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Pragmatic aspects of *wh*-interrogatives in Marzahn German

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ABSTRACT

The following paper deals with the division of pragmatic labor between two types of *wh*-interrogatives in Marzahn German (MG). Use of the first type, marked by the enclitic particle *n* ([*n*-INT]), is near obligatory for and confined to canonical, i.e., information-seeking question acts. The second type, lacking *n* ([Ø-INT]), has to be employed in non-canonical questions, such as rhetorical ones. This pattern of apparent markedness-reversal challenges the pretense-based approach to exam questions by Plunze and Zimmermann (2006) (Section 2) and plausibilizes an approach to information-seeking questions in terms of social cost in the sense of Levinson (2012) (Section 3.1). Overall empirical evidence, however, favors an account of *n*-marking as reinforcement of question act defaults in line with Farkas (2022) (Section 3.2). Section 5 offers a formulation of reinforcement in terms of the "table model" of discourse (Farkas 2022), such that the peculiar status of MG [*n*-INT] follows from the prohibition of contextually overriding "basic conventional discourse effects".

In the course of the above discussion, we will scrutinize different notions of interrogative sentential force (Sections 1, 2, 5), illustrate the form and workings of several types of non-canonical questions (guess, rhetorical, echo etc.), and analyze question use in the light of institutional settings and interpersonal effects (3.3).

Diese Analyse darf nie hinterfragt werden
(Die Wissenschaft)

1. Introduction

It is commonly assumed that the function of canonical question acts is to seek information. This is reflected in Searle's illocutionary analysis, whose core conditions figure *S*, the speaker, "not know[ing] 'the answer'," "wanting […] information," and "attempt[ing] to elicit this information from *H*," the hearer or addressee (Searle, 1969:66). Likewise, within a language's inventory of sentence types, it is the unmarked, or "standard," interrogatives that serve the performance of canonical question acts per default (cf. Sadock and Zwicky, 1985). Finally, to guarantee such a form/function association, researchers have taken ("root" or "main clause") interrogatives to be endowed with a particular conventional "sentential force" (cf. Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 1990: chapter 4)[1] – alternatively dubbed "semantics of mood" (Hausser, 1980), "illocutionary meaning" (Zaefferer, 2001), or "primary illocution" (Allan, 2006) – an influential version of which is shown in (1) (cf. Hintikka, 1974).

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[1] In the interest of space, we provide references very selectively. Usually, an implicit "among many others" should be understood.

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(1) WANT(*S*, STIT(*A*, KNOW(*S*, *Q*)))

According to (1), the use of an interrogative gives expression to a speaker volition that the addressee see to it that *S* acquire knowledge regarding the question denoted by the "descriptive" sentential core, *Q*.[2] The latter can be modeled as a set of (propositional) answers (cf. Hamblin, 1973), which *A* is supposed to select the correct one(s) from. We'll return to this particular structural feature in Section 5.

Now, as is equally well-known, linguists have been paying an ever growing amount of attention to the "other side" of the configuration just sketched, namely, to the study of non-canonical question acts, marked or non-standard interrogatives, and how they relate (cf. Dayal, 2016: chapter 9; Huddleston, 2002). Thus, for example, a shift in finiteness can turn an information- or advice-seeking question (*Tell me: Where shall I begin?*) into a self-addressed musing (*Hm, Where to begin?*). One of the most wide-spread and thoroughly studied modulations of questions involves the addition of (modal or discourse) particles (cf. Kiefer, 1988; Risselada, 2005). Take the case of German, where *wh*-interrogatives expressing constituent questions acquire a rhetorical or conjectural construal, or come with a "remind-me" effect, if they contain the particles *schon* (lit. "already") (Meibauer, 1986), *wohl* (lit. "well") (Eckardt, 2020), or *noch* (*mal*) (lit. "(once) more") (Sauerland and Yatsushiro, 2017), respectively.

However, hitherto unnoted evidence from Marzahn German (MG), (part of) an urban variety spoken in East Berlin (cf. Dittmar and Schlobinski, 1988),[3] shows an interesting departure from the above "conspiracy." MG *wh*-interrogatives have to be marked by the enclitic particle *n* to be useable as information-seeking questions (ISQs), while their non-marked counterparts are reserved for non-canonical questions (NCQs). Consider (1).[4,5]

(1) *Wen* *sieht=r(=**n**)* *da* *durch* *dit* *Fenster?*
who.ACC sees=he=N there through the window
"Who does he see through the window?"

With *n*, (1) constitutes what we'll designate as an [*n*-INT], expressing a curious speaker's ISQ. Without *n* we have a [∅-INT], which – perhaps also preceded by *und* ("and") – would naturally function as an "expository question," to be resolved by *S* him- or herself at a narrative climax. It seems therefore that MG *wh*-interrogatives display a type of markedness-reversal (cf. Battistella, 1996) or "anti-Horn strategy" (cf. van Rooy, 2004) that, to our knowledge, has not been sufficiently appreciated yet.[6] We'll discuss several options of dealing with this challenge.

Concretely, the following steps will be taken. Section 2 further sharpens the notions of ISQ and NCQ by looking at a controversy between Truckenbrodt (2004, 2006a; 2006b) and Plunze and Zimmermann (2006) about the relation between sentential force, common ground, and exam questions, and we'll illustrate how this plays out in MG. After that, two theories of MG *n*-marking will be explored (Section 3), one analyzing *n* as a signal of social cost in the sense of Levinson (2012), and another considering [*n*-INT] to involve the reinforcement of question act defaults (cf. Farkas, 2022). It will turn out that the latter approach has advantages. Next, given that MG *n* is closely related to the Standard German question particle *denn* (lit. "then"), Section 4 briefly goes over evidence that the two items behave differently, both structurally and interpretively. Finally, we'll show in Section 5 that modeling question act defaults in terms of "conventional discourse effects" (Farkas, 2022) allows a formulation of *n*-marking that fits the MG pattern into a principled system of the division of labor between unmarked and marked interrogatives in the expression of ISQs and NCQs. Section 6 offers some general conclusions.

2. Sentential force, common ground, and exam questions

Both Searle (1969:66) and Hintikka (1974: section 12) deem it important to mention that exam(ination or test) questions pose difficulties for proposals like (1). This is part of the reason Truckenbrodt (2004; 2006a) promotes a generalized sentential force of interrogatives, rendered here in our adjusted format in (2) (cf. Truckenbrodt, 2004:314).

[2] For an early insightful discussion, see Lewis and Lewis (1975). Horty and Belnap (1995) deal with formal aspects of the STIT operator.

[3] It is controversial whether the term "dialect" should apply to the Berlin urban vernacular(s) in the same way it is used for language varieties spoken in the surrounding Brandenburg area (cf. Dittmar et al., 1988:4f.).

[4] The MG data presented in this paper are due to, Andreas Pankau, who is a native speaker, as well as questionnaire-based interviews conducted by Andreas Pankau with 5 non-linguist speakers of MG. The latter included two females and three males with ages ranging from 23 to 56. The questionnaire contained 25 interrogatives, which were supplied with a context description and tested for acceptability of [*n*-INT] and [∅-int]. Of the examples in our text, (8), (9), (11), (15), (16), (18), (21), and (23) were put on the questionnaire verbatim, while (7), (12b), (19), (22), and (25) were represented by very close counterparts. In addition, several interviews from the East Berlin section of the "Berlin Wendekorpus" (https://www.dwds.de/d/korpora/wende), collected in the mid 1990s, were checked and found not to contradict our results. More specifically, we manually searched the first five (out of twenty-eight) interviews – corresponding to 4,5 of a total of roughly 17 h – for constituent questions and whether or not they contained *n*. It turned out that out of 87 constituent questions, all ISQs (in total 11) were marked with *n*. All other questions were NCQs and lacked *n*. It is thus possible that the pattern of interrogative marking reported on here spreads beyond MG.

