

## On question tags and confirmation requests

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**Goals and claims:** This paper aims to elaborate on the notions of request for confirmation as expressed by two different question tags in Catalan, namely OI? and EH?. Building on Malamud and Stephenson's (2015) account of Reverse Polarity Tags (Tom's here, *isn't he?*) and Same Polarity Tags (Tom's here, *is he?*), the behavior and distribution of OI? and EH? is derived. Even if they seem comparable in certain contexts (notably, in subjective statements), I will provide arguments that show they ask for confirmation on the basis of two different sentence anchors. OI? double-checks the truth of  $p$ , while EH? double-checks the truth of  $p$  as experienced by the addressee.

**Data:** There are reasons that would suggest that OI? and EH? should make the same discourse contribution. First, as shown by Cuenca and Castellà (1995); Rigau and Prieto (2005), OI? and EH? are interchangeable when they precede the complementizer in a pure confirmational interrogative, (1) (as opposed to occurring sentence final). Second, they both prompt an affirmative answer. Third, they are also both compatible as modifiers of optatives and exclamatives, (2).

- (1) Oi/eh que acabaràs la feina? (2) Quin noi tan alt!, eh? / oi?  
OI/EH that finish.FUT.2SG the work what boy so tall EH? OI?  
**Intended:** You'll finish your work, right? **Intended:** What a tall boy! Huh?

More generally, they are both felicitous with subjective predicates, (3).

- (3) La Maria és guapa, eh? / oi? 'Mary is pretty, EH? / OI?'

Other than that, Cuenca and Castellà also point out that their distribution is not totally parallel. They claim that EH? "manifests other pragmatic meanings". For instance, it is possible after an imperative. In fact, EH? has a wider range of uses. EH? can function as a "confirmational" in the sense of Heim et al. (2014), whereby the speaker wants to confirm whether the addressee knows that  $p$  rather than whether  $p$  is true. We consider such uses a different phenomenon, because it does not involve an addressee capable of resolving  $?p$  at the moment of utterance. The focus here is exclusively on cases where the speaker ( $A$ ) considers the addressee ( $B$ ) an authority. The **novel empirical observations** presented here are the following. First, we observe a lack of parallelism between OI? and EH? in requests for confirmation of facts rather than opinions. Specifically, OI? is acceptable in both, while EH? prefers the latter, cp. (3), (4).

- (4) La Terra no és plana, oi? / #eh? 'The Earth is not flat, OI? / #EH?'

Second, contexts that entail an experiential component make clear the two different contributions of OI? and EH?, (5).

- (5) El terra està dur, 'The floor is hard, '  
a. OI?: B can know the truth of  $p$  by external inspection, inference, etc.  
b. EH?: B must know the truth of  $p$  by having fallen on the floor.

Third, in the case of vague predicates, OI? can be used to inquire whether the subject meets the standard of P-ness or whether the subject informs us about the standard of P-ness (Barker, 2002; Malamud and Stephenson, 2015). By contrast, EH? only has the former reading.

- (6) En Pau és llest, 'Pau is smart,'  
a. OI? / EH?:  $?p$  = Does Pau meet the standard of smartness?  
b. OI? / #EH?:  $?p$  = Does Pau inform us about the standard of smartness?

**Background:** The difference between OI? and EH? does not concern the degree of commitment of the speaker toward  $p$  (as is the case for rising and falling tag interrogatives, as analyzed by Farkas and Roelofsen 2017). Malamud and Stephenson's (2015) "conversational scoreboard", which builds on Farkas and Bruce (2010), is fine-grained enough to represent discourse effects of reverse- and same-polarity tags ([RPT], [SPT]), beyond degrees of certainty.

So does Krifka's (2017) program, but he does not discuss judge relativization. Malamud and Stephenson's model includes a Table, where the at issue proposition is considered, the set of commitments relative to  $A$  and  $B$  ( $CS_A$  and  $CS_B$ ), the common ground (CG), and the projected CG ( $CG^*$ ) and projected set of commitments ( $CS_{A^*}$  and  $CS_{B^*}$ ). Such projected sets represent the expected next stage in the conversation. Malamud and Stephenson aim to account for the differences between (7-a) and (7-b).

(7) a. He's attractive, isn't he? [RPT]      b. He's attractive, is he? [SPT]

For RPT they propose that  $p$  is placed in  $CS_{A^*}$  as well as in  $CG^*$ , and  $\{p\}$  is put on the Table. This way,  $A$  expresses her opinion and solicits  $B$ 's. As to SPT,  $p$  is placed in  $CS_{B^*}$  rather than in  $CS_{A^*}$ , and  $p$  is not added to  $CG^*$ . This represents that  $A$  attributes  $B$  the capacity to utter  $p$  in a next stage of the conversation.

**Analysis:** This paper proposes that in both OI? and EH?,  $A$  makes a guess as to  $B$ 's beliefs. OI? shows the same behavior as SPT. The Catalan counterpart of RPT would be NO? rather than EH?. In both OI? and EH?, what is at issue is  $B$ 's judgment, and so  $p$  is placed in  $CS_{B^*}$ , but they exhibit relevant differences. For one, OI?/SPT are possible in objective statements, where the truth of  $p$  is not relative to  $B$ . I propose that, in EH?, what is on the Table (i.e. the question  $A$  wants  $B$  to address) is not  $?p$ , but  $?p$  relative to  $B$ . Since  $A$  is not interested in confirming that  $B$  agrees with her, she may use EH? even if she does not think  $p$  is true.  $A$  does not want to double-check  $B$ 's opinion so as to form her own judgment. Instead  $A$  wants to confirm her suspicion that  $B$  is in a position to utter  $p$ , which, as illustrated in (5-b), requires that the "acquaintance principle" (AP) (Wollheim, 1980; Ninan, 2014) be met. That is, the judgment of truth is based on first-hand experience. In the case of taste predicates, knowing whether  $o$  is tasty involves having tasted  $o$ . But this extends beyond taste. The distribution of EH? concerns, more generally, predicates that entail an experiential component, cf. (8).

(8) T'has tallat els cabells, 'You got a haircut,'

a. OI?:  $A$  wants to double-check with  $B$  whether  $p$  is true.

b. EH?:  $A$  wants to double-check with  $B$  whether  $p$  is true, which requires AP.

(4) is infelicitous with EH?, because it is difficult to create a context in which  $B$  will know whether  $p$  is true on the basis of first-hand experience. By contrast, we correctly expect that OI? and EH? are both felicitous in subjective statements, (3), but with slightly different meanings. OI?, but not EH?, can request for confirmation concerning  $p$  to form her own opinion. By uttering EH?,  $A$  targets  $B$ 's opinion, so as to make it a public belief.

As to vague predicates, (6) shows that EH? cannot be used in Barker's (2002) metalinguistic sense, i.e. if we already know Pau's degree of smartness and want to establish where the standard is. EH? is treating the vague predicate as a taste predicate (in fact, compatible with embeddability under *find*).  $A$  wants to retrieve  $B$ 's opinion (i.e. double-check whether he *finds* Pau smart), but not the information on how to learn about the standard, which implies a somewhat uncertain  $A$  requesting  $B$  to clarify the limits of the predicate's positive extension. (9) could be explained along the same lines for the case of a blue-green sofa.

(9) El sofà és verd, oi? / #eh?      'The sofa is green, OI? / #EH?'

**Conclusions:** This abstract has presented data that refines conversational scoreboards by adding material for a more complete typology of the possibilities for inquiring about taste. This research can also help us understand how vagueness cross-cuts with subjectivity.

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