

Focus and quotation in English echo questions

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1. Introduction

- Many researchers¹ have claimed that English echo questions (EQs)² display quotative³ characteristics
- But opinions differ on precisely which parts of an EQ – if *any* – are quoted

Our claims

- [1] Quotation is not an intrinsic part of EQs
- [2] Although the focused item in an EQ can (and sometimes *must*) be quoted, focus prominence does not conventionally signal quotation
- [3] The purported ‘strictly quotative’ characteristics of some EQs arise from a parallelism requirement, not quotation

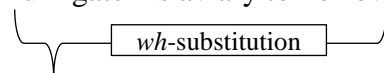
Roadmap

- §2 Discuss 3 ‘basic’ claims about the purportedly quotative nature of EQs and show that none are likely to be correct
- §3 Discuss 3 more obstinate facts about EQs (their so-called ‘strictly quotative’ characteristics) and show that each fact can be explained without appealing to quotation

2. Refuting the basic claims about quotation in English EQs

2.1. Claim #1: *Wh*-substitution in *wh*-EQs targets linguistic strings

(1) A: Joe will fumigate his aviary tomorrow.



B: He will WHAT?

- Some researchers have suggested that the EQ’s *wh*-phrase may replace any string in the echoed utterance (EU), **including a nonconstituent string**

¹ See Cooper (1983), Culicover (1976), Radford (1988), Horn (1989), Blakemore (1993), Noh (1998) Ginzburg & Sag (2000), Escandell-Vidal (2002), Itawa (2003), Fiengo (2007), Sudo (2010), and Beck & Reis (2018:§5). Precisely which characteristics of English echo questions are quotative, and how ‘quotative’ is understood or formally implemented, differs drastically in each case.

² For our purposes, English EQs are defined as those constituent or polar questions whose answer is given by the immediate prior utterance in the discourse. This definition thus excludes declarative questions (i) and quiz questions (ii). Although what we say about EQs is likely to extend to declarative questions and quiz questions, we have excluded them from the current study to keep the discussion manageable.

(ii) a. So, your boy’s name is WHAT? (Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2015)

b. A: The king of France is bald.

B: France is a monarchy?

(Gunlogsen 2002)

³ Other terms used in the literature for such characteristics are *metalinguistic* and *metarepresentative*.

- (2) a. *Sudo (2010:3), adapted from Bolinger (1987:263)*
 A: The dog wanted to eat the cat.
 B: The WHAT?
 [intended interpretation of *what* = *dog wanted to eat the cat*]
- b. *ibid., adapted from Janda (1985:175)*
 A: The man tore his laissez-passer into tiny pieces.
 B: The man tore his WHAT pieces?
 [intended interpretation of *what* = *laissez-passer into tiny*]
- If *wh*-substitution can indeed replace a nonconstituent, then it behaves similarly to mixed quotation, which can also target a nonconstituent string:⁴
- (3) *Maier (2007)*
- She said the dog ate “strange things, when left to its own devices”.
 - David said that he had donated “largish sums, to several benign institutions”.
 - Yet Craig remains confident that the pitching “will come round sooner or later. We just have to hope everybody stays healthy”.

BASIC CLAIM 1: *wh*-substitution is a form of quotation, as it targets a linguistic object

- *Wh*-substitution of nonconstituents is not possible, however
 - Our 10 native British English-speaking consultants reject the examples in (2) on the intended interpretation
 - (2a) only acceptable if *what* is understood as replacing the NP *dog* in an echo fragment
 - (2b) only acceptable (yet incongruous) if *what* understood as an AP, e.g. *favourite*
 - Our consultants rejected other attempts at nonconstituent replacement:
- (4) A: Has John given the painting by Klimt to someone undeserving of it?
 B: * Has John given the painting WHAT of it?
 [where *what* = *by Klimt to someone undeserving*]
- Our consultants also rejected polar EQs where the echo-focus is a nonconstituent:
- (5) A: The man tore his laissez-passer into tiny pieces.
 B: * He tore HIS LAISSEZ-PASSER INTO TINY pieces?

Conc: the fact that *wh*-substitution must replace a constituent reduces likelihood that the

⁴ Maier (2007) suggests that cases of apparent mixed quotation are actually multiple instances of constituent quotation (see (i) to (iii)). If this is correct then the nonexistence of nonconstituent *wh*-substitution in EQs ((4) - (5)) does not preclude a quotative analysis of the *wh*-substitution process. The fact that *wh*-substitution has grammatical repercussions ((6)-(9)) does preclude a quotative analysis, however.