[5] This paper concentrates on *wh*-interrogatives, to the exclusion of polar interrogatives. Cliticization sites for *n* are the finite verb in C° or, in the absence of such a verb, the *wh*-phrase in Spec,CP. For the syntactic background, see Vikner (1995). As shown in (1), cliticization may lead to "clustering." Importantly, MG *n* is incompatible with proper subordination. Structures that look like exceptions are identifiable as "embedded root" environments (cf. Heycock, 2017; Woods, 2016). They allow construal as (quasi-)question acts, which is in line with the use conditional analyses introduced below.

[6] But see Trotzke (2023:10.5), who independently arrived at some related points.

(2) WANT(S, STIT(A, CG$_{\{S,A\}}$(Q)))

Crucially, the revised "question desideratum" (Hintikka, 1974:104) has the addressee see to it that common ground among A and S (CG$_{\{S,A\}}$) be reached regarding Q. A is thus granted some flexibility in question act construal reliant on context.[7] Stated in simplified and unsystematic terms (but see Sections 3.2 and 5), where speaker ignorance is salient, an interrogative can be taken as an ISQ, with A's answer "desired." Salience of both speaker and (presumed) addressee competence, on the other hand, supports interpretation of examples like (3) as rhetorical questions: common ground becomes reachable by A (tacitly) adopting the "obvious answer," i.e., by assuming that no one likes to pay taxes.

(3) *Who likes to pay taxes?*

Alternatively, making addressee competence manifest may be what is called for, as is the case when we are dealing with exam questions, like (4).

(4) *Who stabbed Caesar?*

Concerning these, Truckenbrodt (2004:328) specifically notes that the iterativity of S seeking to know whether A knows the answer to Q vindicates appeal to (Stalnakerian) common ground in (2) (cf. Carlson, 1983:112).[8]

Now, importantly, on Truckenbrodt's approach, the distinction between ISQs and NCQs is no longer a matter of conventional sentential force but to be determined through contextual clues. This has been objected to by Plunze and Zimmermann (2006) (P&Z) on the basis of the scenario in (5).

(5) [A enters S's taxi]
  a. A: *To the British Embassy, please!*
  b. S: *Where is the British Embassy?*

Given that utterance (5a) has signaled A's taking S to be competent regarding the whereabouts of the British embassy, construing (5b) as an ISQ and reaching common ground by answering is not a privileged option according to (2). Instead, S should be understood as joking, or perhaps asking a rhetorical question, if there is no British embassy in town or the taxi is parked right in front of it. Contrary to these predictions, however, S would seem to be quite justified in that scenario to count on recognition of (5b) as an ISQ. "Why? Arguably, the best answer is that S will expect that A's knowledge of the meaning of the uttered interrogative and the assumption that S means what this sentence means leads A to the insight that his former assumption about S's knowledge concerning the location of the British Embassy was *false*" (P&Z: 326). This explanation, of course, requires something like the traditional "subjective-epistemic" formulation in (1) as sentential force of interrogatives, and it rules out its "intersubjective" rival in (2).

At the same time, P&Z concur with Searle and Hintikka that, as it stands, (1) appears ill-suited to accommodate exam questions, and that considering interrogatives ambiguous is an unattractive way out (cf. Truckenbrodt, 2004:320f.). In particular, any putative ambiguity would be incompatible with "type identification" between ISQs and exam questions. Yet, instances of such an effect are readily constructed. Thus, "if John, who is completely ignorant in these matters, asks his daughter Mary whether the square root of 2 is rational, […] she may truthfully respond "My math teacher already asked me this question in the morning"" (P&Z: 327).

As an alternative, P&Z suggest that (1) be combined with a more indirect approach to exam questions. Their reasoning, reformulated in terms of (4), goes as follows: "When [A]'s teacher enquired about [the murder of Caesar], it was clear to all participants that she was not seeking [histor]ical enlightenment. Hence a literal use of the interrogative was out of the question, by which the way was paved for a non-literal construal. What might this construal have been, and how did it come about? In a nutshell, by pretense: the speaker's linguistic behavior was that of an *ignoramus*, who would have put the question to elicit an answer; by playing the *ignoramus*'s part, the teacher, though in the know, indicates her desire to elicit the same reaction by the student" (P&Z: 327).[9] This perspective receives independent support from the fact that (6), paraphrasing the subjective-epistemic analysis, would sound quite natural if uttered in the same examination situation.

(6) *First of all, I would like to know (from you) who stabbed Caesar.*

Here, however, is where data from MG promise to significantly enrich the debate, casting doubt on the full validity of P&Z's proposal. Quite strikingly, MG exam questions require a [∅-INT], as in (7b). The [*n*-INT] in (7a) is confined to genuine ISQs and would thus lead to infelicity in the context at hand.

(7) a. *Wer hat=n Cäsar erstochen?* [✓ISQ/ #ExamQ]
  who has=N Caesar stabbed
  b. *Wer hat Cäsar erstochen?* [#ISQ/ ✓ExamQ]
  "Who stabbed Caesar?"

[7] For earlier work along similar lines, see Carlson (1983:I.8) and Ginzburg (1992: chapter 1).

[8] Truckenbrodt (2006a:262) renders the general idea as "knowledge or belief of which [S and A] believe of each other that they have it, and believe of each other that they believe this etc." (cf. Stalnaker, 2002:704).

[9] Åqvist (1969:119f.) is a precursor, treating exam questions as arising in "non-standard contexts" where it is obvious that the "literal request" made via Q does not coincide with the "real" one.

This, it appears, is in conflict with P&Z's pretense-based approach, which instead predicts examiners to employ (7a) in a non-literal use (cf. Pankau, 2018).[10]

Before analyzing the above challenge in further detail, let us dispel a potential objection to (7) right away. Given that [∅-INT] coincides with formal or official registers of Standard German, (7b) could in principle result from such registers being prevalent in schools. But that is not the case in the East Berlin situation focused on here. In fact, an MG-speaking teacher uttering (7b) could have used an [*n*-INT] like (8) slightly earlier, addressing the same student in the same classroom setting both times.[11]

(8) *Wieso bist=n du zu spät?*
why are=N you too late
"Why are you late?"

Likewise, [∅-INT] figures in "riddle" or "guess" questions (cf. Wilson and Sperber, 1988:92), which would be phrased fully colloquially if, for example, used among friends. (9) exemplifies this.

(9) *Wat hat (# =n) vier Beene un kann flieng?*
what has N four legs and can fly
"What has four legs and is able to fly? (Can you guess?)"

3. Markedness and the use conditions of Marzahn German *n*

An answer to the narrower question of what the MG-pattern in (7) implies for the proper analysis of exam questions – a point returned to in Section 5 – will fall out from a general proposal regarding the interpretive contribution of MG *n* to [*n*-INT]. This involves presenting and constrastively evaluating two approaches to dealing with the [∅-INT]/[*n*-INT]-distinction in terms of use conditions: One according to which ISQs are actually viewed as marked, at least along some dimensions (Levinson, 2012), and another, considering MG *n* a "reinforcement" of question act defaults (Farkas, 2022).

