

INTONATION AND PROCEDURAL ENCODING: THE CASE OF SPANISH INTERROGATIVES*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to show that Wilson and Sperber (1993)'s notion of *procedural encoding* can be usefully extended to the analysis of intonational contours. Some suprasegmental features can be conceived of as markers encoding restrictions on possible interpretations, i.e. as linguistic devices conveying instructions (computational information) on how the conceptual content of the utterance is to be understood. I will focus on interrogative intonational patterns in European (Peninsular) Spanish, and will try to show that each pattern contributes to the interpretation of the utterance in which it occurs in a constant, systematic way. The whole range of functional classes of interrogatives can be thus reduced to a simpler, linguistically motivated characterisation. (For a wider picture on Spanish interrogatives, see Escandell-Vidal (1988), (1996a: chap.10), and (1998)).

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. In section 2, I will present the basic data on Spanish interrogative intonation and the traditional approach on it. In section 3, I will introduce some relevance-theoretical notions. Section 4 will be devoted to the development of my proposal: intonation encodes procedural restrictions on the determination of higher-level explicatures. Finally, in section 5, I will consider some implications of my approach.

2. Interrogatives and Intonation in Spanish

2.1. The classical view

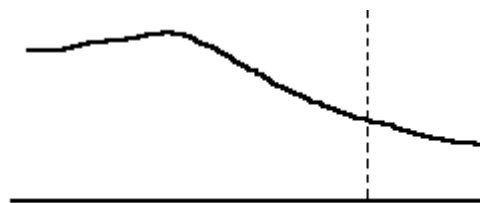
2.1.1. The falling-rising contour

It has been traditionally assumed that Spanish, like many other languages, uses intonation as a formal device to mark some grammatical contrasts, namely the difference between a declarative, such as (1)a, and a *yes/no* interrogative, such as (1)b:

- (1) a. *Había mucha gente.*
 ‘There were a lot of people’
 b. *¿Había mucha gente?*
 ‘Were there a lot of people?’

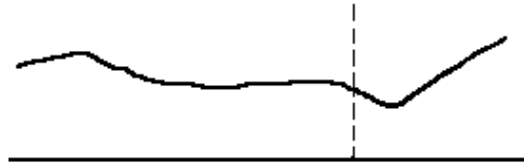
Relevant patterns in Spanish are defined especially by the contours going from the last stressed syllable in the sentence to the end, so only boundary tones are being considered here. While declaratives have a final falling contour, *yes/no* interrogatives show a special falling-rising ending. The contrast is represented in (2) and (3) (Cfr. Fernández Ramírez (1951: I, sect 44 and ff.); RAE (1973: 111); or Quilis (1993: sect. 14), for European (Peninsular) Spanish. The pattern can be slightly different for other varieties: see Quilis (1985) and (1993: sect 14), Sosa (1991), or García Riverón (1996)):

(2)



H a b í a m u c h a g e n t e .

(3)



¿Había mucha gente ?

Alternative interrogatives also show a distinctive contour, with two hemistiches separated by a short pause. The first one presents the same contour as simple *yes/no* interrogatives (represented in (3)), and the second one has a declarative, falling intonation (represented in (2)):

- (4) *¿Has terminado la carrera, o la terminas el año que viene?*
 ‘Have you finished your degree, or will you finish it next year?’

As for constituent (wh-)interrogatives, the fronting of the interrogative word and the obligatory subject-verb inversion make it possible to distinguish interrogatives from declaratives in their syntactic form, so intonation is considered to play a rather secondary role, and therefore the pattern for both (5)a and (5)b is the same:

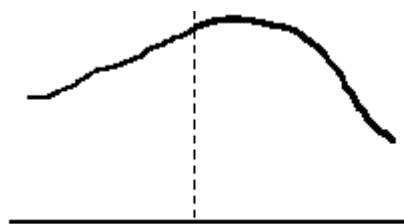
- (5) a. *¿Cuándo vendrá Juan?*
 ‘When will John come?’
 b. *Juan vendrá el lunes*
 ‘John will come on Monday’

Thus the pattern in (3) is considered as the “canonical” intonation for *yes/no* interrogatives. However, next to this pattern, at least two other contours can also be included in the description of *yes/no* interrogatives: the first one has a rising-falling ending, and the second one has a rising ending.

