German Impersonal Pronouns and Logophoricity
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0. What this talk is going to be about

Logophoric contexts
Sentences that report somebody’s words, dreams, hopes, beliefs, wishes, and other attitudes.

Logophoric Pronouns
Scholars of West-African languages have observed that pronouns in logophoric contexts can have puzzling properties.

De se pronouns
Philosophers have observed that pronouns in logophoric contexts can have puzzling properties: They may be interpreted de se.

A case study
German generic pronouns are shown to have puzzling properties in logophoric contexts. I will argue that this is so because they can be de se pronouns.

Relevance
A window into how we talk about other minds. Diagnostics for the presence of a ‘theory of mind’ in developmental studies.

1. ‘Us’ and ‘them’. Unembedded ‘man’.

The German impersonal pronoun ‘man’ has an inclusive and an exclusive reading. When ‘man’ is unembedded, we have the following: On the exclusive reading, ‘man’ refers to a group that excludes the speaker. On the inclusive reading, ‘man’ refers to a group that the speaker is part of or sympathizes with.

**Exclusive ‘man’: ‘Them’**

(1) Als ich in die Pension zurückkam, servierte man schon die Suppe. When I into the boarding house returned, served man already the soup

When I returned to the boarding house, they were already serving the soup.

(2) Im Ministerium wusste man ganz genau über mich Bescheid. in the ministry knew man completely about me info

In the office of the minister, they knew everything about me.

(3) Man behauptete, man habe meine Akte verloren. man claimed man had(subj.) my file lost

They claimed they had lost my file.

Inclusive ‘man’: ‘Us’

(4) Als ich klein war, wurde man nur am Freitag gebadet.  
when I little was got man only on the Friday bathed  
When I was little, we only had a bath on Fridays.

(5) Es war völlig klar, dass man sich nie mehr wiedersehen würde.  
it was compl. clear that man refl. never again see again would  
It was completely clear that we would never see each other again.

(6) Wir spielten Karten, weil man ja hier nichts Besseres zu tun hatte.  
we played cards since man part. here nothing better to do had  
We played cards since we didn’t have anything better to do here.

2. Grammatical differences

Dative and accusative forms

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<th>exclusive</th>
<th>inclusive</th>
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<td>nominative</td>
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<td>accusative</td>
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**Predicative NPs**

(1) \[ \text{Als Hüter des Gesetzes} \] war man verpflichtet, die Einhaltung aller Bestimmungen zu überwachen.

As guardian of the law, we were obliged to watch over the observance of all regulations.

(2) * \[ \text{Als Hüter des Gesetzes} \] hat man mir erklärt, ich könne hier nicht wohnen.

As guardians of the law, they explained to me that I couldn’t live here.

In (1), the presence of a predicative NP related to the subject eliminates the exclusive reading of ‘man’. In (2), an inclusive reading of ‘man’ is excluded, and the sentence comes out as ungrammatical.

Possessive pronouns

(3) Wenn man seine Hausaufgaben gemacht hatte, durfte man spielen.
    when man man’s homework done had could man play
    When we had done our homework, we were allowed to play.

(4) * Wenn man seine Brille aufsetzte, kriegten wir Angst.
    when man man’s glasses put on got we fear
    When they put on their glasses, we got frightened.

Exclusive ‘man’ lacks agreement features

The inability to license predicative NPs and possessive pronouns suggests that exclusive ‘man’ might not have the full set of agreement features.

(5) Man erkundigte sich nach mir.
    man inquired refl. after me.
    They inquired about me.

German 3rd person reflexive pronouns have no number and gender features. Since exclusive ‘man’ shows singular number agreement with finite verbs, we may conclude, that the feature that it lacks is the gender feature.

3. A first analysis

Syntax

Semantics

Predictions

- ‘Man’ is definite.
- ‘Man’ can be semantically plural
- ‘Man’ is not a rigid designator.

**Definiteness of ‘man’**

(1) *Es war man gekommen.*
   there was man come
   They/we had come.

(2) *Es war wer gekommen.*
   there was somebody come
   Somebody had come.

(3) *Es war jemand gekommen.*
   there was somebody come
   Somebody had come.

**Possible plurality**

(5) *Man redete miteinander.*
   man talked with each other.
   One talked with each other.

(6) *Man bekam jeden Luftballon.*
   one got each a balloon

**Non-rigidity**

(7) *Wenn ich Kinder hätte, könnte man zusammen Monopoly spielen.*
   If I children had could man together Monopoly play.

   If I had children, we could play Monopoly together.
   (Example inspired by Partee 1989).

4. Switch of Perspective in Logophoric Contexts

Switch from exclusive ‘man’ to ‘inclusive ‘man’

1) **Man erzählte uns, dass **einem**  Unrecht geschehen war.**  
They told us that they had been treated unfairly.

2) **Man erklärte mir,  man habe [als Beamter]**  
They explained to me that as public employees, they were obliged to inform me about this incident.

3) **Man erklärte mir,  man habe seine Brille vergessen.**  
They explained to me that they had forgotten their glasses.

5. Anaphoric Relations

(1) * Jedes Paar verstand sich besser als man dachte.
    Each couple understood refl. better than man thought
    Each couple got along better with each other than they thought.