(i) She said the dog ate “strange things”, “when left to its own devices”.
 (ii) David said that he had donated “largish sums”, “to several benign institutions”.
 (iii) Yet Craig remains confident that the pitching “will come round sooner or later”. “We just have to hope everybody stays healthy”.

substitution process is akin to (mixed) quotation

- Additional evidence that *wh*-substitution is not string-substitution comes from its grammatical repercussions:
 - *Wh*-substitution can trigger changes in grammatical agreement

(6) *Number agreement: Beck & Reis (2018:377)*

A: The gringos are angry. B: WHO {is/*are} angry?

(7) *Number agreement (Hungarian)*

A: János eladott húsz Cupuaçut.
János PV.sell.PST.3SG twenty Cupuaçu.ACC
'János sold twenty Cupuaçus.'

B: Eladott miket?
PV.sell.PST.3SG what.PL.ACC
'(János) sold WHAT?'

(8) *Definiteness agreement (Hungarian)*

A: János megette a carambolát.
János PV.eat.PST.3SG.DEF the starfruit.ACC
'János ate the starfruit.'

B: {Megevett / * Megette} mit?
PV.eat.PST.3SG.INDEF PV.eat.PST.3SG.DEF what.ACC
'(János) ate WHAT?'

- The *wh*-echo phrase cannot occupy antipronominal positions, which are grammatically defined

(9) *Beck & Reis (2018:377)*

A: She left, our wee lass. B: * She left, WHO?

2.2. Claim #2: the backgrounded portion of an EQ is quoted

- The background of an EQ can deviate from the background EU in various ways
 - synonym, hypernym, and pronominal substitution (10) to (13)
 - dative alternation (14)
 - application of ellipsis (15)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| (10) A: Did you go to New York recently? | B: Did I go to <u>the BIG APPLE</u> recently? |
| (11) A: Do you want an Alsatian? | B: Do I want <u>a DOG</u> ? |
| (12) A: I want John to kiss me. | B: You want <u>HIM</u> to kiss you? |
| (13) A: I want him to kiss me. | B: You want <u>JOHN</u> to kiss you? |
| (14) A: I should've given Bo your room. | B: You should've given <u>my room to Bo</u> ? |
| (15) A: The rumour that Dracula came to
brunch is surely false. | B: The rumour that WHO did Δ_{VP} is surely
false? |

- EQs need not display the same {clause-typing / force-indicating} syntax as the EU

(16) *Adapted from Beck & Reis (2018:376)*

- | | | | | |
|----|----|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| a. | A: | Call the pope immediately! | B: | I'm supposed to ring WHO? |
| b. | A: | Could he be schizophrenic? | B: | You think he's WHAT? |
| c. | A: | Who would have thought that our son
would do so well at MIT!? | B: | Tom is now studying WHERE? |

- In EQs, deixis-shift is (almost) obligatory, unlike in mixed quotation

(17) A: Should I feed the aardvark later? B: Should {you/*I} feed the WHAT later?

(18) Bush said that he would “recommit {his/my} heart to Jesus Christ” (Maier 2007)

- If an EQ's background is quoted, then substantial deviation from the source material is permitted: for instance, the EQs in (16) share/no little morphosyntactic similarities with their EUs
 - *A simpler analysis*: the background of EQs is not quoted

2.3. Claim #3: Echo-foci always refer to linguistic expressions

- Sudo (2010) claims that an EQ's focused item (the *echo-focus*) is always a linguistic expression (of semantic type *u*, following Potts' 2007 theory of quotation)
- If true, then these linguistic expressions need not match their correlate in EU in terms of form (19) or meaning (20) (i.e. they are not quotes in a naïve sense)

(19) A: Did you go to **New York** recently? B: Did I go to **the BIG APPLE** recently?

(20) A: Do you want **an Alsatian**? B: Do I want {**a DOG / WHAT**}?

- Sudo's treatment of echo-foci as type *u* entities is motivated by additional observations, but alternative explanations have been offered for each of these observations⁵
- ∴ No compelling reason to uphold Sudo's claim

Important! We are not arguing that echo-foci can never be quoted.

We are arguing that quoting the echo-focus isn't an intrinsic part of deriving English EQs

Q: How do we determine when an echo-focus is or isn't quoted?

