1 Introduction

- Our research topic today are Invariable qué-questions (IQQ) in Spanish:

  (1) Qué estamos, en Austin?
  ‘Is it in Austin that we are?’

  (2) Qué viste, a María?
  ‘Is it María that you saw?’

  (3) Qué pagará, con tarjeta?
  ‘Is it by card that she’ll pay?’

- Descriptively:

  - They are yes-no questions with narrow focus (whence our translations using clefts). That is, the question denotes two propositions with different polarity which constitute possible answers. In (4): (i) we are in Austin; (ii) we are not in Austin.

  - They are always invariably headed by qué (what) (see §2 for a comparison with a (merely) superficially similar phenomenon, viz. split questions).

  - Qué is strictly adjacent to the finite verb.¹

- The verb followed by the tag, i.e. the phrase which constitutes the narrow focus of the question.

- Prosodically, the tag is introduced by a prosodic break, indicated orthographically by a comma. The comma does not signal the presence of a pause.


- Their pragmatic properties have been overlooked. We fill this gap in this talk. Ultimately, we believe the pragmatic properties of IQQs may shed some light on their syntax.²

Main claims:

- IQQs are indirect inferential evidentials.

- Que in IQQs lexicalizes a pragmatically-contentful structure above TP (Cinque 1999; Speas & Tenny 2003; Speas 2004) that derives its evidential meaning.

- They are excellent irony triggers. Not surprising, given the close relation between evidentiality and irony (Aikhenvald 2004; Rodriguez Ramalle 2019; Santa-maria 2009).

¹Although it is tempting to say that this adjacency requirement is a corollary of the wh-operator of qué, IQQs display a much stronger adjacency condition than regular partial interrogatives, which casts some doubt on the nature of qué as simply an interrogative operator, see Fernández-Sánchez and García-Pardo (2020).

²We thus contend that certain pragmatic notions are syntactically encoded (Cinque 1999; P. Speas and Tenny 2003, a.o.)
2 IQQs are not SQs

- A superficially similar phenomenon: split questions (SQ)

\[(4) \text{Dónde estamos, en Austin?} \quad \text{where are\text{,} } 1\text{\textemdash }3\text{\textemdash }pl \quad \text{in Austin} \]
\[ \quad \text{‘Where are we, in Austin?’} \]
\[(5) \text{A quién viste, a María?} \quad \text{dom who saw\text{,} } 2\text{\textemdash }sg \quad \text{DOM María} \]
\[ \quad \text{‘Who did you see, María?’} \]
\[(6) \text{Cómo pagaré, con tarjeta?} \quad \text{how will pay\text{,} } 3\text{\textemdash }sg \quad \text{with card} \]
\[ \quad \text{‘How will she pay, by card?’} \]

- The above data are identical to the IQQ examples in §1 modulo the wh-word, which in these examples varies according to the morphosyntactic properties of the tag.

- SQ have been studied at length by Arregi (2010), who defends (correctly in our view) a biclausal treatment along these lines:

\[(7) \text{Dónde estamos, estamos en Austin?} \]

- In Fernández-Sánchez and García-Pardo (2020): SQs and IQQs are radically distinct. We posit that a biclausal account is untenable (contra Fernández-Soriano 2020; see also Jiménez-Fernández and Tubino-Blanco’s talk today):

1. The syntactic (in)dependence of the tag
   In IQQ the tag is an integral part of the clause, without it the question is ill-formed. If the tag belonged in a different clause, we would have to say that one of the clauses is ungrammatical. Further, we’d have to impose ellipsis somehow, given that should ellipsis not apply, the resulting string is bad: *qué estás, estás en Austin?

2. The prosodic (in)dependence of the tag
   In SQs, the tag can be preceded by a short pause. This is expected given that it belongs in an independent clause, which enables an intonational phrase boundary to be inserted at its right edge. Such a pause is absolutely impossible in IQQs, which is expected given that it is part of the main clause and not an extrasentential element.

3 The pragmatic properties of IQQs

3.1 Evidentiality crosslinguistically

- Many languages of the world have been shown to encode evidentiality morphologically.

\[(8) \text{Classification of linguistic evidentials in Brugman and Macaulay (2015), apud Willett (1998), based on an adaptation by Faller (2002, p. 90):} \]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Types of evidence} \\
\text{Direct} \quad \text{Attested} \quad \text{Auditory} \\
\text{Indirect} \quad \text{Inferring} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Reported} \quad \text{Inferring} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Hearsay} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Folklore} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Second-hand} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Third-hand} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Other sensory} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\text{Visual} \quad \text{Reasoning} \\
\end{array}
\]

3.1.1 Evidentiality in Spanish

- Spanish does not appear to have specialized evidential morphemes, but there are morphosyntactic constructions that have nonetheless been shown to encode evidentiality.

1. Evidential estar
   Spanish has two copulas meaning ‘to be’, ser and estar. The selection of estar triggers an evidential reading of the predicate (Escandell-Vidal 2018 and references therein). For (9) to be pragmatically well-formed, the speaker needs to have direct experience for the assertion.
There is a type of root clauses headed by the complementizer *que* that are reportative indirect evidentials (Demonte and Fernández-Soriano 2014):

(9) a. María está muy guapa.
    ‘María looks very pretty.’

b. ¡La comida del gato está deliciosa!
    ‘The food of the cat tastes delicious!’