3.1. Information-seeking questions and social cost

As part of an exploration of the "question-assertion function space," Levinson (2012) charts an "economy of information," which details "social costs of asking a question" (ibid.:20). Designed to "explain the reluctance to ask questions" (ibid.), the model predicts a tendency – at least partially confirmed by corpus research (ibid.:23f.) (cf. Siemund, 2017) – to "minimize the informational increment requested" (Levinson, 2012:23). Accordingly, "prototype Q[uestion]s" are located in a position of high (prospective) informational gain accompanied by high social cost to the speaker (ibid.:25, Fig. 2.5).

Now, obviously, Levinsonian social cost can furnish the dimension along which ISQs may be taken to be marked.[12] There is thus a way of reconciling the MG [*n*-INT]-type with the earlier mentioned function of particles (Section 1), provided we allow a richer notion of modulation. And, conversely, the marking of MG *wh*-interrogatives would lend striking empirical support for Levinson's theory (broadly construed). More concretely, inspired by the views just outlined, it can be postulated that MG *n* comes with the use condition in (10) (SC mnemonic for "social cost"), where expressing obligingness by *S* toward *A* counts as payment of a minimal (or "symbolic") social fee.

(10) $UC_{sc}(n)$: OBLIGING(*S*, *A*)

Before beginning to test the rich ramifications of (10) (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4), let us sketch the general lines of what can be said about the MG [∅-INT]-type. Consider again exam questions like (7b). Absence of *n*, i.e., employment of [∅-INT], makes perfect sense if the examiner does not "owe the addressee something for the information" (Levinson, 2012:20). In addition to *S* already being in possession of the answer (by contextual premise), some kind of "institutional contract" may contribute to *A* accepting the non-canonical imposition involved here.

Speaker knowledge of the answer is equally at play in questions posing riddles, like (9), which quite commonly are even meant as attempts by *S* to entertain *A*. As a consequence, the expression of such questions by [∅-INT] is correctly predicted.

Also, rhetorical questions convey rather than elicit information, so that signaling obligingness toward *A* is not called for. And again, speakers of MG avoid [*n*-INT] under such circumstances, as illustrated in (11).

[10] Similar instances of ISQs expressed by marked interrogatives can be found in the Ghardëina variety of Dolomitic Ladin and Hebrew. The former requires the particle *pa*, derived from Latin *post* ("after"), to occur in "standard questions (true requests for information)" (Hack, 2014:53, 55, 69) while NCQs may come without it. For the latter, Ozerov (2019:32) established a particular prosodic pattern accompanying ISQs. Checking the predictions of P&Z's approach to exam questions has only been possible for Hebrew, where according to Pavel Ozerov (p.c.) a "non-ISQ prosody" would be used, at variance with the idea of non-literal pretense.

[11] Independent evidence for vernacular use in East Berlin schools is provided by Rosenberg (1986:97) and, more anecdotally, by conversations from the "Berlin Wendekorpus" (IDS, Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch (DGD), BW–_E_00001_SE_01_T_01, Beitrag 0281 FK – 0294 GINA & Beitrag 0176 FK – 0203 DIRK [dgd.ids-mannheim.de]).

[12] Compensation for high social cost may be related to Gussenhoven's "effort code," as argued by Chen (2012:156), reporting on signals of "strong interest in the information requested." Conveying heightened interest or "concern" is sometimes cited as one of the major functions of the German question particle *denn* (cf. Bayer, 2012), so exploring this perspective for MG *n* should be on the agenda for future work. See also Section 4.

(11) *Wer is (# =n) schon perfekt?*
who is N SCHON perfect
"After all, who is perfect?"

Another interesting case is hinted at directly by Levinson (2012:23): Since "information has already been offered […] repair questions do not incur further" social costs. This is fully in line with the fact that MG "echo questions" are realized by the [∅-INT]-type, shown in (12b).[13]

(12) a. A: *Maria war jestern in Vestenbergsgreuth.*
Mary was yesterday in V.
"Yesterday, Mary was in Vestenbergsgreuth."
b. S: *WO war (# =n) Maria jestern?*
"WHERE was Mary yesterday?"

In closing, the "technical" caveat should be added that (10) forms the basis of making a discrete binary choice between ISQs, expressed by [*n*-INT], and non-ISQs, realized by [∅-INT]. Scalar (measuring) effects that the notion of "minimization" is suggestive of play no role here. Thus, for example, even if different *wh*-expressions might potentially alter the "informative weight" of questions (cf. Siemund, 2017:6.4), MG *n*-marking indiscriminately applies, as long as one is dealing with ISQs, cf. (13).

(13) *Wer/wat/wo/wieso/wozu is=n dit?*
who/what/where/why/what.for is=N this
"Who/what/where/why is this?" / "What is this for?"

3.2. Question act defaults and reinforcement

In very recent work, Farkas (2022) develops a comprehensive account of "non-intrusive questions," i.e., questions signaling suspension of the speaker's answer expectation, which she profiles against a "general typology of canonical and non-canonical questions." The overall picture presented there confirms the earlier mentioned ideas about particles used as NCQ-triggers. However, interestingly, Farkas (2022:333) stresses that "nothing rules out the existence of a particle that reinforces some default assumption, rendering the interrogative thus marked not useable in contexts where that assumption is not met." This, of course, can be seen to directly apply to the case of MG *n*. Default question acts are information-seeking but the interrogatives employed for that purpose in MG are marked by reinforcement.

Note, incidentally, that, the way we understand it, "reinforcement" is no interpretive on-line procedure (unlike coercion or strengthening). Instead, it is meant – as a piece of "innocent" terminology – to evoke the result of whatever takes place in diachronic phenomena like "Jespersen's Cycle" (cf. Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti, 2009) (see also Section 4).

Now, to make this alternative to the approach in terms of social cost more tangible, let us list the "default assumptions accompanying question acts" as stated explicitly by Farkas (2022:297), in reformulation of Searle's conditions introduced in Section 1.

(14) a. *Speaker ignorance* (SI): The speaker's epistemic state is neutral relative to the possible resolutions of the issue she raises.
b. *Addressee competence* (ACt): The speaker assumes that the addressee knows the information that settles the issue she raises.
c. *Addressee compliance* (ACl): The speaker assumes that the addressee will provide this information in the immediate future of the conversation as a result of the speaker's speech act.
d. *Issue resolution goal* (IRG): It is assumed that the main aim the speaker pursues when raising an issue is to have it resolved in the immediate future of the conversation.

Importantly, and interestingly, to be able to single out ISQs, the use conditions of *n* will have to correspond to (14) in (almost) its entirety. Otherwise, certain obligatory occurrences of the [∅-INT]-type in MG cannot be captured. Thus, although exam, (7b), guess, (9), and rhetorical questions, (11), all violate SI, the latter cannot serve as the sole ISQ-criterion. One counterexample here are "can't-find-the-value-of-x" questions, which signal that *S* has been unsuccessful in coming up with an answer (cf. Obenauer, 2004). [*n*-INT] is ruled out for such cases, as shown in (15).

(15) *Wo is (# =n) bloß mein Schlüssel?*
where is N BLOß my key
"Where on earth are my keys?"

[13] As can be seen in (i), the effect in (12b) does not reduce to general incompatibility between *n* and narrowly focused *wh*-phrases.

(i) *Ick weeß zwar DAT Hans uff=m Jehweg jeparkt hat,*
I know indeed that H. on=the.DAT sidewalk parked has
aber: WaRUM hat=n der da jeparkt?
but why has=N he there parked
"I do know THAT John parked the car on the sidewalk, but: WHY did he park the car there?"