- Quoted use of echo-focus is disambiguated when
 - Nonstandard stress pattern, indicating subword focus (Artstein 2004)

(21) a.	John found a STALAGmite.	(default stress = likely to be denotation focus)
b.	John found a stalagMITE.	(nonstandard stress = subword expression focus)

⁵ Because type *u* elements are stipulated to occupy a different plane of meaning (Potts 2007), they are therefore unpluggable, which, according to Sudo (2010), explains why echo-foci take the widest scope, even above the speech act level (e.g. (20)) and take widest scope. An alternative explanation for this observation is that echo-foci are bound by an operator that occupies a syntactic projection above the echoed ForceP, see Chernova (2014) and Griffiths, Güneş & Lipták (2019) for cross-linguistic evidence. Appealing to quotation is not required to explain why *wh*-EQs do not display intervention effects (Sudo 2010), either, as Beck & Reis (2018) have shown.

- focus on non-shifted deictic elements

(22) A: Did John take my laptop away? B: Did he take MY laptop away?

- Errors / oddities retained in the EQ

(23) A: Is Saddam misunderestimating me?
B: Is Saddam MISUNDERESTIMATING you?

NB: Prosody alone appears not to disambiguate

- Corpus data show that speakers often cannot tell whether an EQ comments on the EU's denotational content or on a non-denotational aspect of the EU

(24) A1: You would always have every foot with a piece of spunyarn in the wire.
B1: SPUNYARN?
A2: Spunyarn, yes!
B2: What's spunyarn?
A3: Well, it's like tarred rope. (Ginzburg 2012:151)

- ➔ B's EQ is first interpreted by A1 as conveying surprise (comment on A1's content)
- ➔ Becomes clear that B's EQ was information-seeking (comment on A1's lexical choice)

(25) B: No, she read [Nabokov]_F last week.

(26) A: She read Tolstoy last week. B: (25) = denotational use of focus
A: She read NaBokov last week. B: (25) = quoted use of focus

- Prosodic marking of echo-focus is therefore **unlike** quotation marks
 - "quotation marks systematically indicate the need for further pragmatic inferences [...] all they do is block the stereotypical interpretation of an expression, and thereby indicate that some alternative meaning ought to be inferred" (Gutzmann & Stei 2011:2651)
 - There are no conventional phonological correlates of quotations marks in spoken languages (Kasimir 2008)

In general: Quoted echo-foci are no different from other quoted phrases in spoken language
They are identified as quoted through via the same pragmatic inferences

Conclusion

- Quotation is not required to derive the form or function of English EQs
(in-line with Beck & Reis 2018)

3. Purported 'strictly quotative' phenomena in EQs

- Certain items that can appear in English EQs must be licensed by a corresponding item in the EU
 - Non-declarative clause-typing syntax

(27) a. A: **Call** Dracula!
B: **Call** WHO?
b. A: You should give Dracula a ring.
B: # **Call** WHO?

- (28) a. A: **Did** Dracula ring? b. A: I'm asking if Dracula rang.
 B: **Did** WHO ring? B: # **Did** WHO ring?

○ Subword focus / *wh*-substitution (unfocused syllables in words must be licensed)

- (29) a. A: He's got arachn**ophobia**. b. A: He's got a fear of spiders.
 B: He's got arachno-**WHAT**? B: # He's got arachno-**WHAT**?

○ *Wh*-substitution of phrases that cannot be *wh*-moved or *wh*-pied-piped in standard *wh*-questions (e.g. NPs, transitive V)

- (30) a. A: The **queen** has arrived. b. A: Elizabeth Winsor has arrived.
 B: The **WHO** has arrived? B: # The **WHO** has arrived?

- Beck & Reis (2018:§5) presume that these phenomena involve quotation, whereby certain parts of the EU are necessarily quoted
- These phenomena are characterised as 'strictly quotative'

- Qs:** [1] Why must these items be specially licensed, but not others?
 [2] Does this licensing necessarily involve quotation?

Tentative answers:

- [1] Instances of apparent parallelism in form between an EQ and its EU arise as reflex of conditions on *Question-Answer (Q-A) congruence*
 [2] Quotation is irrelevant to Q-A congruence

3.1. A sketch of a Q-A congruence approach

- (31) **Q-A congruence** (Krifka 2001a:296)

Let Q be the structured proposition $\langle \text{Background}, \text{Restriction} \rangle$ and let A be the structured proposition $\langle \text{Background}', \text{Focus} \rangle$.

A is a congruent to answer to Q iff:

$[\text{Background} = \text{Background}']$ and $[\text{Focus} \in \text{Restriction}]$

- (32) A: Who did Mary see? $\langle \lambda x. \text{saw}(\text{M}, x), \text{PERSON} \rangle^6$
 B: Mary saw John_F. $\langle \lambda x. \text{saw}(\text{M}, x), \text{J} \rangle$
 $[\lambda x. \text{saw}(\text{M}, x) = \lambda x. \text{saw}(\text{M}, x)]$ and $[\text{J} \in \text{PERSON}]$ \therefore A is congruent to Q

Our claim: For an EQ to perform its echoic function, the EU must be a congruent answer to EQ

- Assessing Q-A congruence in an EQ context (where F-marking is retroactively applied to the EU)

- (33) A: Mary is dating Dracula. $\langle \lambda x. \text{dating}(\text{M}, x), \text{Dracula} \rangle$
 B: WHO is she dating? $\langle \lambda x. \text{dating}(\text{M}, x), \text{PERSON} \rangle$

⁶ For the sake of convenience, we ignore intensions throughout.

