



## INTRODUCTION

- We analyze a type of questions which are quite pervasive in conversations but which have not been paid attention to
- These questions represent an “excursus” in discourse, hence “excursive questions” (EQ)
- They seem to ask about an “antecedent question” (AQ)

- (1) A: Did John use the car yesterday?      (2) A: When do people eat dinner?  
B: When?      B: Where?  
A: In the evening.      A: In Spain.  
B: No. (He did not use it in the evening.)      B: Late at night.

## CENTRAL CLAIM OF THE ANALYSIS

Speech acts are grammatically represented

## PROPERTIES OF EQs

- Connectivity effects: EQs are constrained by the argument structure of the relevant verb

- (3) A: Which ship did they sink?      (4) A: Which ship sank?  
B: With what?      B: #With what?  
A: A torpedo.      A: #A torpedo.  
B: The Japanese ship.      B: #The Japanese ship.  
cf. They sank the ship with a torpedo      cf. #The ship sank with a torpedo

- Reconstruction effects: EQs may contain bound variables

- (5) A: Did every boy<sub>1</sub> write a letter?      (6) A: What did every boy<sub>1</sub> write?  
B: To which of his<sub>1</sub> relatives?      B: To which of his<sub>1</sub> relatives?  
A: To his<sub>1</sub> uncle.      A: His<sub>1</sub> uncle.  
B: No.      B: A letter.

- $\bar{A}$  effects: EQs are unbounded and island sensitive

- (7) A: Does Bill think John used the car?      (8) A: Does John believe the claim that Mary  
B: When?      had dinner with Bill?  
A: Yesterday.      B: #Where?  
B: No. (But he does think John used the car      A: #In Paris.  
last week.)      B: #No.

- Definiteness effects: EQs must relate to definite noun phrases

- (9) A: Did John read the book?      (10) A: Did John read a book?  
B: Which book?      B: #Which book?  
A: Barriers.      A: #Barriers.  
B: No.      B: #No.

## EQs ARE NOT CASES OF ECHO QUESTIONS OR SLUICING

- (11) a. Does John believe the claim that Mary had dinner with Bill WHERE?  
b. John read a book, but I don't know which book

## ANALYSIS

- Sentences contain a “performative prefix” (cf. Ross 1970, Lakoff 1970, Gazdar 1979, Krifka 2001, 2015, Sauerland & Yatsushiro 2017, Trinh & Truckenbrodt 2018, Trinh 2021)

- (12) A: Did John use the car yesterday?  
[<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday ]]]  
B: When?  
[<sub>δ</sub> B ASK A [<sub>γ</sub> when<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday then<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]  
'B asks A for which time *x* A asks B whether John used the car yesterday at the time *x*'

- EQ is derived from AQ by *merge*, *move*, and *trace conversion* in the sense of Fox (2003)

- (13) [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday ]]]      AQ  
[<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday when<sub>x</sub> ]]]      merge  
[<sub>γ</sub> when<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday when<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]      move  
[<sub>δ</sub> B ASK A [<sub>γ</sub> when<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday when<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]      merge  
[<sub>δ</sub> B ASK A [<sub>γ</sub> when<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday then<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]      TC

- Bounding nodes are TPs (cf. Chomsky 1981, 1986), and performative prefixes introduce no new TP

- (14) a. [<sub>CP</sub> B ASK A [<sub>CP</sub> when<sub>x</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> A ASK B [<sub>CP</sub> WHETHER [TP John used the car yesterday then<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]  
b. #[<sub>CP</sub> B ASK A [<sub>CP</sub> where<sub>x</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> A ASK B [<sub>CP</sub> WHETHER [TP John believes the claim [<sub>CP</sub> that [TP Mary had dinner with Bill there<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]]]

- A definite DP can be interpreted as a trace, but an indefinite DP cannot: the derivation in (15) would not be possible if the object of *read* is *a book* instead of *the book*

- (15) Derivation of the EQ in (9)      AQ  
[<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John read the<sub>x</sub> book ]]]      merge  
[<sub>γ</sub> which book<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John read the<sub>x</sub> book ]]]]]      merge  
[<sub>δ</sub> B ASK A [<sub>γ</sub> which book<sub>x</sub> [<sub>β</sub> A ASK B [<sub>α</sub> WHETHER [TP John read the<sub>x</sub> book ]]]]]

## QUESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Why is nothing in the EQ pronounced except the wh-phrase?

## REFERENCES

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