At the same time, these questions do not come with an addressee competence assumption. Yet, ACt (14b) alone wouldn't work as ISQ-requirement either, given that it obtains in exam and rhetorical question. This suggests that SI and ACt be combined.

Complicating the picture further – and thus of special theoretical interest – are instances of what could be called "broad" exam questions, realized in MG by [∅-INT]. Consider (16), taken to inquire about a novel that has been read in class.

(16) % *Wie interpretierst (# =n) du dit Schlusskapitel?*
how interpret.2SG N you the end.chapter
"What's your interpretation of the final chapter?"

Arguably, conditions (14a)-(14c) are all fulfilled in examination situations that test broader examinee capabilities (understanding, explanation, etc.) (cf. Weigand, 1989). In particular, it is not implausible to assume SI in cases like (16).[14] Infelicity of *n* must therefore be due to issue resolution failing to constitute the speaker's main aim. And indeed, like standard exam questions, broad exam questions first and foremost seek knowledge about the addressee's competence.

Note, by the way, that (16) is one of the cases where native judgments vary, flagged by %. We think that MG speakers who accept *n* here reconceptualize the situation such that *S* switches the examination mode and begins engaging in a conversation with the student by using a "normal" ISQ.

Altogether, our brief and unsystematic investigation indicates that an alternative use condition for MG *n*, expressive of the defaults responsible for its association with ISQs, should consist of the conjunction of conditions in (14). This is captured in (17) (RE mnemonic for "reinforcement").

(17) $UC_{RE}(n)$: SI & [ACt &] ACl & IRG

ACt is put in brackets in (17): Assuming addressee compliance in the absence of addressee competence does not make sense (Farkas, 2022:297, 318). Therefore, from the requirement of ACl, ACt will come for free. Further verification of (17), which requires the formal underpinnings introduced in Section 5.1, won't be possible in the current paper.[15]

3.3. Theory comparison

Given that the two theories – in the following "theory-SC" and "theory-RE" – are designed to single out ISQs, it might appear at first sight that they cover the same empirical ground. However, clearly, the tie determined by theory-SC between prospective information gain and payment of a social fee via expressing obligingness is loose enough to allow for social cost depending on the wider context rather than the nature of the current speech act itself. Evidence for or against the resulting flexibility will thus be a crucial part of theory comparison. We are going to discuss two instantiations of the effect in question, one involving the use of echo questions (Section 3.3.1) and another due to institutional setting (Section 3.3.2). In a third step, the interpersonal dimension of social cost will be addressed (Section 3.3.3).

3.3.1. Echo questions

One key example for the contextual determination of social cost are certain uses of echo questions, already introduced in Section 3.1. Consider again (12), repeated below for convenience.

(12) a. A: *Maria war jestern in Vestenbergsgreuth.*
Mary was yesterday in V.
"Yesterday, Mary was in Vestenbergsgreuth."
b. S: *WO war (# =n) Maria jestern?*
"WHERE was Mary yesterday?"

The assertion by *A* in (12a) freely offers information to *S*, so that the latter's checking back in order to "repair" something like "auditory failure" (Repp and Rosin, 2015) comes without the need to pay for that (cf. Levinson, 2012:23). This correctly predicts the use of [∅-INT] in MG, shown in (12b).

The importance of (12) is further heightened by the fact that theory-RE threatens to fail in such cases. Where *S* has been unable to properly hear part of *A*'s statement, SI, (14a), can be assumed. Likewise, ACt, (14b), and ACl, (14c), manifestly apply. Finally, it

[14] Contrary to what is the case with (7b), students could not "turn the table" and ask their teacher for the correct answer to (16) (literally). Also, *Oh, interesting!* would be a fairly natural teacher's reaction to an answer, issuing an "information receipt" (cf. Heritage, 1984:307). Broad exam questions are not covered by the "norms of exam questions" stated by Gaszczyk (2023:6), according to which *S* must have "access to the answer." Beyond directly knowing the answer, being "equipped with sheets with responses" (ibid.:7) like a quiz master counts as satisfying that requirement. In (16), however, general competence regarding the subject matter of the question is what is at stake.

[15] In a nutshell, with the four conditions in (14), 2^4=16 types of questions can be defined. This then reduces to 12, given the impossble combination of ~ACt and ACl (~ standing for negation/absence). Of particular interest to proving the necessity of the ingredients in (17) are the types violating just one condition: (i) ⟨SI, ACl, ~IRG⟩, (ii) ⟨SI, ~ACl, IRG⟩, and (iii) ⟨~SI, ACl, IRG⟩. (i) is instantiated by broad exam questions like (16). Finding an instance of (ii) is complicated by the fact that issue resolution has to be left to a bystander, "calculated" by *S* to step in for *A*. Parents present at and allowed to speak at their child's (=*A*) student interview could for example reply to a question like *What was the financial situation of your previous schools?* (iii), finally, depends on the definition of "issue resolution" by Farkas (2022:304), which allows questions that put competent *S* and *A* on the same page by *A* making the answer explicit. Court hearings are a natural environment for that, but spelling out the details and treating additional types would lead us too far afield.

would be hard to deny that finding out about Mary's whereabouts on the previous day is the main aim of *S* in (12b), i.e., the IRG default, (14d), holds as well.[16] Therefore, by (17), $UC_{RE}(n)$ is fulfilled and (12b) incorrectly expected to be realized as [*n*-INT].

However, the apparent advantage of theory-SC over theory-RE in the realm of echo questions vanishes if one follows the diagnosis by Beck and Reis (2018:373) that counterparts of (12b) do not involve *wh*-operator fronting within interrogatives but "topicalization" of "echo-*wh*-expressions" into the periphery of verb second declaratives. On that count, given interrogativity as a strict precondition on the occurrence of MG *n*, the effect in (12b) is not a matter of choosing between [∅-INT] and [*n*-INT] at all, but explained in terms of clause type incompatibility.[17] Thus, certain technical caveats aside,[18] theory-RE requires no additions to deal with echo questions.

3.3.2. Institutions

Recall that we mentioned the possibility of an "institutional contract" playing a role in suspending the need to pay a social fee for exam questions (Section 3.1). This could in principle contribute to the MG choice of [∅-INT] in cases like (7b) and (16). Closely related are "pedagogical" (or "Socratic") questions (cf. Truckenbrodt, 2004:3.2), which are posed to serve addressees as intermediate steps toward resolving less easily answerable questions. Their realization by the [∅-INT]-type in MG is equally predicted by theory-SC and theory-RE, the latter most prominently due to absence of SI.

Staying within the confines of "classroom discourse," we can, however, find cases that turn out more critical for the purpose of theory comparison. Consider the example of "procedural" questions, i.e., questions that help organize classroom interaction, as the one shown in (18).

(18) [%] *Wer will (# =n) in Projekt A mitarbeiten?*
who wants N in project A with.work
"Who wants to join project A?"

As indicated by [%], MG speakers vary in their judgments here. The ones who accept *n* straighforwardly confirm theory-RE: all four criteria for [*n*-INT] are fulfilled. In particular, in conformity with the IRG default, the main aim of (18) is to find out about candidates for project A. Likewise, the teacher's paying a fee for a genuine ISQ is compatible with theory-SC, (10), too. By contrast, the [∅-INT] option turns such procedural questions into a veritable challenge for theory-RE. What's more, the teacher's withholding of an expression of obligingness, i.e., avoidance of *n*, may indeed leave explanation in terms of an institutional contract as the only viable alternative for theory-SC.

