

# Excursive questions

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 A previously unanalyzed class of questions
- 3 Analysis

# Sentences and speech acts

## (1) Sentences

A: Did John use the car yesterday?

WHETHER [John<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]

LF

B: No he did not.

NOT [he<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]

LF

## (2) Speech acts

a. A asks B whether John used the car yesterday

b. B tells A that John did not use the car yesterday

# The Performative Hypothesis (PH)

## (3) Sentences

A: Did John use the car yesterday?

A ASKS B [WHETHER [John<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]

B: No he did not.

B TELLS A [NOT [he<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]

## (4) Speech acts

a. A asks B whether John used the car yesterday

b. B tells A that John did not use the car yesterday

# Linguistic communication under PH

(5) A to B: “Did John use the car yesterday”

LF: A ASKS B [WHETHER [John<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]  
 performative prefix

(6) Conversation

- a. Producing *contingent* symbolic representations that are *guaranteed to be true*, thereby making changes to the world  
 → the theory of grammar tells us how these representations are constructed, interpreted, and phonologically realized
- b. Reacting appropriately to these changes  
 → the theory of discourse tells us what kind of reactions is appropriate

## Research on “speech acts in grammar”

(7) A to B: “Did John use the car yesterday”

LF: A ASKS B [WHETHER [John<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]  
 performative prefix

Object of investigation: the syntactic structure, semantic contribution, and phonological realization of performative prefixes

→ cf. Stenius (1967); Ross (1970); Lakoff (1970); Gazdar (1979); Chomsky (1981, 1986); Krifka (2001); Miyagawa (2012); Krifka (2015); Sauerland and Yatsushiro (2017); Trinh and Truckenbrodt (2018); Krifka (2019, 2020); Trinh (2021); Wiltschko (2021); Miyagawa (2022); among others

## The silence of performative prefixes

- (8) What makes (9a) different from (9b), assuming both sentences are spoken by A to B?
- A ASKS B [WHETHER [John<sub>1</sub> used the car yesterday]]
  - I'm asking you [whether John used the car yesterday]

Maybe this question is related to another question.

- (9) What makes (10a) different from (10b)?
- The king of France is bald
  - France has a king and the king of France is bald
- (10) Conjecture  
Performative prefixes express non-at issue meaning, and non-at issue meaning is not phonologically realized

# Today's talk

- (11) a. Introduce a novel observation  
b. Propose an analysis in which
- (i) performative prefixes are needed for semantic interpretation
  - (ii) performative prefixes can be shown to occupy a position between two *grammatically* related positions



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# Examples

(12) A: Did John use the car yesterday?

B: When?

A: In the evening.

B: No. (He only used it in the morning.)

antecedent question

excursive question

(13) A: When do people eat dinner?

B: Where?

A: In Spain.

B: Late at night.

AQ

EQ

(cf. Schmitt, 2021)

## Connectivity effects

EQs are constrained by the argument structure of the relevant verb

- (14) a. They sank the ship with a torpedo  
 b. #The ship sank with a torpedo

- (15) A: Which ship did they sink?  
 B: **With what?**  
 A: A torpedo.  
 B: The Japanese ship.

- (16) A: Which ship sank?  
 B: #**With what?**  
 A: #A torpedo.  
 B: #The Japanese ship.

## Reconstruction effects

EQs may contain bound variables

(17) A: Did every boy<sub>1</sub> write a letter?

B: To which of his<sub>1</sub> relatives?

A: To his<sub>1</sub> uncle.

B: No.

(18) A: What did every boy<sub>1</sub> write?

B: To which of his<sub>1</sub> relatives?

A: His<sub>1</sub> uncle.

B: A letter.

## $\bar{A}$ effects: unboundedness & island sensitivity

- (19) A: Does Bill think John used the car?  
 B: **When?**  
 A: Yesterday.  
 B: No. (But he does think John used the car last week.)
- (20) A: Is it Bill's thought that John used the car?  
 B: **#When?**  
 A: **#Yesterday.**  
 B: **#No.** (But it is Bill's thought that John used the car last week.)