2.1.2. *The rising-falling contour*

The rising-falling contour has usually been characterised as conversational and affective (Cfr. Fernández Ramírez (1951) and (1957-59); and Quilis (1993)):

(6)



¿Trabaja mucho ?

‘Does he work a lot?’

It can be found in utterances such as

(7) A: —...y cuando se casó...
 ‘...and when she got married.’

B: — ¡Ah! ¿Se casó?
 Oh! got married?

‘Oh! Did she?’

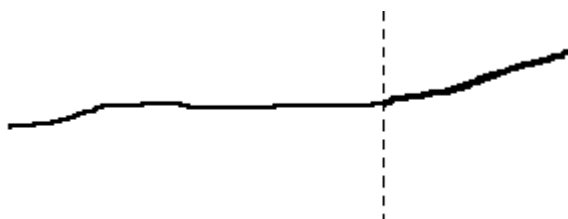
(8) *¿Me estás amenazando?*
 ‘Are you threatening me?’

According to the traditional approach, utterances with this pattern are usually called *reflejas* (‘reflex’), and can convey a large range of attitudes: they can show disagreement, amazement, puzzlement, irritation; or they can “comment” on the interlocutor’s words with surprise, irony, interest; or they can express disapproval, rejection... (Cfr. Fernández Ramírez (1951) and (1957-59)).

2.1.3. The rising contour

A rising pattern is also described for polar interrogatives.

(9)



According to the received view, it is found in the sequences in italics of utterances like

(10) a. ¿Pero qué creéis? ¿Qué cree la gente?... *¿Que yo estoy enamorada del profesor?*

‘But what do you think? What do people think? That I am in love with the teacher?’

b. Pero, tonta, ¿qué crees que he estado haciendo? *¿contándote cuentos?* Pues no.

‘But, you silly girl, what do you think I have been doing? Telling you stories? Not at all.’

Fernández Ramírez (1959: 259) uses the term *exploratorias* (exploratory) to refer to these interrogatives, in which the speaker herself voluntarily offers an explanation for her question (I will conventionally refer to the speaker as *she*, and to the hearer as *he*).

2.2. Problems with this approach

In the previous sections I have sketched the standard description of intonational patterns for interrogatives and their interpretations. This approach, however, raises a number of problematic issues.

First, there is no attempt to establish a constant correlation between suprasegmental contours and meaning. If the standard characterisation is accepted, it is far from clear that the contribution of each one of these patterns be a systematic one. The diversity of intentions that, according to this view, can be transmitted by an utterance with any of those melodic contours hinders any generalisation.

Second, if no explicit principle is suggested, which governs the selection of each one of these patterns, there will be, as a consequence, a number of utterances for which it will be difficult to decide what the proper contour is. In fact, Fernández Ramírez (1959: 259) noted that the same sentence in the same situation would fit both into the rising-falling contour and the rising pattern quite naturally — and this is true, for example, even for the utterances in (10), which are supposed to be good instances of exploratory interrogatives — , so he had to admit that it is not always easy to distinguish between *reflective* and *exploratory* interrogatives.

Third, the description does not explain why, although there are three different patterns, both native speakers and grammarians consider the falling-rising contour as the prototypical or canonical one.

The proposal I want to build tries to give a satisfactory answer to these problems.

3. Relevance and Linguistic Encoding: Conceptual and Procedural Expressions

As many linguists have pointed out, the illocutionary force of an utterance is not an intrinsic property of the sentence itself, but an effect of the interaction between encoded meaning and contextual assumptions (See Sperber and Wilson (1986) and (1993) for a convincing discussion). The ultimate intention of a speaker cannot be fully predicted from the very form of her utterance. Thus, as Goody (1978:20) points out, if a guest at a party asks her partner *What time is it?*, from a linguistic perspective we can only say that her utterance was overtly a question about the time, although she may try to convey that it is too late and they should go. We all have the intuition that in those circumstances the addressee can reach the intended interpretation quite naturally; but if he does not, there will be *no grammatical error* in his performance. Understanding an utterance is, therefore, a matter both of decoding and inference, a matter of combining linguistically encoded information with a particular set of contextual assumptions, in order to advance a hypothesis about the speaker's intention.