Now, it goes without saying that we cannot here do justice to the fuller range of teachers' questions in classroom discourse with all its dynamics (cf. Diegritz and Fürst, 1999:137–142; Nystrand et al., 2003).[19] One point remaining to be clarified, for example, is to what extent use of [*n*-INT] in (9) constitutes an "off-protocol" effect. Let us also stress that institutional factors as such are not an essential ingredient of theory-SC in an account of [∅-INT] in exam questions. Varieties of these naturally occur outside class activities among students probing each other's knowledge in rehearsal. An illustration is given in (19).

(19) *Wat is (# =n) de Hauptstadt von Ecuador?*
what is N the capital of E.
"What is the capital of Ecuador?"

As far as theory-SC is concerned, the common denominator of all such cases is that absence of genuine information-seeking removes the motivation for payment of a social fee on part of the questioner, which prevents use of *n*.

Turning very briefly to another instance of institutional discourse, we would like to come back to Levinson (2012), who explicitly mentions "press conferences" as places where questions "can indicate subordination" (ibid.:21). This trait would override any putative institutional contract between host (inviting to be asked) and journalists (invited to ask) that might exempt the latter from incurring social costs. And indeed, as far as we can tell, data from MG confirm that intuition, i.e., journalists' questions at press conferences would seem to require the [*n*-INT]-type. (20) provides an example.

[16] According to the analysis by Beck and Reis (2018:4.3), echo questions and ISQs coincide as regards their "ordinary meaning," consisting of the familiar set of answers both times. They thus determine the same "issue." In the former case, the special echo effect – "presuppos[ing] that a particular answer to the question is available in the context" and relating to the "immediately preceding utterance" (ibid.:400) – results from a "deictic/anaphoric alternative" (ibid.:398) triggered by focus on the *wh*-part of the *wh*-expression involved. The above reasoning equally goes through if issue resolution in echo questions requires "specification of phonological information of the preceding utterance" (Krifka, 2001:305). The speaker's main aim, decisive for evaluating IRG, would be adjusted accordingly. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* under the approach to echo question semantics by Biezma et al. (2021:3.1.2).

[17] The ban on Standard German (SG) question particle *denn* from echo questions, which Theiler (2021:337,fn.13) leaves as an open problem for her account, would follow from clause type incompatibility as well.

[18] In the case of English *WHERE was Mary yesterday?*, Beck and Reis (2018:373) envisage "syntactically normal [interrogative] *Wh*Qs" "allowing for an echo interpretation." If German possesses the same option, the structures in (12b) have to be considered ambiguous and the issue of ruling out [*n*-INT] in the interrogative case reemerges, together with a "derivative" argument in favor of theory-SC. Echo questions built from *wh*-interrogatives, such as *When was Mary WHERE?* echoing *When was Mary in Vestenbergsgreuth?*, are likewise structurally suitable environments for licensing MG *n*. And again, obligatory realization by [∅-INT], shown in (i), may not be expected by theory-RE. (i) *Wann war* (# = *n*) *Maria WO?* "When was Mary WHERE?" (i) is doubly interesting in that it neither introduces *n*, as expected on theory-SC, nor copies it from the echoed utterance, assumed here to be an ISQ, i.e., of type [*n*-INT] (*Wann war'n Maria in Vestenbergsgreuth?*). Beck and Reis (2018:402f.) refrain from providing any in depth analysis of such configurations, in part perhaps because their semantics would not handle the interaction between standard *wh*-operators and "echo-*wh*-expressions" properly. Thus, the respective involvement of clausal and phrasal *Q*-operators leads to different ways of determining and shifting between ordinary and alternative semantic values (ibid.:4.3). Such complications are avoided by Biezma et al. (2021:3.1.2), who otherwise, however, gloss over much of the intricate form/interpretation challenge.

[19] Not to speak of students' questions and (a)symmetries of putative institutional contracts (cf. Goody, 1978:42).

(20) *Wann will=n der Vorstand uff de Krise reajiern?*
when wants=N the board.of.directors on the crisis react
"When does the board of directors intend to react to the crisis?"

Crucially, however, neither theory-SC nor theory-RE can claim any advantage in accounting for cases like (20), which involve ISQs with all the defaults stated in (14).

3.3.3. Interpersonal effects

Levinson (2012:2.4) characterizes the social cost of ISQs against the backdrop of work by Goffman and Brown and Levinson, the former establishing a general game-theory inspired outlook on interaction (Goffman, 1971), the latter responsible for the influential "politeness" model (Brown and Levinson, 1987) (B&L). The question thus arises as to what theory-SC predicts regarding specific interpersonal effects. In Section 3.1, we already indicated that $UC_{SC}(n)$, (10), is taken as underlying a simple binary choice between ISQs and non-ISQs. No scalar (measuring) effects that the fine-grained B&L architecture introduces are envisaged.

Nevertheless, the choice between [*n*-INT] and [∅-INT] in MG could – reflecting the broad interpersonal function of "pragmatic markers" (Brinton, 2008:1.6.1) – be interpreted as involving some elementary social scorekeeping (cf. Merin, 1994). And, of course, that choice may in principle be subject to strategic maneouvering. We are going to see, however, that there is reason for skepticism, both regarding the stability of relevant cases in MG as well as the degree to which theory-SC would be favored over theory-RE in any putative account. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this.

Consider first the following question by parents to a youngster having come home late at night.

(21) *Wo kommst(=n) du jetzt her?*
where come.2SG=N you now from
"Where are you coming from now?"

Withholding *n* – the standard expression of obligingness accompanying ISQs, according to (10) – conveys a distinctly unfriendly attitude. *A* is not paid for information requested, in line with the parents' purpose of achieving exactly such an effect. But this seems to be an optional use. For some MG speakers, presence of *n* is equally compatible with parental disapproval, perhaps due to a display of "hypercorrect" behavior (cf. Lakoff, 1975:79; see Selting, 2010 on hyperarticulation).

What's more, (21) is equally amenable to a treatment in terms of theory-RE. The [∅-INT] variant invites the assumption that at least one of the question act defaults in (14) does not hold in the situation at hand. Most plausibly, the youngster may infer that issue resolution is not the parents' main aim and take (21) as instead meant to elicit some justification for coming late. For [*n*-INT] the above account would carry over. Both times, while only derivable indirectly, unfriendliness comes in as a factor here too.[20]

Second, indirect requests, as the one in (22), are uniformly realized by the [∅-INT]-type.

(22) *Warum bist (# =n) du ne leise?*
why be.2SG N you not quiet
"Why aren't you quiet?"

Expressing obligingness toward *A* by addition of *n* would not be modulating a directive use – unlike what is the case with particles like *bitte* ("please"), *mal* ("once"), and *vielleicht* ("perhaps")[21] – but turn (22) into an ISQ.[22] Thus, utterances like *Kommt nicht in Frage!* ("No way!") are only felicitous as reactions to [∅-INT] here. It must therefore be concluded that while theory-SC is potentially able to account for avoidance of [*n*-INT] in indirect requests, no more specific argument in its favor involving interpersonal ("social") factors emerges. Theory-RE, of course, can once again rely on absence of the IRG default, (14d), to deal with (22) (cf. Farkas, 2022:330).