This is evidence that EQs are not elliptical “echo questions”.

- (21) Does John believe the claim that Mary had dinner with Bill  
 WHERE?

## Definiteness effects

EQs must relate to definite noun phrases

(22) A: Did John read the book?

B: Which book?

A: Barriers.

B: No.

(23) A: Did John read a book?

B: #Which book?

A: #Barriers.

B: #No.

This is evidence that EQs are not cases of sluicing

(24) John read a book, but I don't know which book

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# Claim: HP is correct

(25) A: Did John use the car yesterday?

A ASK B WHETHER John used the car yesterday

'A asks B whether John used the car yesterday'

B: When?

B ASK A [ when<sub>x</sub> [ A ASK B WHETHER John used the car yesterday then<sub>x</sub> ] ]

'B asks A which time  $x$  is such that A asks B whether John used the car yesterday at the time  $x$ '



# Claim: EQ is derived from AQ

- (26) A: Did John use the car?  
 B: When?

	[A ASK B [WHETHER [ John used the car ]]]	AQ
	[A ASK B [WHETHER [[John used the car] when <sub>x</sub> ]]]	<i>merge</i>
	[when <sub>x</sub> [A ASK B [WHETHER [[John used the car] when <sub>x</sub> ]]]]	<i>move</i>
[B ASK A [when <sub>x</sub> [A ASK B [WHETHER [[John used the car] when <sub>x</sub> ]]]]]]		<i>merge</i>
[B ASK A [when <sub>x</sub> [A ASK B [WHETHER [[John used the car] then <sub>x</sub> ]]]]]]		TC

## Excursus to trace conversion

- (27) Trace Conversion (Fox, 2003)  
[which<sub>x</sub> NP] → [the<sub>x</sub> NP]
- (28) a. Traces are interpreted as definite descriptions (cf. Fox, 2003; Sauerland, 2004)  
b. Determiners come with indices (cf. Hackl, 2019)
- (29)  $\llbracket \text{the}_x \text{ NP} \rrbracket = \text{the NP identical to } x$

# Accounting for the definiteness effects

(30) A: Did John read the book?

B: Which book?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read the}_x \text{ book } ] ] ] \quad \text{AQ} \\
 [ \text{which}_x \text{ book } [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read the}_x \text{ book } ] ] ] ] \quad \text{merge} \\
 \# [B \text{ ASK } A [ \text{which}_x \text{ book } [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read the}_x \text{ book } ] ] ] ] ] \quad \text{merge}
 \end{array}$$

(31) A: Did John read a book?

B: #Which book?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read a book } ] ] ] \quad \text{AQ} \\
 [ \text{which}_x \text{ book } [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read a book } ] ] ] ] \quad \text{merge} \\
 \# [B \text{ ASK } A [ \text{which}_x \text{ book } [A \text{ ASK } B [ \text{WHETHER } [ \text{John read a book } ] ] ] ] ] \quad \text{merge}
 \end{array}$$

# Accounting for the $\bar{A}$ effects

- (32) a. TPs and NPs are bounding nodes (cf. Chomsky, 1981, 1986)  
 b. Performative prefixes introduce no new TPs

- (33) A: Does Bill think that John used the car?  
 B: When?

[ B ASK A [ when<sub>x</sub> [ A ASK B [CP WHETHER [TP Bill thinks [CP when<sub>x</sub> that [TP John used the car when<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]]]

- (34) A: Is it Bill's thought that John used the car?  
 B: #When?

[ B ASK A [ when<sub>x</sub> [ A ASK B [CP WHETHER [TP it is Bill's [NP thought [CP when<sub>x</sub> that [TP John used the car when<sub>x</sub> ]]]]]]]

## An open question

Why can only the EQ wh-phrase and nothing else be pronounced?

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