However, the speaker is not expected to put the addressee to an unjustifiable amount of processing effort (i.e., an effort not rewarded with enough effects). The theoretical generalisation under the previous informal statement is what Sperber and Wilson (1995) call the *Second, or Communicative, Principle of Relevance* (In the first edition of *Relevance* (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) it was called 'Principle of Relevance' *tout court.*):

- (11) "Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 266-267)

which means that

- (12) "a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it.
b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences." (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 270)

The addressee's interpretation is built on the presumption that the stimulus is adequate enough for him to be able to recover the intended set of assumptions, including those regarding the speaker's communicative goals, at no unnecessary processing cost. If so, it seems reasonable that utterances should contain some formal elements that help the addressee to construct the interpretation. In fact, as Wilson and Sperber have suggested,

“An utterance can be expected to encode two basic types of information: representational and computational, or conceptual and procedural — that is, information about the representations to be manipulated, and information about how to manipulate them.” (Wilson and Sperber, 1993:2)

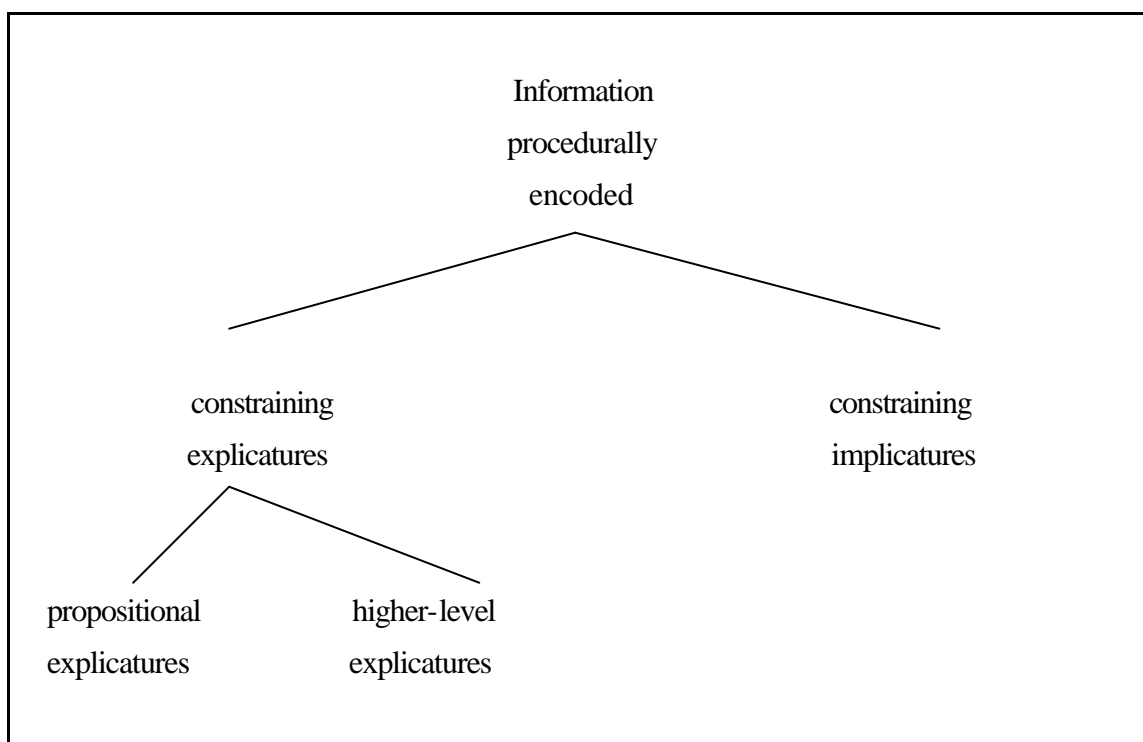
The distinction between *conceptual* and *procedural information* has become one of the key notions in all cognitive approaches. It was introduced in the relevance-theoretic framework by Blakemore (1987) to account for the meaning of discourse connectives, such as *so* or *after all*. According to her analysis, these particles do not encode concepts and do not contribute to the utterance's truth conditions, but encode instructions that guide the addressee towards the intended interpretation. Thus, the distinction between conceptual and procedural encoding does not fully parallel the one between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional, or illocutionary meaning, as Blakemore herself (1992), or Wilson and Sperber (1993) have shown: on the one hand, there are conceptual expressions that do not contribute to the truth conditions of an utterance (such as so-called “illocutionary adverbials”); and, on the other hand, there are procedural expressions that do contribute to the utterance's truth conditions (such as personal pronouns).

