Embedded Inverted Questions as Embedded Illocutionary Acts

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1. Introduction

Embedded inverted questions (EIQs) are a fairly well studied phenomenon in English dialects and have previously been analysed as evidence for direct CP recursion in Germanic languages. In this paper, their properties as speech reports will be further investigated and the CP recursion analysis will be updated, showing that the structure of EIQs has implications for our understanding of clausal selection and the possibility of embedded speech acts in natural language. Specifically, further evidence will be provided that not all cases of clausal complementation involve selection and evidence of embedded illocutionary force in English will be presented.

The paper is structured as follows; the key data on EIQs will be presented along with new observations on their meaning and use. Secondly, an analysis of the embedded clause itself will be presented which proposes that illocutionary force independent of the matrix force is available in EIQs. Thirdly, a proposal for the linking of the EIQ and the matrix clause will be made which accounts for both the embedded characteristics of the EIQ and its incompatibility with selection by the matrix verb. It will be proposed that the embedded clause refers to an utterance in a previous discourse and is identified as the content of the true complement to the matrix verb, namely a null nominal. The paper then concludes with directions for future research.

2. Data
2.1. Key features of EIQs

EIQs have most famously been studied by McCloskey (1992, 2006) and Henry (1995) in Hiberno English dialects. They also occur in a range of other British and non-British dialects, including North West England English (Woods, 2014), African American English (AAE; Green, 2002), Indian English (Bhatt, 2000) and New York English (C. Sailor and B. Pearson, p.c.). Their most salient features are the presence of subject-auxiliary inversion in an embedded clause and the (general) lack of overt complementisers. Example (1) contains paradigm examples of the EIQ construction, which can contain either a polar or wh-question:

(1) a. I asked Jack was she in his class.
   b. I wondered how did they get into the building. Irish English, McCloskey (2006)

EIQs have a highly restricted distribution. They typically appear under interrogative bridge verbs like those in (1) but are blocked under factive verbs (as in (2)); a state of affairs reminiscent of embedded verb second (EV2) contexts in Germanic.

(2) *I found out how did they get into the building. Irish Eng., McCloskey (2006)

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Unlike Germanic EV2, however, EIQs can occur under factive verbs if the matrix clause also contains interrogativity (3a), modality (3b), negation (3c) or imperative force (3d). This distribution strongly indicates that the relationship between the EIQ and the matrix clause is not one of selection by matrix V because other operators in the matrix clause interfere.

(3)  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  a. & Do we know how were words chosen for the lists? \hspace{1cm} \text{New York Eng., attested}^1 \\
  b. & I wanted to know could they do it for me. \hspace{1cm} \text{AAE, Green (2002)} \\
  c. & I don’t understand what is the utility of it. \hspace{1cm} \text{Indian Eng., attested}^2 \\
  d. & Find out does he take sugar in his tea. \hspace{1cm} \text{Irish Eng., McCloskey (2006)} \\
\end{tabular}

2.2. EIQs as speech reports: new observations

EIQs are primarily used to report speech or mental states. They fall somewhere between indirect and direct speech reports in terms of characteristics shared and the degree to which they are considered “quotative”; that is to say the extent to which they reperform an original speech act in content and in form.

2.2.1. Similarity to indirect speech reports

EIQs are like indirect speech reports in that non-selection-related dependencies such as Sequence of Tense phenomena and indexicality hold. Furthermore, it is well-known that the embedded clause in an indirect speech report cannot stand alone or be fronted as in (4a). At first blush, it seems that this is possible for EIQs, given the possibility of sentences like (4b). However, there is evidence that examples like (4b) are not EIQs. Example (5a) contains an example of an EIQ, in which both temporal adjuncts must be evaluated according to the speaker’s temporal coordinates. In contrast, (5b) is an example of Free Indirect Discourse (FID) in which two coordinates can be tracked; those of the anonymous narrator, and those of Mary, resulting in the two different readings. This shows that (5b) must be an example of FID, as tomorrow and yesterday can be evaluated according to different temporal coordinates (cf. Giorgi (2010:194) for more on temporal expressions in FID), while this option is not available in EIQs.