Why must Q-A congruence hold between the EQ and its EU?

- A question Q is *uninquisitive* if an answer to Q is already present in the discourse. Uninquisitive Qs are treated as ‘discourse-mistakes’ unless they are marked – typically with a special prosody – to suggest that they are uttered on purpose (compare Bob’s responses in (34)).

(34) Amy: Mary is dating Dracula.

Bob: # Who is she dating?

(standard *wh*-question, without LH* accent on *wh*-phrase)

Bob’: WHO is she dating?

(echo *wh*-question, with LH* accent on *wh*-phrase)

- Interlocutors infer from a purposely-uttered uninquisitive Q (i.e. an EQ) that its utterer (Bob, in this case) deems Q to be **inquisitive**, and the only way that Q can be inquisitive is if its answer (the EU) is being {ignored / is not accepted as a valid discourse move} by Bob
- Thus, by uttering the EQ, Bob is implicitly saying this: “I’m ignoring the fact that Amy just committed that speech act, and I’m offering her the opportunity to try again”
- The degree of authenticity in Bob’s request for Amy to perform her speech act again can vary:
 - The request is expected to be fulfilled when Bob seeks information / clarification
 - The request is not expected to be fulfilled when Bob uses the EQ in an exclamatory manner

(35) A: Mary is dating Dracula.

B: She’s dating WHO?

(information- / clarification-seeking EQ)

A: She’s dating DRACULA. He’s an aristocrat from Romania.

(36) A: Mary is dating Dracula.

B: She’s dating WHO? Well, that’s unexpected!

(EQ used in exclamatory manner)

Upshot: To perform its discursive function (as described above), an EQ must be uninquisitive

To be uninquisitive, the EU must be interpreted as a congruent answer to the EQ

3.2. *Wh*-phrases that cannot be *wh*-moved or *wh*-pied-piped

(37) A: The **queen** has arrived.

$\langle \lambda R. \text{has-arrived}(\iota x.R(x)), \text{queen} \rangle$

B: The **WHO** has arrived?

$\langle \lambda R. \text{has-arrived}(\iota x.R(x)), \text{CN} \rangle$

(38) A: Elizabeth Winsor has arrived.

$\langle \lambda x. \text{has-arrived}(x), \text{Elizabeth W.} \rangle$

B: # The **WHO** has arrived?

$\langle \lambda R. \text{has-arrived}(\iota x.R(x)), \text{CN} \rangle$

- Q-A congruence only obtains in situations like (37), in which the EU also contains a common noun (CN)
- This gives the false impression that the configuration ‘*the X*’ is necessarily quoted from the EU⁷

⁷ The sceptic might wonder why, if ‘*the WHO*’ isn’t somehow metalinguistic or quotative, one cannot use in non-echoic *wh*-questions, such as those in (i) and (ii). We contend that such questions are unacceptable for independent, syntactic reasons: non-echoic *wh*-questions always involve (c)overt *wh*-movement in English

3.3. Clause-typing syntax

- Even purely content-based EQs must refer to the EU *qua* its status as a speech act. The EQ cannot target only the propositional content of the EU:

(39) A: Did Dracula ring?
 B: You're asking whether or not WHO rang?
 B: # WHO rang or not?

- This observation accords with claim that echo-foci always scope over the EU's speech act predicate (Karttunen, 1977, Ginzburg and Sag, 2001, Iwata, 2003, Sobin, 2010, Chernova 2014)
- For the sake of determining whether Q-A congruence obtains between an EQ and its EU, the EU's focus is interpreted as outscoping the speech act predicate⁸

(40) A: Did Dracula ring? $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{ask}}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{Dracula} \rangle^9$
 B: Did WHO ring? $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{ask}}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{PERSON} \rangle$

- Q-A congruence obtains when the declarative EQ mentions the EU's speech act predicate

(41) A: Did Dracula ring? $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{ask}}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{Dracula} \rangle$
 B: You're asking if WHO rang? $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{ask}}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{PERSON} \rangle$

- Q-A congruence does **not** obtain when the declarative EU mentions the speech act predicate the EQ, as declarative EU itself contains another, higher speech act predicate, and the focus must scope over this higher predicate