2. Reportative *que*

There is a type of root clauses headed by the complementizer *que* that are reportative indirect evidentials (Demonte and Fernández-Soriano 2014):

(10) a. Oye, que el Barça ha ganado la Champions.
    ‘Hey, Barça has won the Champions’ League.’ (Etxepare 2007)

b. Que el paquete no ha llegado.
    ‘The parcel hasn’t arrived yet!’

3. Direct evidence *que*

*Que* can encode direct evidentiality combined with an interjection (Rodriguez Ramalle 2013):

(11) Vaya *que* las cosas han cambiado sin intervención de la voluntad

    Gee that the things have changed without intervention of the will

    de Salinas Pliego, y *vaya que* México era un país muy diferente.

    of Salinas Pliego and gee that Mexico was a country very different.

    I’ll say things have changed without the intervention of Salinas Pliego’s will,

    and I’ll say that Mexico was a very different country back then!’

4. *Dizque*

*Dizque* is an evidential used in some parts of Latin America which can function as a reportative evidential, an epistemic modal and a quotative marker (De la Mora and Maldonado 2015; Demonte 2020; Demonte and Fernández-Soriano 2013; Travis 2006).

(12) Por ejemplo, el a... aquí el alcalde, Todo lo que ha hecho, Y... y

    for example the here the mayor all that he’s done and and

    ahorita, *dizque* ya lo están investigando.

    now *dizque* already him are investigating

    ‘For example, the mayor here, all that he’s done, and now, dizque he’s under investigation.’ (Travis 2006, her (12))

3.2 *IQQs are indirect inferential evidentials*

- IQQs are pragmatically odd in out-of-the-blue contexts.
  - Context: the Spanish National Statistics Institute is calling random cellphone numbers. At first, they must make some general questions. The caller asks:

(13) *Qué vive usted, en Cataluña?*

    ‘What lives you in Catalonia?’
    ‘Is it in Catalonia that you live?’

- The question in (13) is pragmatically odd, as it suggests that the speaker has some evidence that the interviewee is from Catalonia.

- Different situation: the ‘landline context’, as landlines in Spain indicate the region by means of a prefix. This takes us to the next point:

- IQQs are based on the speaker’s indirect evidence for something. Context: two Colombian friends are talking about their plans for the summer.

    ‘You know what? This year finally I go to Spain.’

b. Speaker B. Anda, qué bien! Qué vas, a Barcelona?
    ‘That’s great! Are you going to Barcelona?’

- Speaker B’s response is based on indirect knowledge:
  - World knowledge that Barcelona is one of the most popular turistic places.
  - Common knowledge between speakers that Speaker A has family/friends there.

- Suppose Speaker B had answered the following sentence:

(15) Anda, qué bien! Qué vas, a Burgos?
    ‘That’s great! Is it to Burgos that you’re going?’

    wow how great what go you to Burgos
    ‘That’s great! Is it to Burgos that you’re going?’
– Unless S-B has evidence that S-A has ties to Burgos, the sentence would be strange.

• IQQs are not direct evidentials.

– Suppose we run into someone in the train. It would be infelicitous for Speaker A to utter (/one.onum/six.onuma). Speaker B could righly respond with (/one.onum/six.onumb) in a puzzled tone.\(^1\)

(16) a. Speaker A. Qué estás, en el tren?
what you.are on the train
‘Is it on the train that you are?’

b. Speaker B. Es que no lo ves?
is that not it you.see
‘Can’t you see that I am?’

– Again, if we happened to know that Speaker B takes the train every day at /nine.onumam, it would be felicitous to utter (/one.onum/six.onuma) if we texted Speaker B at /nine.onum:/one.onum/zero.onumam.

• An interesting fact: The IQQ is compatible with the expression of the supporting evidence for the speaker’s inference (e.g. (/one.onum/seven.onuma)), but not if the IQQ is overtly expressed as a conclusion (e.g. (/one.onum/seven.onumb)). Escandell-Vidal (/two.onum/zero.onum/one.onum/four.onum:/two.onum/three.onum/eight.onum) notes the same contrast for the Spanish future tense, which she also analyzes as an indirect inferential evidential.

(17) a. Anda, si son las 9:10. Qué estás, en el tren ya?
\(^3\)Gosh if is the 9:10 what are-2SG in the train already
‘Why, it’s 9:10! Are you in the train already?’

b. #Dado que son las 9:10, qué estás, en el tren ya?
\(^3\)given that are the 9:10 what aree-2SG in the train already
‘Since it is 9:10, are you already on the train?’

• IQQs are not hearsay

\[^1\]In this context of direct evidence, we could use a similar construction in Spanish that crucially omits the tensed verb. We leave aside this construction for further research, but see section 3.3.

\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^3\)
3.3 Irony

• Previously unnoticed: IQQs are great irony triggers.