(4)  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  a. & *Whether he could come, I asked him. \\
  b. & Could he come, I asked him. (* on an EIQ reading) \\
\end{tabular}

(5) \text{Both of the sentences below are spoken on 5th May} \hspace{1cm} \text{yesterday=4th May, tomorrow=6th May}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  a. & Mary asked John, yesterday would he, leave tomorrow. \\
  b. & Would he, leave tomorrow, Mary asked John, yesterday. \\
\end{tabular}

\text{yesterday=4th May, tomorrow=5th May OR yesterday=4th May, tomorrow=6th May}

2.2.2. Similarity to direct speech reports

In other aspects, EIQs are more similar to direct speech reports. As well as featuring subject-auxiliary inversion, McCloskey (2006) notes that EIQs permit other root phenomena such as speech act adverbs (as in (6a)), topicalised arguments (6b) and discourse particles (6c), which are not usually licit in embedded contexts.

(6)  
\begin{tabular}{ll}
  a. & Jane asked him seriously$_{\text{jane}}$ would he cook her dinner. \\
  b. & Mary asked (if) this book, was it really worth reading. \text{\cite{McCloskey2006}} \\
  c. & Jamie asked please would I help him. \\
\end{tabular}

1 Naturally occurring New York English data provided by Barbara Pearson, p.c.
2 Naturally occurring Indian English data provided by Jyoti Iyer, p.c.
3 The overt complementiser if is available here because, as McCloskey notes, there is sufficiently substantial phonological material between the overt complementiser and the raised auxiliary (McCloskey, 2006:105) to avoid spelling out two adjacent instantiations of the interrogative feature Q.
There are also semantic similarities between EIQs and direct speech reports. Direct speech reports express entailments about the existence of a speech act in a prior discourse and the addressee of that speech act. For example, the direct speech report in (7a) is a direct question which was asked in a previous discourse. The EIQ equivalent in (7b) does not give rise to the same entailments, but it implies that the addressee is the person accused of having an affair - an implication that can be cancelled - and it presupposes that the question was at issue in a previous discourse:

(7) a. I asked, “Are you having an affair?”
   b. I asked was she having an affair.

Example (8) more clearly illustrates the presupposition inherent in the use of an EIQ. (8a), an indirect mental state report, does not presuppose that the question “Can Joe come to the party?” was asked in a previous discourse, or in fact discussed at all. (8a) can be used to describe a situation in which no-one talks about Joe coming to the party, but everyone knows that everyone else is thinking about it.

This is not possible if either (8b) or (8c) is used. (8b) entails that the question was directly asked, while (8c) presupposes that the question was discussed, if not necessarily directly asked. I propose that the EIQ constitutes a question which was at some point the question-under-discussion in the sense of Roberts (2012).

(8) a. Everyone wanted to know whether Joe could come to the party.
   b. Everyone wanted to know: “Is Joe coming to the party?”
   c. Everyone wanted to know could Joe come to the party.

2.2.3. Characteristics of the EIQ alone

Finally, there are aspects of EIQs and their interpretation that are unlike both indirect and direct speech reports, for example their opacity to extraction. A small-scale grammaticality judgement task performed by speakers of EIQ dialects (n=9) shows that argument extraction from EIQs is judged worse than argument extraction from indirect speech reports, but better than argument extraction from direct speech reports. Scores were given on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being completely ungrammatical and 7 being completely grammatical:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EIQ</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect report</td>
<td>5.43</td>
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<td>Direct report</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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Table 1: Grammaticality judgements on extractability of arguments from different types of speech report

The case of adjunct extraction is less clear. An online question-answer study of 57 participants including 12 EIQ dialect speakers was conducted using scenarios followed by one of four types of question, as shown in (9).

(9) **Scenario:** Sam was very excited. He was going to the park today. He bounced out of bed, stood at the top of the stairs and shouted really loud downstairs to his Mum, “Mum! Can we go to the park on our new bikes today?” She said, “Yes of course! But quiet down now Sam - you shouldn’t shout from the top of the stairs!”

    **How x EIQ:** How did Sam ask could they go to the park?
    **How x Indirect:** How did Sam ask if they could go to the park?
    **Where x EIQ:** Where did Sam ask could he ride his bike?
    **Where x Indirect:** Where did Sam ask if he could ride his bike?