A *procedural expression* is therefore a formal device encoding instructions about how to select the interpretation, or, put in more abstract terms, encoding constraints on the inferential phase of comprehension by restricting the range of possible interpretations for a sequence.

In the relevance-theoretic framework, inferential processes are not limited to the identification of implicatures — as they would be in a Gricean model —, but also take place in the determination of explicatures, that is, of what is explicitly communicated. The need for inferential processes leading to the determination of explicatures seems clear. Sentences are abstract semantic representations and do not express propositions; before they are able to — that is, before they can have truth conditions —, their logical forms must be developed and inferentially completed. Reference assignment, disambiguation and enrichment of vague expressions are all inferential tasks linked to the determination of the *propositional*, or *lower-level*, *explicatures* of an utterance.

What is explicitly communicated, however, is not exhausted by the determination of the proposition itself: it also involves the characterisation of the utterance as performing a certain action or conveying a certain attitude of the speaker's towards its content: the representations specifying illocutionary force and propositional attitude constitute its *higher-level explicatures*.

Procedural expressions impose restrictions on inferential processes. Since there are at least three different stages of inference — those yielding lower-level explicatures, higher-level explicatures, and implicatures —, one would expect that different procedural expressions should affect each of those phases; and in fact it is what happens. The schema below, adapted from Wilson and Sperber (1993: 3), shows the scope of procedurally encoded information:



Languages provide a wealth of formal means for encoding procedural information: these typically include lexical or morphological items and syntactic constructions. For instance, discourse connectives are lexical items that constrain implicatures, while personal pronouns place restrictions on propositional explicatures, and mood indicators are syntactic or lexical markers that constrain higher-level explicatures. Some of them have already received an analysis in relevance-theoretic terms (See Blakemore (1987) for discourse connectives;

Kleiber (1990), and Wilson and Sperber (1993) for personal pronouns; Blass (1990) for an analysis of hearsay particles as procedural constraints on higher-level explicatures; and Wilson and Sperber (1988), and Clark (1993) for mood indicators. See also the references found in Sperber and Wilson (1995: 297, fn. 21-23)).

Although it is widely assumed that intonation plays a major role in determining the interpretation of an utterance, suprasegmental variation has not, however, been systematically analysed in this light. Prosodic emphasis (as used for focus marking is a suitable candidate to be accounted for in procedural terms, and the same goes, I would suggest, for other suprasegmental patterns.

As for interrogative mood, I will assume the standard relevance-theoretic approach (Sperber and Wilson (1986: 4.10), and Wilson and Sperber (1988)), which is based on the distinction between *descriptive* and *interpretive use*. An utterance is a description when its propositional content reflects a state of affairs; and it is interpretively used when it represents another propositional form because they resemble each other in some respect:

“[Any representation] can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs; in this case we will say that the representation is a description, or that it is used descriptively. Or it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form — a thought, for instance — in virtue of a resemblance between the two propositional forms; in this case we will say that the first representation is an interpretation of the second one, or that it is used interpretively.” (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 228-229)

According to this approach, interrogative sentences are interpretations of “desirable” thoughts, i.e., “interpretations of answers that the speaker would regard as relevant if true.” (Sperber and Wilson (1986:252)). Being a two-place predicate, the notion of “desirability” needs a further specification on the person to whom the speaker supposes the answer would be relevant. Therefore, in the interpretation of any interrogative utterance the hearer must contextually infer who is the intended target, i.e., the person for whom the represented thought would be relevant.