• Important: SQs differ from IQQs in this respect, which is yet another argument against a unified treatment (Fernández-Sánchez and García-Pardo 2020)

• Caveat: IQQs are not inherently ironic. Irony isn’t linguistically encoded in Spanish, but certain syntactic configurations have been argued to favour ironic readings, like certain fronting operations (Leonetti and Escandell 2009), as well as evidentiality.

• The relation between evidentiality and irony has been observed in the general literature on evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004) as well as in the literature on Spanish (Rodríguez Ramalle 2019; Santamaría 2009).

(22) Pero cómo lo va a ganar Ariadna Gil? Qué estamos, en 1998?
but how it go to win Ariadna Gil what are.pl in 1998
’But how on earth is Ariadna Gil going to win it [the Goya]? Is it in 1998 that we are?’
(<Paquita Salas, So2E01, Netflix>).

(23) #En qué año estamos, en 1998?

• Context: Two people are going to a very posh place for a Sunday brunch. They meet, and one of them is wearing shorts, sandals and a straw hat. The other one says:

(24) Qué vamos, a la playa?
what go to the beach
‘Are we going to the beach or what?’

(25) #Dónde vamos, a la playa?
where go to the beach
‘Where are we going to, to the beach?’

• In fn. 3 we mentioned the existence of a kind of verbless IQQ, a non-verbal predicational structure (Hernanz and Suñer 1999). They are also great irony triggers:

(26) Context: I left my two kids at home doing homework, when I come back I see them chatting amusingly. I say:

Qué, de cháchara?
what of chitchat
‘What, chitchatting?’

• Clearly not a question: the speaker is asserting that the hearers are indeed chitchatting.

• Further, the speaker implies that the hearers should NOT be chitchatting.

• We believe the existence of these ironic strings challenges de traditional, (neo)-Gricean approaches to irony based on the idea of opposition, and favor Wilson and Sperber’s relevance-theoretic approach.

4 Our proposal

• This is the structure we propose for IQQs. We have divided it in two parts:

  – First part above TP (27b): represents the pragmatic structure of IQQs, lexicalized by invariable que.

Lower part below TP (27c): represents the VP, the tag and its movement to a low FocusP position (Fernández-Sánchez and García-Pardo 2020).

(27) a. Qué estás, en el tren?
what you.are on the train
‘Are you on the train?’

4The cleft structure in English, albeit accurate in other contexts, cannot capture the irony in IQQ. Interestingly ironic contexts in English can be expressed using a structure which is structurally identical to Spanish IQQs:

(i) No, you have not, Dom, and I’d appreciate it if we avoided name calling. I mean, what are we in second grade here? (Tony Forgione, The Wager (p.68).

Despite the similarities, we believe the English structure is substantially distinct from its Spanish counterpart. For once, in English it appears to be limited to the verb to be

(28)  Speech Act (SA) › Evaluative Phrase › Evidential Phrase › Epistemological Phrase

• Each projection has implicit subjects that bear specific Pragmatic roles. See Table 1.

• In an indirect evidential, the Speaker is also the Evaluator but is neither a Witness nor a Perceiver. Speas (2004) represents it in her system with disjoint reference pronouns as in (29).

(29)  [SAP \textit{pro}_{ij} [Eval \textit{pro}_{ij} [Evid \textit{pro}_{ij} [Epis \textit{pro}_{ij} ]]]]

• We hypothesize that the \textit{que} in IQQs lexicalizes these projections in a span, i.e. a set of adjacent terminal nodes, as in (27b).

• The lexical entry of the IQQ \textit{que} is as in (30), where the subscripts indicate the coreference requirements among the subjects of the projections of each head.

(30)  Lexical entry of our IQQ \textit{que}: [SA_{ij}, Eval_{ij}, Evid_{ij}, Epis_{ij}]

• If on the right track, we are adding yet another \textit{que} to the typology of \textit{que} in Spanish:
As articulators of the information structure in the left periphery (Demonte and Fernández-Soriano 2009; Villa-García 2015, a.o.) See example (31), from Demonte and Fernández-Soriano (2009)).

(31) a. Le gritó que qué mala cara que tenía.
   CL4Sg he.shouted that what bad face that she.had
   ‘He shouted him how awful she looked.’

b. [FacP que; [TopP que int/excl [– [FacP que2; ]]]]

More importantly, as one more type of evidential que (remember our discussion in Section 3.1.1).

5 Conclusions

- IQQs are syntactically distinct from SQs (Fernández-Sánchez and García-Pardo 2020).

- Today, we showed that they are also different in terms of their semantic/pragmatic import.

- In particular, we claimed that:
  - IQQs are indirect, inferential evidentials.
  - They are excellent irony triggers, which follows nicely given the independent connection between evidentiality and irony.

- Syntactically, we argued that:
  - Que is not a wh-phrase, but a complementizer of sorts that lexicalizes evidential structure right above TP.
  - The tag moves to the specifier of a low Focus projection right below TP.
  - This proposal allows us to explain several distributional facts of IQQs, chiefly the morphosemantic mismatch between que and the tag—given that they are not in an operator-variable relation—and the strict adjacency between que, the inflected verb and the tag—given the syntactic sequence we propose.

References