The results show that all participants were more likely to extract adjuncts—interpret the matrix wh-word as extracted from the embedded clause—from EIQs than from indirect speech reports, though EIQ dialect speakers extracted less frequently overall. There was also an item effect: almost all adjuncts judged as extracted from the embedded clause were **where**-adjuncts; **how**-adjuncts were very rarely
judged as extracted.\footnote{See Woods (forthcoming) for full results.}

EIQs also differ from direct and indirect speech reports in their sensitivity to the pragmatics of orientation. Some EIQs with third-person matrix arguments and first/second-person embedded arguments are hard to resolve if they are string-identical to direct speech and pragmatically unlikely:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(10)] \textbf{Unclear perspectives}
\begin{enumerate}
\item John asked Mary, “Could I meet you at the weekend?”
\item John asked Mary if I could meet you at the weekend.
\item John asked Mary could I meet you at the weekend.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

Without context it is easy to construe (10c) instead as a direct speech quotation because of its string similarity and because it is hard to see why John could ask that question of Mary and expect an answer. Context improves the ease of achieving this reading:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(11)] \textit{Context: John is my secretary, Mary is yours and we are overdue a meeting.}
John asked Mary could I meet you at the weekend.
\end{enumerate}

When the EIQ cannot be string-identical to direct speech (without assuming a very odd context) the EIQ reading is easier to achieve:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(12)] John asked Mary did I meet you at the weekend.
\end{enumerate}

2.3. Summary

The established and the new observations above show that EIQs are neither like indirect nor direct speech reports, but share characteristics with both. They are clearly syntactically embedded due to the presence of Sequence of Tense phenomena, the lack of indexical shift and the restrictions on their linear position. Along with the fact that EIQs do not entail an original questioning act, this suggests that they are not instances of mixed quotation either.\footnote{Thanks to Hotze Rullmann for this question.} However, they are like independent clauses in that they permit expressive elements and root-like structures, they presuppose that a real questioning act occurred in a previous discourse regardless of the exact matrix predicate and they make implications about the identity of the addressee. These facts are due to the structure of the EIQ. It is proposed that the EIQ is subordinate to the matrix clause but is not selected by it; instead, the EIQ expresses information, both propositional and expressive, about the true nominal complement to the matrix verb.

3. The structure of the EIQ

In this section I follow the spirit of the CP recursion analysis of EIQs (McCloskey, 2006) but look to differentiate between the two C heads he proposes at the top of the structure.

3.1. The Illocutionary Act Phrase

I propose that the EIQ has as its highest projection an Illocutionary Act Phrase (IAP) similar to the Speech Act Phrase proposed by Hill (2007) in the tradition of Speas & Tenny (2003). The structure of the IAP is shown in (13) for the sentence “[I asked him] please would he cook dinner for me.”

\begin{align*}
\text{iap} & \text{[centre of evaluation]} \text{[ia please] \text{[forcep \text{#w would} \text{[tp he cook dinner for me]]}]}}
\end{align*}

The structure in (13) retains the key aspects of McCloskey’s (2006) CP recursion analysis, in particular that ForceP is selected by a functional head. However, this structure can answer some of the problematic aspects of CP recursion hypotheses and can better account for some of the interpretive properties of the EIQ.

The analysis above avoids problems of ‘counting’ raised by CP recursion analyses, namely the lack of restrictions on the number of CPs which can embed another CP (cf. Iatridou & Kroch (1992)). As IA<style text="italic">°</style>
and Force\textsuperscript{6} are distinguished featurally and functionally, there is no debate about the number of iterations that may occur or their relative ordering. The IA head is the key difference between an EIQ, in which it is present, and an indirect speech report, in which it is not. It is due to the IA head that the EIQ carries the presupposition of a question under discussion, as it encodes in the EIQ independent illocutionary force which is absent in the indirect speech report.\textsuperscript{6} It is the presence of the IA head which permits discourse particles that lexicalise illocutionary force, such as please (Woods, submitted) to occur in this embedded context and not in others. The IA head and the Force head must be of compatible types; for example, the Force head cannot be declarative in EIQs. The mechanism for this will be developed in section 4.