3.3.4. Evaluation

Our rough attempt at theory comparison has by and large failed to bring out effects uncontroversially characteristic of theory-SC. Exploitation of social scorekeeping for strategic interpersonal effects (3.3.3) does not seem to play any systematic role in the choice between [*n*-INT] and [∅-INT]. Also, regarding the contextual determination of social cost independently of the actual question acts performed (3.3.1, 3.3.2), a single case has been identified where suspending the need for payment of a social fee for information requested might arguably be due to an institutional setting: In classroom discourse, "procedural" questions are – according to some MG speakers – realized by [∅-INT], as shown in (18). This at the same time constitutes the

[20] According to the B&L parameters, (21) instantiates a situation of small social distance (D), large power differential (P), and low ranked imposition (R). Variation of these parameters does not seem to us to determine MG *n*-marking, as evidenced, for example, by constant [∅-INT] choice in (7b) and (19) despite different values for D and P. ISQs differing wrt. R – e.g., asking for the time vs. about *A*'s salary – would invariantly require the [*n*-INT]-type. Quite obviously, we won't be able to go into the vast literature on "politeness," including, in particular, the many critiques of the B&L model. As will become clearer later on, we fully subscribe to the assessement by Terkourafi (2015:11) that "conventionalized expressions (whenever available for a situation or to a speaker) are used *all else being equal*, irrespective of the degree of face-threat." Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing us in that direction.

[21] The direction of modulation, i.e., whether the requestive strength is downgraded ("mitigated") or upgraded, depends on both context and host expression. For recent relevant discussion of *bitte*, see Zimmermann (2009) and Ackermann (2023).

[22] We assume that, irrespective of how exactly the use conditions in (10) and (17) are formulated, MG *n* differs from expressions like *bitte* in being strongly "descriptively ineffable" (Gutzmann, 2015:18; Potts, 2007:2.4).

only substantial challenge to theory-RE so far. Of course, to put this result on a firmer basis, a fuller investigation of classroom discourse as well as other institutional settings is required.

Further serious reservations regarding the adequacy of theory-SC stem from the not unobvious fact that direct ways of manipulating contexts exist that add extra flexibility to the determination of social cost. One case in point is the "issuance of waivers" as exemplified in (23).

(23) a. S: *Ka=ick de wat frang?*
can=I you what ask
"Can I ask you something?"
b A: *Klar.*
"Sure."
c. S: *Wo is=n dit Buch her?*
where is=N this book from
"Where does this book come from?"

Here, *A* signals not minding taking a question, so payment of a social fee via *n* isn't called for. Nevertheless, it is [*n*-INT] that has to be used by *S*, whereas switching to the expected [Ø-INT]-type would be odd.

Before spelling out further advantages of (a formalized version of) theory-RE in Section 5, we'll have a brief look at the affinity between MG *n* and particle *denn*.

4. Question particle *denn*

As already mentioned in Section 1, MG *n* is closely related to the Standard German (SG) question particle *denn* (lit. "then"), which at first sight may suggest that the former is just a phonologically reduced version of the latter (cf. Thurmair, 1991:378,fn.2). This intuition is further supported by Thurmair (1989:167; 1991:385f.), who, in the case of *wh*-interrogatives, observes a trend for SG *denn* to serve as marker of standard questions, with absence of *denn* indicative of NCQ-like effects.[23]

However, there are substantial interpretive and structural reasons to keep MG *n* and SG *denn* apart. In the interest of space, we provide only some hints. Thus, first, as documented in (11) (Section 3.1), MG *n* is banned from rhetorical questions, which are "natural environments" for SG *denn*, cf. (24) (see Meibauer, 1986: Appendix).

(24) *Wer zahlt* denn *gerne Steuern?*
who pays DENN gladly taxes
"Who likes to pay taxes?"

Second, MG possesses a counterpart of SG *denn* that can cooccur with *n*.

(25) *Wieso bist=**n** du **denn** zu spät?*
"Why are you late?"

Third, Bayer, Häussler and Bader (2016:595) discuss non-local licensing of SG *denn* in structures like (26), where *denn* surfaces inside a declarative (*that*-)clause in spite of modulating the question act.

(26) *Wo glaubst du, dass er denn hingegangen ist?*
where believe.2SG you that he DENN there.gone is
"Where do you think that he has gone?"

By contrast, due to its being strictly confined to interrogatives, MG *n* could only occur attached to the matrix verb (*glaubst=n*) in counterparts of (26).

The above differences notwithstanding, diachronic transitions between systems resembling SG and systems containing MG *n* aren't difficult to envisage. Importantly, the pragmatic contribution of *denn* to question acts is fairly broad. In line with originating from a "causal" conjunction, "*denn* indicates that the questioning act is in some way externally motivated. For instance, […] that the reason why the speaker is asking the question can be found in the immediate utterance context" (Theiler, 2021:327, summarizing earlier literature). Such an appeal to contextual motivation ("common ground") is a way of taking *A* into consideration, which could arguably be reinterpreted as a signal of the kind of obligingness shown by *S* toward *A* according to theory-SC, stated via $UC_{SC}(n)$ in (10).[24]

Likewise, a link to theory-RE can be created from ideas present in earlier studies of *denn*: According to König (1977:123), *denn* comes with an assumption of addressee competence. Deppermann (2009) takes it that uses of *denn* impose a commitment on *A* to answer. If sincere, they thus strengthen the expectation of addressee compliance. Finally, Theiler (2021) introduces an implicit default of speaker ignorance into her "felicity condition for *denn*," which – in simplified form – states that *S* considers "learning" the answer to a *denn*-Q a necessary precondition for *S* to proceed from a previous discourse move or piece of contextual information (cf. ibid.:333).[25] And, with ACt, ACl, and SI "around," it is not a huge step to add IRG and end up with the conventionalized MG *n* "package" defined by $UC_{RE}(n)$ in (17).

[23] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for reminding us of the importance of Thurmair's work.

[24] This follows Hentschel and Weydt (1983:268), who suggest that something like "friendliness" may arise as secondary interpersonal effect (cf. Schiffrin, 1987:63).

[25] In order to accommodate rhetorical questions like (24), this mechanism has to be "flipped" (cf. Theiler, 2021:6.2) such that the message conveyed becomes "informative" in the sense of useful for *A*; e.g., as an explanation or justification within a more extended argumentation.

Alternative scenarios of "overshooting the target" and yielding an obligatory marker of *wh*-interrogatives – evidenced by Bavarian (cf. Bayer, 2012) and one of our MG-interviewees – can draw on the insight by Theiler (2021:347) that her analysis is flexible enough for "the ease with which *denn* can appear in *wh*-questions almost across the board."[26]

5. Conventional discourse effects, markedness, and question construal

An additional advantage of theory-RE over theory-SC is the fact that the question act defaults in (14)/(17) actually are derivable on the approach to sentential force by Farkas (2022). And, what's more, that approach enables a reformulation of (17) fitting the division of labor between [*n*-INT] and [∅-INT] in MG into a systematic picture of markedness and question construal. An account of why in exam questions, [*n*-INT] is blocked in MG while the [∅-INT]-type is as fine as its counterpart in SG falls out as well.