(2) Jedes Paar behauptete, man verstünde sich gut.
    each couple claimed man understood(subj.) refl. well
    Each couple claimed they got along well with each other.

(3) Jedes Paar glaubte, man verstünde sich gut.
    each couple believed man understood(subj.) refl. well
    Each couple believed they got along well with each other.

7. ‘Man’ and de se pronouns

Reminder: The two parts of ‘man’
Inclusive ‘man’: \( \text{DP} [\text{IN NP} [\text{MAN}]] \)
Exclusive ‘man’: \( \text{DP} [\text{EX NP} [\text{MAN}]] \)

‘MAN’: Amended analysis
‘MAN’ can be free, in which case it refers to the speaker. If it is bound, it is interpreted as a de se pronoun. (A unified analysis would be possible within a dynamic, context change framework.)

What’s a de se pronoun?

De se pronouns occur in logophoric contexts and refer back to the one whose attitudes or words are being conveyed. The attitudes or words are reported by taking a ‘first person’ perspective.

Illustration

“An amnesiac, Rudolf Lingens, is lost in the Stanford library. He reads a number of things in the library, including a biography of himself, and a detailed account of the library in which he is lost...He still won’t know who he is, and where he is, no matter how much knowledge he piles up, until that moment when he is ready to say, “This place is aisle five, floor six, of Main Library, Stanford. I am Rudolf Lingens.”

Suppose Rudolf Lingens knows everything that can be known about Rudolf Lingens and John Perry from books, pictures, videos, etc., but wrongly believes that he himself is John Perry, rather than Rudolf Lingens.

(1) Rudolf Lingens believes that he is John Perry.
(2) Rudolf Lingens believes that Rudolf Lingens is John Perry.

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Rudolf Lingens is shown videos of himself, and asked: “Is this you?”

“No, that’s not me, that’s Rudolf Lingens, the amnesiac who thinks he is me. He is lost in the Stanford library right now, and is watching a video of himself.”

Rudolf Lingens is shown videos of John Perry, and asked: “Could this be you?”

“Yes, that’s definitely me.”

Rudolf Lingens is asked whether John Perry and Rudolf Lingens are the same person.

“Of, course not, how could they? Come on, I am not that stupid, I am a famous philosopher.”

Ingredients for an analysis of logophoric pronouns

- Logophoric contexts express properties, not propositions.
  David Lewis: “Attitudes de dicto and de se”. Philosophical Review 88.

  (3) a. John Perry believes that he is John Perry.
  b. Rudolf Lingens believes that, too.
  c. But Perry is right, and Lingens is wrong.

- Logophoric contexts that contain logophoric pronouns can express properties because the pronouns are variables bound by an abstraction operator.

Implementation

(1) Rudolf Lingens believes that he is John Perry.

Predicate Abstraction
If $\alpha$ is a branching node whose daughters are an index $i$ and $\beta$, then for any variable assignment $g$, $[[\alpha]]^g = \lambda x. [[\beta]]^{gx/i}$.

(1') Rudolf Lingens self-ascribes the property of being John Perry.

(1'') For all doxastic alternatives $<x_e, w_s>$ of Rudolf Lingens in the actual world: $[\lambda x. \lambda w_s. x$ is (a counterpart of) John Perry in $w](x)(w) = 1$ ⇔

For all doxastic alternatives $<x_e, w_s>$ of Rudolf Lingens in the actual world, $x$ is (a counterpart of) John Perry in $w$.

8. Explaining the Logophoricity effects

Switch of perspective

(3) Man erzählte uns, dass einem Unrecht geschehen war.
man told us that man(dat.) injustice happened had
They told us that they had been treated unfairly.

(3') Talking to us, ‘they’ self-ascribed the property
[ $\lambda x. \lambda w. the group of x suffered injustice in w$ ].

Anaphoric relations

(4) Jedes Paar glaubte, man verstünde sich gut.
   each couple believed man understood(subj.) refl. well
   Each couple believed they got along well with each other.

(4’) Each couple self-ascribed the property
   [ λx. λw. the group of x got along well with each other in w ].

8. Non-source perspectives

(1) Wir haben jedem Austauschschüler eingeschärft, dass man
   we have each exchange student (dat.) made clear that man

   als kleiner Botschafter des Vaterlandes auftreten müsse.
   as little ambassador of the father country appear must

   We made it clear to each exchange student that (s)he had to assume
   the role of a little ambassador of his/her country.

(2) Wir haben betont, dass man als kleiner Botschafter des Vaterlandes auftreten müsse.

We emphasized that everybody had to assume the role of a little ambassador of his/her country.

(3) Coach Cal berichtete von jedem Team, dass man sein Bestes gegeben habe.

Coach Cal reported of every team that it had given its best.

(4) Er verlangte von jedem Schüler, dass man ihn mit ‘Herr Professor’ betitulierte.

He asked of every student that (s)he addressed him as ‘Herr Professor’.
Der Psychiater machte jedem Paar klar, dass man sich erst nach vielen Jahren so richtig gut verstehen würde.

The psychiatrist explained to every couple that they would only understand each other really well after many years.