The IAP also contains in its specifier the Centre of Evaluation (CofE). This is a bundle of features including deictic and temporal coordinates pertaining to the discourse participants in the original discourse, as well as information about their statuses relative to each other. The CofE is not a referential DP itself as in Speas & Tenny (2003), Hill (2007) and others, nor is indexicality determined by the presence of speaker and addressee arguments in the CP layer, but is akin to a situation pronoun as conceived of by Schwarz (2012).\textsuperscript{7} This is because the effect of the presence of the CofE is more semantic than syntactic; it is present to determine the orientation of expressive phrases. There is evidence from the interpretation of the subject in embedded imperatives in languages like Japanese and Korean, as well as English, that there are covert elements which shift perspective when overt phi-feature shifting is not otherwise available in the language (Kaufmann, 2015). Following Shklovsky and Sudo’s (2014) account for overt phi-feature shifting in Uyghur, I claim that there is a similar syntactically present contextual operator which determines the orientation of covert perspectival elements such as the subject of embedded imperatives, speech act adverbs and discourse markers, and that this operator is the CofE. The presence of the CofE also allows for implications about the identity of the addressee when no information is expressed in the matrix clause (cf. (7b)). The CofE is therefore an instrument of reference to help interpret the EIQ.

3.2. Whence the IAP?

The pressing question now is: where does the IAP come from? I assume that the IAP is not part of the same phrasal spine as the CP, but the IA head is a determiner-like head that selects for ForceP. There is evidence that both DP-like and non-DP-like clausal complements exist in natural language. Clauses are DP-like in the following ways: clausal complements can enter into equative constructions, suggesting they are entities, and are blocked from small clause constructions, suggesting that they are not predicative (Potts, 2002:67-68); EIQs and other that-less clauses cannot be complements to nouns or sentential subjects; and crosslinguistically, clausal complements may be headed by determiners to induce a particular interpretation, as in the Hebrew examples in (14) from Kastner (2015:160).

(14) a. Hu hisbir [še-ha-binyan karas] (aval hu lo be’emet karas) he explained COMP-the-building collapsed but he NEG really collapsed “He explained that the building collapsed (but it didn’t really).”

b. Hu hisbir et [ze še-ha-binyan karas] (#aval hu lo be’emet karas) he explained ACC this COMP-the-building collapsed but he NEG really collapsed “He explained the fact that the building collapsed (#but it didn’t really).”

EIQs specifically share some properties with content nouns which non-EIQ complement clauses and clausal complements to nouns do not (cf. Moulton (2009) on Potts (2002)): they can be described in terms of properties such as nice and nasty, as in (15); they (or at least, the QUDs they presuppose) come into existence at certain times; and they can also cease to exist, for example when they are answered.

\textsuperscript{6} Note that this does not mean that the EIQ is a separate speech act independent from the matrix clause; it is not necessarily the case that the EIQ can be ‘answered’ in lieu of the matrix clause. The question of whether an embedded clause can be a Main Point of Utterance (Simons, 2007)—which it can, but not obligatorily—is a separate question to the one posed here.

\textsuperscript{7} This may yet turn out not to be the correct analysis depending on the conceptualisation of the semantics of situation pronouns. For discussion of another approach that captures the same characteristics of the CofE in which it is characterised as a covert Vocative phrase, see Woods (forthcoming).
A: You asked me did I cook dinner for you
B: No I didn’t, I asked did you make me a cup of tea
B’: No I didn’t, I was much more polite about it than that!8

They also share certain characteristics with factive clauses, which have been analysed as ‘referential’ CPs—clauses selected by a definite determiner—by Kastner (2015), following de Cuba & Úrögdi (2010) and others. Both EIQs and factive complements are weak islands and there is a strong connection between the argument(s) in the matrix clause and the embedded clause in the sense that the embedded clause contains information about the motivations and emotions of the matrix arguments (the matrix clause is not simply interpreted as a parenthetical, cf. McCloskey (2006)). Moreover, they both pick out discourse objects as referents: a factive complement refers to an accepted proposition in the discourse just as an EIQ refers to an accepted QUD (a QUD that both participants commit to resolving) in the discourse.

