- As discussed in Idiatov (2009), Bantu ‘who?’ interrogatives commonly reconstructed as *(d)a(n)i have developed out of a selective interrogative ‘which one?’ and ultimately a locative interrogative construction *[AG9(or AG7) COP G16-‘what?’].

  - In several Bantu languages of zone C, reflexes of this interrogative construction mean both ‘who?’ and ‘what?’
Conclusions

- The use of ‘who?’ in questions for personal proper names supports the relevance of the notion of **categorical presuppositional meanings** of proper names.

- **Propriality** can account only for a small part of cases of the use of ‘who?’ in NAME-questions for non-personal proper names in the languages of the world.

- A **diachronic explanation** of the use of ‘who?’ in NAME-questions (especially, about very marginal kinds of proper names, such as names of “folk genera” and pure autonyms) is more adequate and should be preferred all things being equal.