5.1. Conventional discourse effects and sentential force

In line with previous work on discourse modeling and what has become known as inquisitive semantics (Farkas and Bruce, 2010; Farkas and Roelofsen, 2017), Farkas (2022) assumes that interrogatives are associated with "conventional discourse effects" (CDE) that determine a particular way of updating a context structure.[27] Concretely (and in much simplified terms), an interrogative S_{INT} is taken to denote an "issue," $I(S_{INT})$, which is a (non-singleton) set of propositions corresponding to the (exclusive) alternative answers to S_{INT} (cf. Hamblin, 1973, mentioned in Section 1). When S_{INT} is uttered, this issue is placed on a repository stack called "table." At the same time, the generalized union of the issue, $\bigcup(I(S_{INT}))$, the set of all worlds not yet ruled out by the common ground, is added to the discourse commitments of the speaker, DC_S, i.e., $DC_S \cup \{\bigcup(I(S_{INT}))\}$. Finally, a "projected set," ps, of future discourse developments is modified such that for each alternative p in $I(S_{INT})$, the proposal that the addressee's discourse commitments, DC_A, be updated with p, i.e., $DC_A \cup \{p\}$, is added to ps.[28]

Now, crucially, conversations with a non-empty table are taken to be in an "unstable" state. To reach a stable state, the table has to be cleared, which in the case of interrogatives requires that *A* commit to one of the answers. If *S* agrees, that answer ends up in both DC_A and DC_S. By contextual default, this amounts to having resolved the issue raised.

Thanks to the mechanism just described, interrogatives, given their CDE, are means for steering *A* toward issue resolution, i.e., toward providing an answer. Consequently, intrinsic specifications of the sentential force of interrogatives, such as formulated in (1) and (2) become superfluous (Farkas, 2022:307, 327). We'll return to what this implies for question construal and the controversy between Truckenbrodt and P&Z momentarily (Section 5.3).

5.2. Conventional discourse effects and question act defaults

Recall the key role the question act defaults in (14) have played in accounting for the distribution of MG *n* under theory-RE, (17). Importantly, instead of having to stipulate (14), it can be derived from the CDE, as laid out by Farkas (2022:325f.). Thus, assuming that interlocutors act rationally, choice by *S* of an expression whose CDE steer the conversation toward issue resolution can be interpreted such that *S* pursues the IRG. Next, if *S* knew which alternative in the set of answers, $I(S_{INT})$, were true, asserting that alternative would be more efficient than having *A* choose from the entire set. Refraining from making such an assertion – and undertaking a "trivial" commitment ($DC_S \cup \{\bigcup(I(S_{INT}))\}$) instead – is therefore a signal of SI. Third, projecting future discourse developments as requiring commitments by *A* to one of the alternatives makes most sense where *S* assumes ACt. And, finally, the same projected future discourse developments involve *A* resolving the issue raised, so taking ACl to hold is equally rational.

At the same time, with the above derivation of (14), the status of use condition (17) becomes unclear. To the extent that the individual question act defaults are "epiphenomenal" under the CDE-approach, they should be replaced by an appropriate theoretical counterpart. And, of course, the resulting formulation has to be equivalent in guaranteeing the proper division of labor between MG [*n*-INT] and [∅-INT]. This leads us to the question of how CDE relate to markedness of forms and the distinction between ISQs and NCQs.

Farkas (2022), building on extensive discussion by Farkas and Roelofsen (2017), suggests that dealing with the latter point requires splitting CDE into basic and special varieties. For interrogatives, basic CDE correspond to the update mechanism sketched in Section 5.1, which determines canonical "information-seeking" questions, i.e., questions adhering to the question act defaults in (14) (cf. Farkas, 2022:298). All interrogatives are taken to "trigger" basic CDE. Next, the association of marked interrogatives with NCQs (rhetorical, conjectural, non-intrusive, etc.) results from these forms coming with special CDE in addition. Finally, unmarked interrogatives may be used as NCQs if the defaults due to their basic CDE are overridden by context. In the case of rhetorical questions, for example, manifest speaker knowledge of the

[26] See also Zeevat (2004:110) for some general remarks.
[27] A closely related theory is developed by Krifka (2021).
[28] Where the input ps is non-empty, such additions have to target the prospective DCs of the appropriate individual anchors and "multiply out" properly.

answer would lead to modified commitments made by *S* and suspend SI.[29] The latter mechanism may be blocked if a marked interrogative for the same non-canonical construal exists. Fig. 1 outlines the above rules.

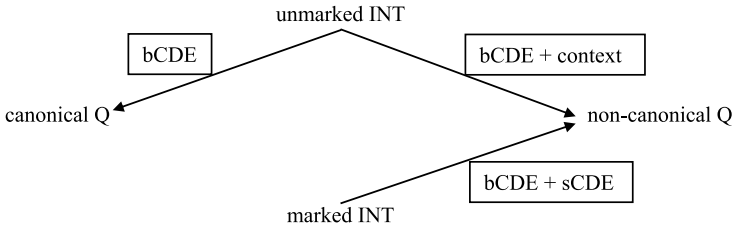

Fig. 1. Markedness, CDE, and question construal (standard).

This reflects the unmarked status of [∅-INT] in SG: It serves the expression of canonical questions, i.e., ISQs, per default, and of NCQs where the right contextual conditions apply. But what about MG? Why not consider [*n*-INT] unmarked – ignoring the particle – and enforce association with ISQs this way? Well, because under such assumptions it would be left open why [*n*-INT] is in essence immune to contextual factors and unavailable for NCQs. At the same time, [∅-INT] in MG behaves like its SG counterpart except that is has been stripped of its canonical option. Therefore, a more satisfactory approach consists in postulating a particular special CDE, able to flip the marked interrogative, [*n*-INT], from non-canonical to canonical construal and, through blocking, disrupt the standard association between unmarked interrogative ([∅-INT]), basic CDE, and canonical question construal. This is shown in Fig. 2.

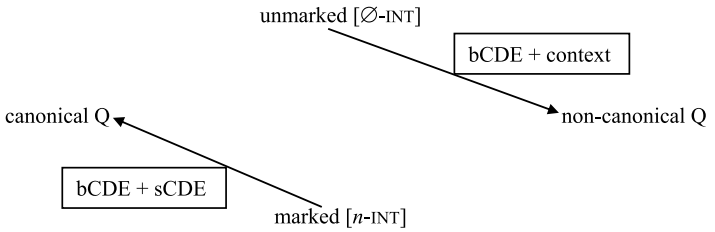

Fig. 2. Markedness, CDE, and question construal (MG).

Yet to be determined, then, is the use condition that replaces (17) within the CDE-approach, capable of reinforcing question act defaults without direct reference to (14). We tentatively suggest that (27) can do the trick.

(27) $UC_{RE[CDE]}(n)$: No contextual overriding of basic CDE

Plugged in for sCDE in Fig. 2, (27) "reinforces" the bCDE of [*n*-INT] by folding construal back into the ISQ corner and, together with the blocking assumption, induces the [*n*-INT]/[∅-INT] complementarity characteristic of MG.

Let us finish this section by stressing that the question act defaults in (14) continue to guide the use of MG *n* even after the switch from (17) to (27). Their status as "epiphenomenal" is a theory-internal matter. Violations of (27) technically imply deviations from the bCDE, which in turn "descriptively" implies non-application of one or more of the conditions in (14). That at least is what is intended. A formal demonstration of equivalence will be left for another occasion.

5.3. *Conventional discourse effects and question construal*

With the CDE-model in place, we are now ready to present a solution to the controversy from Section 2 between Truckenbrodt and P&Z over exam questions and how they are realized in MG. The bCDE of interrogatives like *Who stabbed Caesar?* will put the mechanism described in Section 5.1 to work. However, as acknowledged by Plunze and Zimmermann (2006:327), the context makes it "clear to all participants" that no ordinary ISQ is intended. In particular, SI does not hold,

[29] We refrain from discussing the possibility of context "shifting" between different non-canonical construals of marked interrogatives. But see Gärtner and Gyuris (2023) for an intriguing case study.

i.e., addition of $\bigcup(I(S_{INT}))$ to *S*'s commitments, DC_S, is not a sincere proposal and must be contextually overruled (cf. Farkas, 2022:329 on "quiz" questions). At the same time, in order to bring the "conversation" back into a stable state, the examinee has to commit to one of the answers in ps, and thereby – absent the standard IRG – demonstrate competence.