4. Intonation and Procedural Restrictions on Higher-Level Explicatures

The proposal I want to put forward in this section can be summarised as follows: the three different patterns found in Spanish interrogatives each encode a different procedural piece of information (a certain computational instruction), namely a specific restriction on the determination of higher-level explicatures. The contribution of each one of these melodic contours to the interpretation is linguistically encoded and a systematic, constant one.

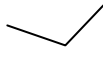
4.1. The falling-rising contour: Neutral interrogatives

Interrogatives with a falling-rising intonation represent the unmarked case on the suprasegmental side. The falling-rising contour is a formal device encoding the interrogative meaning. In the present case, the procedural instruction is to process the utterance as an interpretation (i.e., a resembling representation) of a thought that would be relevant to someone if true, as the standard relevance-theoretic approach to interrogatives claims.

4.1.1. Compatible interpretations

The hypothesis about the speaker's intention in producing the stimulus (that is, the utterance's higher-level explicatures) must be constructed and developed on the basis of this abstract interrogative meaning, and must be fully compatible with this instruction; but — it should be noted — its ultimate interpretation crucially depends on contextual assumptions. In fact, the difference between genuine questions, requests and suggestions, rhetorical, exam or expository questions, etc., does not necessarily involve any perceptible variation in the form of the utterance, but can be the result of computing different contextual assumptions (namely, assumptions about the person to whom the answer would be relevant, and additionally, about what the degree of knowledge attributed to the hearer is): when the answer is thought to be relevant for the speaker, we have genuine questions or exam questions; when it is for the hearer, we have rhetorical questions, suggestions, expository questions, ...

Thus, the various illocutions that can be associated with an interrogative can be easily accounted for in this way as a result of different, contextually determined decisions about the construction of higher-level explicatures. For instance, an utterance such as

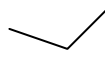
- 
- (13) *¿Sabes lo que cuesta este cuadro?*
‘Do you know how much this picture costs?’

with a falling-rising intonation can serve a vast range of illocutionary purposes. It can be a genuine question, in a context in which the speaker’s goal is to obtain a certain piece of information and the hearer is in a position to give a true answer; it can be a rhetorical question (see Escandell-Vidal, 1984), acting as a reminder to the hearer, with an interpretation like *You don’t have the slightest idea about how important this picture is*. It can also be used as an indirect request, if the hearer is not being careful enough with a priceless painting; it can offer information, if the speaker knows the answer but the hearer does not; or it can be an exam question... This list of possible interpretations does not aim to be exhaustive, ...and probably it could never be: the interpretation of intentions crucially depends on contextual assumptions and their possible combinations are virtually unlimited; it only aims to show that interrogatives with a falling-rising pattern are compatible with any interpretation unless further indications are given.

4.1.2. *The falling-rising pattern as an obligatory marker*

However, the fact that the falling-rising contour is compatible with any interpretation does not imply that it is not obligatory for some of them to arise. Some illocutions indeed require that the inferential phase be minimally restricted, so no further, inconvenient constraints should be imposed on the interrogative abstract meaning for the construction of higher-level explicatures.

Genuine questions can clearly illustrate this point. As said above, for an interrogative to be interpreted as a genuine question (that is, as a sincere request for unknown information) it is necessary, among other things, that the underspecification concerning the person to whom the answer would be relevant is resolved on the speaker, and that there is enough evidence to suppose that the hearer is able to provide the requested information. Now, as soon as we add a piece of information that manifestly contradicts some of these assumptions, any possibility of constructing an interpretation as an information-seeking utterance is definitely destroyed, so one would obtain anything but a genuine question. Consider the following utterance:

- 
- (14) # *Ya sé que no lo sabes, pero ¿ha llegado Juan?*
‘I know you don’t know, but is John arrived?’

The first part of it overtly states that the speaker is convinced that the hearer does not know the answer to her “question”, which makes this assumption mutually manifest to both speaker and hearer. With such an assumption being a part of the context of interpretation for the interrogative, it is impossible to interpret the second part as a genuine question — in fact, it seems difficult, though not impossible, to reach any consistent interpretation at all —, and this is why this utterance sounds odd.