For these reasons I propose that the IA head in EIQs is a determiner-like element that selects for ForceP. This determiner-like element also encodes the illocutionary force of the clause below it and so it denotes an abstract discourse object, namely a QUD. This analysis also has repercussions for our understanding of the Centre of Evaluation; it is structurally analogous to the possessor in a possessor DP construction, so the CoFE and the clause are related via the IA head rather than as co-arguments to a lexical head. This is a desirable result because it captures the flexibility of the relationship between the discourse context and the clause which the argument structural analysis cannot. Furthermore, an argument structural analysis does not capture aspects of the original discourse situation such as the respective statuses of the discourse participants and their understanding of each other’s aims and commitments, which the CoFE analysis presented here can. This is crucial because elements relating to the relationship status of the participants can be represented in embedded contexts, for example honorific-marked verb forms in certain Japanese embedded clauses (Sauerland & Yatsushiro (2014) *inter alia*). If there is no recourse to the correct discourse context, the correct honorific marking cannot be established.

Note that, even if the proposed determiner is silent, there must be some overt marker that the clause is a quasi-quotational construction rather than a standard clause. In EIQs and similar constructions, such as Germanic EV2 and recomplementation phenomena in Spanish (Villa-García, 2015) and Catalan (González i Planas, 2014), in which embedded illocutionary force appears to be present, it is also necessary that some element is moved into or base-generated in the expanded CP layer which is not present in the force-less counterpart embedded clause. To illustrate, the syntactic effects (doubling of the complementiser and root phenomena) and semantic effects (quotative interpretation) of recomplementation cannot occur unless a discourse-oriented phrase appears in the CP layer (Catalan example in (16) from González i Planas (2014:59)).

(16) a. En Nicolau m’ha dit que sincerament que no està content.
   Nicolau 1CL-has said that sincerely that NEG is satisfied
   “Nicolau said to me that sincerely (he) is not satisfied.”
   *Low reading of adverb, quotative interpretation*

   b. En Nicolau m’ha dit sincerament que no està content.
   “Nicolau said to me that sincerely (he) is not satisfied.”
   *No low reading of adverb; no quotative interpretation*

Furthermore, while there is a imperative counterpart to the EIQ, as in (17), there is no declarative counterpart.

(17) My girlfriend said don’t call her.

I propose that this is because there is no overt marking of a declarative containing independent illocutionary force compared with a force-less declarative—there is no verb movement to C as in Germanic EV2, or some other kind of overt evidence—and so the declarative counterpart of the EIQ is not available in English.

8 Note that this is not an appropriate response to an indirect question like “You asked me if I had cooked dinner for you.”
3.3. How argument extraction is blocked

A brief explanation is warranted as to why arguments cannot be extracted from the EIQ, as there is nothing in the theory yet to account for this. One possible analysis is that the IA head is the actual head of the phase rather than Force so anything below the IA head becomes part of the phase below and is invisible to the matrix clause. However, the experimental results outlined in section 2.2.3 show that extraction of elements from the EIQ is not completely outlawed, particularly in the case of adjunct extraction. A phase-based approach is unattractive for this reasons.

Instead I suggest that argument extraction is blocked due to a kind of criterial freezing. As the embedded ForceP is \([\text{uwh}]\), it will attract any wh-phrases in its c-command domain to its specifier. At this point, the wh-phrase will satisfy \([\text{uwh}]\) on ForceP and will not be compelled to move any higher as this might result in multiple interpretations of the string. This is illustrated in example (18); the movement of the wh-phrase \([\text{what}]\) to ForceP creates a perfectly formed wh-EIQ, so there is no reason for \([\text{what}]\) to move any higher.\(^9\)

\[(18) \ [\text{ForceP} \ [\text{Force} + \text{wh}] \ [\text{TP} \ [\text{DP} \ [\text{DI}] \ [\text{T'} \ [\text{Taskedi} \ [\text{VP} \ [\text{VTi} \ [\text{IAP} \ [\text{IAASK} \ [\text{ForceP} \ uwh \ [\text{DP} \ [\text{what},j] \ [\text{Force'} \ [\text{Force'did} \ [\text{TP} \ [\text{Mary lose},j]]]]]]]]]]]]]]]

As a result argument extraction is strongly dispreferred in EIQs, but not completely outlawed. This is because the effect of criterial freezing in the case of A-bar movement is an interface effect which can be lessened in certain circumstances, rather than a constraint on derivations proper (cf. Gallego (2009)).