Crucially, then, the pretense P&Z take to be involved in exam questions has to be "open pretense," such that there is no attempt on part of the examiner at hiding the necessity for a contextual override.[30] As a consequence, MG speakers – like those of SG – have to use [∅-INT]. [*n*-INT] is unavailable due to $UC_{RE[CDE]}(n)$, (27), prohibiting contextual adjustment.

By contrast, the taxi driver's question in (5b) (*Where is the British Embassy?*) can rely on that interrogative's bCDE leading to an ISQ, given the driver, *S*, has reacted to *A*'s request immediately and thus not ratified *A*'s presumption of the absence of SI. Here, MG therefore requires use of the [*n*-INT]-type, as shown in (28).[31]

(28) *Wo is=n die Britische Botschaft?*

It is safe to assume, incidentally, that for the taxi driver to make a joke would involve "covert pretense" (of SI and IRG), with *S* tricking *A* into an ISQ construal first, and contextual revision as a later step. Quite expectedly, this only works with an [*n*-INT] like (28) in MG.

In the interest of space, we won't go into discussion of further examples, being confident that the accounts in terms of theory-RE, (17), carry over to the CDE-approach based on (27).[32] This implies that use of [∅-INT] in MG for "procedural" questions like (18) (Section 3.3.2), even if not preferred by all speakers, remains unexplained.

Note, finally, that the CDE-model is able to resolve the controversy over directly encoded sentential forces like (1) and (2) by decomposition and "proceduralization." Their various ingredients – among them the propositions denoted by *Q* – are located in different parts of the context structure and/or activated by different components of the interpretive mechanism at different stages. ISQ construal becomes privileged as result of the default without having to be hardwired as a monolithic entity. This is reflected in the difference between the open pretense and early partial contextual override of exam questions and the covert pretense and late complete contextual override of jokingly employed ISQs. Reluctantly, we have to leave things at that.

6. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the division of pragmatic labor between two types of *wh*-interrogatives from Marzahn German (MG). Use of the first type, marked by the enclitic particle *n* ([*n*-INT]), is near obligatory for and confined to canonical, i.e., information-seeking question acts. The second type, lacking *n* ([∅-INT]), has to be employed in non-canonical questions, such as rhetorical ones. This pattern of apparent markedness-reversal challenges the pretense-based approach to exam questions by Plunze and Zimmermann (2006) (Section 2) and plausibilizes an approach to information-seeking questions in terms of social cost in the sense of Levinson (2012) (Section 3.1). Overall empirical evidence, however, favors an account of markedness as reinforcement of question act defaults due to Farkas (2022) (Section 3.2). Section 5 has offered a formulation of reinforcement in terms of the "table model" of discourse (Farkas, 2022), such that the peculiar status of MG [*n*-INT] follows from the prohibition of contextually overriding "basic conventional discourse effects."

In the course of the above discussion, we have scrutinized different notions of the sentential force of interrogatives (Sections 1, 2, 5), illustrated the form and workings of several types of non-canonical questions (guess, rhetorical, echo etc.), and analyzed question use in the light of institutional settings and interpersonal effects (3.3).

Before closing, some remarks are due regarding the contributions of our paper to pragmatic theory. Starting at the "technical" end, we've promoted aspects of formal pragmatics by showing that the discourse model defended by Farkas (2022) constitutes a promising approach to the sentential force of interrogatives, involving an ISQ default and its NCQ extensions. This approach is instrumental in getting a better grip on the grammar/pragmatics interface (cf. Ariel, 2017) in regulating the interaction of marked and unmarked interrogatives, context, and question construal in terms of "basic" and "special conventional discourse effects" (Section 5). One intricate interface effect we've uncovered concerns the nature of *wh*-echo questions, which function as ISQs pragmatically but repel particles like MG *n* and SG *denn* on account of their declarative clause type status (Section 3.3.2).

Shifting perspectives slightly, the discussion of subtler distinctions among sentence types on the one hand and ISQs as well as subtypes of NCQs on the other belongs into an agenda of finely characterizing "social action formats" (cf. Deppermann, 2011:3.4). On the function side, this obviously relates to the domain of questions within the "pragmatics of speech actions" (Borge, 2013). Important results here concern the necessity of distinguishing between narrow and broad exam

[30] Independent evidence here can be gained from that fact that in the rehearsal scenario involving students in (19) it would be infelicitous for the "examinee" to criticize the "examiner" by saying: *Don't pretend that you are interested in the answer!* Also, pretense must be "local" in the sense of not carrying over to the follow up ("third turn") move by the examiner, which standardly is "evaluative" (*OK!*, *Correct!*, etc.) rather than "real" (*Oh, how interesting!*) (cf. Heritage and Clayman, 2010:28).

[31] Note that the use-conditional approach to [*n*-INT] does not run into the "type-identification" problem formulated by P&Z (see Section 2 above). This is due to the fact that [*n*-INT] and [∅-INT] coincide in at-issue meaning, which is what can be picked up by expressions like *this question* in the critical cases.

[32] Quite strikingly, the NCQs triggering a "remind-me" effect that we mentioned in Section 1 comply with the question act defaults in (14). And, as predicted by theory-RE, (17)/(27), they are realized by the [*n*-INT]-type in MG. As a consequence, *noch (mal)* is one of the particles that motivate the "richer notion of modulation" hinted at in Section 3.1. According to Sauerland and Yatsushiro (2017:667), we are here dealing with a "descriptive" contribution at the level of sentential force, construed as in (2).

questions wrt. presence vs. absence of speaker ignorance, and actual versus rehearsed cases wrt. differences in interpersonal dimensions (power, distance) (Sections 2, 3.2, 3.3.2). Likewise we have separated instances of open pretense and early partial contextual overriding of ISQ default (exam questions), from instances of covert pretense and late complete contextual overriding with ISQs used jokingly (Section 5.3). Clarifying the (±ISQ) status of "procedural" questions in classroom discourse is a point we put on the agenda for further work here.[33]

Finally, we have explored the possibility of deriving markedness of ISQs from the social cost they incur in interaction (Levinson, 2012). This, however, has turned out to be more problematic than it initially appeared, given that the divison of labor between the constructions studied isn't really sensitive to interpersonal effects in modulating indirect speech acts (Section 3.3.3). Nor does the linking of cost to "institutional contracts" (school, press conference) yield convincing explanatory insight. We've thus sidestepped in-depth engagement with politeness theory proper (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and critiques thereof, except for noting that the currently most attractive account of the MG data investigated supports the assessement by Terkourafi (2015:11) that "conventionalized expressions (whenever available for a situation or to a speaker) are used *all else being equal*, irrespective of the degree of face-threat" (Sections 3.1, 3.3.3). In addition, on our way toward establishing the largely negative result above, we've clarified intricacies regarding contextual vs. act-based determination of cost that could easily escape more naive approaches (Section 3.3).

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Hans-Martin Gärtner: Writing – review and editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Andreas Pankau:** Writing – review and editing, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

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Data availability

Nature of data is characterized in footnote 4 of the paper.

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[33] Acquisition of the pragmatic competences involved in such cases constitutes another fascinating area of study for which MG would provide an ideal testing ground. Some pertinent remarks concerning exam question are made by Bejarano (2011:322,fn.4; cf. Heritage and Clayman, 2010:33).

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