

## Focus and quotation in English echo questions

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In this talk, we examine the extent to which English *echo questions* (EQs) are quotative and explore how focus in EQs interacts with quotation. Delimiting an EQ as a constituent or polar question that necessarily relates to an *echoed utterance* (an EU) and which displays a specific prosodic signature (namely, a rising pitch accent H\*L on the focus item and a high-rising bounding tone HH%), **we claim that:** [C1] EQs are not inherently quotative (i.e. they need not contain any items quoted from the EU) and [C2] the unique prosodic tune associated with EQs does not introduce quotation by convention, but often introduces quotation indirectly via pragmatic inference. **The result is** a pragmatic and procedural approach to licensing quotation by echo focus that aligns with the pragmatic approach to licensing quotation in written language encapsulated in Gutzmann & Stei (2011).

The prior literature contains three main claims about the alleged inherent quotativity of EQs: that the echo-focused item can correspond to a syntactic non-constituent (and therefore echo focus operates over phonological strings) (1) (Bolinger 1978, Janda 1985, and Sudo 2010), that the EQ must quote the clause-typing portion its EU (2) (Escandell-Videl 2002, Sobin 2010) and that a quotative mechanism is involved in allowing wh-phrases in EQs to occupy irregular category slots (such as NP) (see 1 & 2) (Beck & Reis 2018). **To motivate [C1]**, we marshal extant and novel evidence against each of these claims.

- (1) A: The dog wanted to eat the cat.                      B: The what? (adapted from Bolinger 1987 : 263)  
(2) A: Pass me the jackhammer.                            B: Pass you the what?

**Elaborating on [C2]:** We argue that the H\*L pitch accent borne by the focused item F in an EQ functions to restrict the set of contextually-determined alternatives of F to a singleton set that includes the echoed item in the antecedent utterance (Sudo 2010, Beck & Reis 2018). We also assume that linguistic expressions are, by default, interpreted as used rather than mentioned (Gutzmann & Stei 2011). From a default denotational perspective, the restriction of the echoed item's alternatives to a singleton set will result in an EQ being an uninquisitive question whenever the denotation of the correlate is known to all participants. This failure of EQs to be inquisitive triggers a pragmatic inference that the EQ is either asking an information-seeking question about a non-truth-conditional aspect of the EU, or is performing a clarificatory function (Ginzburg 2012). Either way, this failure serves as a cue to interpret focus as targeting implicatures or presuppositions triggered by the focused item, or as targeting the use or form of the expression. The latter two uses are uncontestedly quotative.

**References:** Arstein, R. (2002). A focus semantics for echo questions. In Workshop on Information Structure in Context. Beck, S. & M. Reis. (2018). On the form and interpretation of echo questions. *Journal of Semantics* 35, 369–408. Gutzmann, D. & E. Stei (2011). How quotation marks what people do with words. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43.