4. How the IAP meets the matrix clause

There remains the question of how the EIQ relates to the matrix clause. Kayne (2010) and others have suggested that a clausal complement is a restrictive relative clause. I argue against this for two key reasons: firstly, there is no gap or resumptive pronoun to suggest this kind of relationship with a head noun; and secondly, extraction from EIQs (in particular \(\text{where}/\text{when}\) adjuncts) is permitted but restricted, whereas extraction from restrictive relative clauses is strongly blocked. Keeping the idea that the true complement to the verb is a null nominal, I propose that a functional head expresses an identity relation between the IAP and the nominal complement to the verb. In this way, the structural facts of the EIQ are maintained and the interpretive facts of the EIQ are accounted for; in particular the fact that the expressive aspects of the EIQ can be directly questioned as well as the content of it (see example (15)).

4.1. The mechanism

The mechanism for this relationship is as follows: the complement to the verb is a nominal like \(\text{question}\) which may or may not be pronounced. This explains why the clausal ‘complement’ may be dropped or replaced with a pronominal, with the consequent loss of information not about the event of asking, but about the content of that which was asked.

As has already been noted, the IAP effectively nominalises the question clause of ForceP into a referential entity which picks out a QUD in the discourse. Adapting a similar proposal by Lahiri (2002), I suggest that the IA head can take complex types such as questions (sets of propositions) and imperatives (properties) as input to return an entity, but cannot take propositions as input.

To elaborate step by step, the IA head takes an argument \(S\) of a complex type \(< \sigma, t>\). It then returns the unique utterance \(u\) such that \(u\) is mapped onto \(S\), where the propositional content of \(u\) and \(S\) are identical.\(^10\) The utterance \(u\) is then checked against the relevant discourse context at the next stage (through the centre of evaluation, see Woods (forthcoming) for further details). This utterance \(u\) which is returned is of type \(e\). Because a declarative is only of type \(t\), it cannot provide input to the IA head and the derivation crashes. The utterance which results in cases which compose is then checked against the relevant discourse context\(^11\) at a later stage.

\(^9\) In order to satisfy the wh-feature on the matrix Force head, it is preferred that something be attracted from the matrix clause or dummy \(\text{do}\) be inserted.
\(^10\) Thanks to Norman Yeo for clarifying my thinking here.
\(^11\) This is represented by the Centre of Evaluation, conceived of as a situation pronoun, in (21).
The link between the nominal complement to the verb and the utterance entity is a functional head, here called ToWit. ToWit identifies the nominal question with the IAP. Its meaning is \( \lambda x \lambda y[x = y] \); essentially, it is an identity function. ToWit may be ‘pronounced’ in the case that the nominal is also pronounced: its realisation may be an intonational pause, represented by the colon in (19) or the copula in an example like (20) from the British National Corpus. I claim that this is the locus of variation between EIQ dialects and non-EIQ-dialects; the latter does not permit null spell-out of ToWit, which means the overt spell-out of the nominal question is also always required.

(19) I asked him a simple question: did he see her that night?
(20) The question is: can they get it to work a second time? BNC

The outcome of the proposed structure, as illustrated below in (21), is as follows: the content and the expressive aspects of the IAP are identified as those of the question asked, without being complement to the verb \textit{ask}. This happens via predicate modification. This means that the content and expressive aspects of the IAP can be questioned separately from the event of asking a question. Moreover, in addition to the IAP carrying questioning force (as expressed by the IA head), the EIQ will be identified as a question rather than a fact or a musing, in contrast to indirect interrogatives reports which can potentially be interpreted in all three ways.

(21)

\[ VP <e,t> \]
\[ V <e<e,t>> \]
\[ DP <e> \]
\[ D <<<e,t,e>> \]
\[ asked \]
\[ the \]
\[ ToWitP <e,t> \]
\[ ToWit' <e,t> \]
\[ question \]
\[ ToWit <e<e,t>> \]
\[ \lambda x \lambda y[x = y] \]
\[ IAP <e> \]
\[ IA' <s,e> \]
\[ CENTRE OF EVALUATION \]
\[ IA <s,t<s,e>> \]
\[ ASK \]
\[ would be make dinner for me \]