(42) A: I'm asking if Dracula rang. $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{assert}}(\text{Amy}, \text{ask}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{Drac})$
 B: # Did WHO ring? $\langle \lambda x. \underline{\text{ask}}(\text{Amy}, \langle \lambda f. f(\text{rang}(x)), f \rangle), \text{PERSON} \rangle$

Upshot: When the EQ is non-declarative, Q-A congruence only obtains in situations like (40), in which the EU also contains the same speech act predicate

- This gives the false impression that clause-typing syntax is necessarily quoted from the EU¹⁰

3.4. Subword focus / *wh*-substitution

Artstein (2004):

(Cheng & Demirdache 2010, Kotek 2016), yet *wh*-NPs can neither be *wh*-moved nor *wh*-pied-piped (Cable 2010). Thus, *wh*-NPs are permitted in English EQs because such questions involve no *wh*-movement whatsoever (Sobin 2010, Beck & Reis 2018).

- (i) * The who will John greet?
 (ii) * Who wants to be the who?

Intended: $\langle \text{John}, \text{the prince} \rangle, \langle \text{Mary}, \text{the queen} \rangle, \dots$

⁸ For the sake of simplicity, we adopt a performative perspective on speech act predicates (Ross 1970). A more serious formulation would adopt a neo-performative perspective (Krifka 2001b, 2014; Tenny & Speas 2003).

⁹ Where $f \in \{\lambda p. p, \lambda p. \neg p\}$

¹⁰ For this approach to work, fine-grained distinctions must be made between speech act predicates:

- (i) A: Dracula is upset, right? [biased polar question]
 B: # Is WHO upset? [unbiased polar question]
 (ii) A: Could you give Dracula a ring for me? [polite request]
 B: ? Call WHO? [command]

- Subword focus is **inherently quotative**: the denotation of a focused syllable is the string it represents (an entity of type e) and the unfocused syllable is a function from strings to semantic denotations¹¹

Upshot: the Q-A congruence condition can be applied straightforwardly to such cases

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (43) | A: He's got arachnophobia.
B: He's got arachno-WHAT? | $\langle \lambda x. \text{has}(\text{John}, \text{arachno}(x)), [\text{fəubi.ə}] \rangle$
$\langle \lambda x. \text{has}(\text{John}, \text{arachno}(x)), x \in D_e \rangle$ |
| (44) | A: He's got a fear of spiders.
B: # He's got arachno-WHAT? | $\langle \lambda x. \text{has}(\text{John}, x), \text{a fear of spiders} \rangle$
$\langle \lambda x. \text{has}(\text{John}, \text{arachno}(x)), x \in D_e \rangle$ |

- When the EQ displays subword focus or subword *wh*-substitution, Q-A congruence only obtains in situations like (44), in which the EU also contains a word with a string-identical unfocused portion
- Although subword focus on a word w is itself a quotative phenomenon (Arstein 2004), the parallelism required between the unfocused portions of w in the EQ and its EU is not a reflex of quotation

3.2. Summary of §3

- The conclusion that certain items inside EQs are 'strictly quotative' can be avoided
- The pragmatic function of an EQ is derived through its status as an *uninquisitive* question, which is conferred only if Question-Answer congruence obtains between an EQ and its EU
- In a number of cases, Q-A congruence obtains only if an EQ and its EU show a certain degree of formal parallelism. This accounts for why certain elements in EQs seem like they are quoted

4. Conclusion

Main Q: To what extent are EQs quotative?

Not quotation

- The *wh*-substitution process that forms *wh*-EQs
- The deaccented portion of an EQ is not quoted
- Echo-foci are not necessarily quoted
- The 'strictly quotative' aspects of EQs as identified by Beck & Reis (2018) are not quotative, but arise as a reflex of the requirement that EU be *congruent* to the EQs

Yes, quotation

- Echo-foci can (but don't need to be) be quoted
- Nonstandard stress on a subword syllable necessarily involves quotation of that syllable

Focus and quotation (in English EQs):

Focal prominence doesn't conventionally signal quotation, but its nonstandard placement does

¹¹ More precisely (from Arstein 2004:7):

Let A be the unfocused part of a word and let τ be the type of the entire word. Then $\llbracket A \rrbracket \in D_{\langle e, \tau \rangle}$ is the function $h: D_e \rightarrow D_\tau$ such that for all $\beta \in D_e$, $h(\beta) = \llbracket A\beta \rrbracket$ if $A\beta$ is a word and $\llbracket A\beta \rrbracket \in D_\tau$, otherwise undefined.

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