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12 Hat-tip to Eytan Zweig for naming ToWitP.
13 Examples of usage taken from the British National Corpus (BNC) were obtained under the terms of the BNC End User Licence. Copyright in the individual texts cited resides with the original IPR holders. For information and licensing conditions relating to the BNC, please see the web site at http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk.
14 Thanks to Bradley Larson for his question on this point, with apologies for my terrible on-the-spot response.
15 Thanks to Patrick Elliott for helping me clarify my ideas here.
(21) is a structural representation of the concept of questions as conversational moves in Roberts’s (2012) working out of the QUD framework. She notes that conversational moves—the subquestions that are under discussion throughout a conversation—are “not speech acts but the semantic objects which are used in speech acts.” As the EIQ is analysed as a referential entity, it is necessary that there is some referent, here some conversational move, for it to refer to, either in the relevant previous discourse or in the current one.

Finally, the structural dependence of the IAP on the matrix clause is established, with the result that indexicality and tense are contingent on the matrix clause and the IAP cannot be fronted. Ultimately there is no effect of ‘same-saying’ associated with the EIQ as there is with direct speech, though the EIQ hints at the shape of and expressive content contained within the original speech act.

4.2. Consequences for the distribution of EIQs and other questions

The structure above seems to account for the properties of the EIQ, but how can it account for the EIQ’s restricted distribution? It is possible that embedded illocutionary acts as they are understood here, as the representation of a real utterance, will be restricted to languages which allow verbs to take cognate or near-cognate nouns as their complements. This predicts that, for example, French will not have embedded speech acts as one cannot *demander la question, but that German (fragen die Frage) and Spanish (preguntar la pregunta) will. So far this is borne out, but many more languages need to be examined before this can be considered a good predictor.

In the same vein, can we predict the distribution of EIQs based on whether or not a given verb can take question as a nominal complement? This does not seem desirable; this sort of explanation would still link back to the selection properties of the verb, and whilst examples of “want to know the question”16 and “wonder the question”17 followed by a clause can, however improbably, be found, examples of “don’t know the question” plus clause are not attested. Moreover, examples of EIQs such as “Go and see did they come yet” (AAE; Green, 2002) would not be accounted for under such assumptions.

A semantic explanation for the distribution of EIQs is preferable and may also better account for cross-linguistic differences in the distribution of embedded illocutionary acts such as Germanic EV2 and reocomplementation. It is clear that EIQs are polarity sensitive given that they are only licensed under a modal, negative or interrogative operator—assuming, as Lahiri (2002) does, that interrogative verbs like say contain some element which licenses negative polarity items. Moreover, the existence of English EIQs and reocomplementation under interrogative verbs in Spanish and Catalan suggests that Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) claim that assertion is the key feature which licenses embedded root phenomenon cannot be maintained. The details of how EIQs are licensed remains for future work.

5. Conclusion

EIQs are a quasi-quotational method for reporting speech. They do not introduce the indexical shifting and verbatim inferences which come with direct speech, but they presuppose that the question they contain was once the question under discussion and they express the force and expressive aspects of an original speech act in a way that indirect speech reports cannot.

More importantly, EIQs provide an interesting data set to examine both the nature of clausal complementation and the possibility that illocutionary acts may not always constitute independent clauses. They have a full left periphery and are selected by an Illocutionary Act head. This head imbues the EIQ with embedded illocutionary force and permits root phenomena such as subject-auxiliary inversion and the adjunction of topics and speech act adverbs, amongst others. The IAP is also responsible for shifting the question contained within the EIQ into a referential entity. Parallels were drawn between EIQs and similar quasi-quotational phenomena in Spanish and the Germanic languages. It is suggested that the IAP may only occur—and with it these quasi-quotational interpretations—if overt marking occurs in the CP layer in some form.

16 “However, it is an industry-wide problem in the UK and I know you will all want to know the question are we done, are we done on conduct.” Taken from www.nab.com.au/content/dam/nab/about.../NAB_Update_091014.doc.

17 “If you own a website […] you probably may have wondered the question, is maintenance for a website really needed”. Taken from http://webdesy.com/the-importance-of-website-maintenance/.
It is also proposed that EIQs are not selected by the matrix verb but are identified as the content of the true complement of the matrix verb, a nominal, by a functional head here named ToWit. In this way the EIQ is interpreted as a representation of a question under discussion in the original discourse and can carry expressive, not-at-issue content which may be questioned in the current discourse.

References


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