This is exactly — I will argue — what the other intonational patterns do. As I will try to show in the next sections, rising-falling and rising intonations encode additional procedural instructions, and therefore overtly communicate further restrictions on the inferential processes. If so, the prediction is that they will be incompatible with interpretations requiring minimal restrictions, namely, with the interpretation of an interrogative as a genuine question.

If this proposal is on the right track, then we have a natural explanation for two related intuitions: the intuition that interrogatives with a falling-rising contour are more basic examples of interrogatives, and the intuition that genuine questions are seen as the prototypical function of interrogatives. It is so because falling-rising intonation represents the default, unmarked case, and because the interpretation as an information-seeking utterance requires the occurrence of this pattern.

4.2. The rising-falling contour: Attribution to other

As shown above, the rising-falling contour represents the mirror-image of the falling-rising pattern. It seems reasonable to suppose that such a clearly perceptible contrast in the phonological shaping of the utterance should be associated with a systematic difference in meaning.

The rising-falling contour encodes an added piece of procedural information, namely the attribution of the content represented in the sentence to another individual¹. It is usually attributed to the hearer, but this is not a necessary condition: the identity assignment is not encoded in the utterance, but must be inferred by the hearer.

Interrogatives with a rising-falling intonation constitute, then, a case of echoic utterances in relevance-theoretic terms (i.e., utterances in which the speaker echoes a thought attributed to someone else. See Sperber and Wilson (1986: 4.9))². They are also a case of second-degree interpretive use, since they first represent a thought of the speaker which turns out to be itself an interpretation of another thought entertained by another individual.

Attributed interrogatives are a special case of interpretive use. If so, one would expect that they should share some formal properties with other attributed representations, namely with covert quotations. The occurrence of markers of reported speech in attributed interrogatives is, I think, one of such properties. In fact, indicators of syntactical embedding, such as *que* (completive ‘that’) and *si* (‘whether’) or a combination of both, may appear in initial position — the conditions governing their occurrence involve other parameters, so I will not pursue this issue here (but see Escandell-Vidal (1998) for a more detailed account):

- (15) *¿Que si tenían éxito?*
 That whether they were successful?
 ‘Were they successful?’

Their relevance comes precisely from the fact that they are attributed representations. As one would expect, this imposes a sharp reduction in the range of possible interpretations for the utterance, i.e., a formal restriction on the construction of its higher-level explicatures. Although a common implication that the speaker wants to dissociate herself from the representation she has uttered may arise, it is not encoded, nor is a necessary implication. The speaker’s precise attitude towards the attributed proposition must be gathered from contextual assumptions. Let’s, then, examine some examples of rising-falling interrogatives in this light.

4.2.1. Repetitive interrogatives

The dialogue in (7), repeated here for convenience’s sake, contains a standard instance of reflective interrogative: the one in italics.

- (7) A: —...y cuando se casó...
 ...and when she got married...
 B: — ¡Ah! *¿Se casó?*
 Ah! Got married?
 ‘Oh! Did she?’

According to my proposal, the rising-falling contour indicates that the utterance’s content is attributed to someone else. The use illustrated in (7) is, I think, one of the clearest cases, since B’s utterance literally echoes some words that were *actually* pronounced by the other

speaker: the previous turn contains the attributed representation. The reply is, in fact, a prototypical instance of an *echo question*³.

My approach suggests that all the interrogatives that are usually analysed under the label of *repetitives* will admit the rising-falling contour, no matter what the syntactic status of the echoed utterance was. This happens to be true, since the same intonation is found in *ditto questions*, which repeat not a declarative, but an interrogative. Thus, we will find the rising-falling contour in utterances like B's reply in (16):

- (16) A: —¿Te gusta la gramática?
 ‘Do you like grammar?’
- B: —¿(Que) si me gusta la gramática? ¡Me encanta!
 (That) whether I like grammar? I love it!
 ‘Do I like grammar? I love it!’

Moreover, if my analysis is correct, the same intonation should appear even in wh-interrogatives, when these are a repetition of a previous utterance. This prediction seems also to be on the right track:

- (17) A: —¿Desde cuándo la conoces?
 ‘Since when have you known her?’
- B: —¿Desde cuándo la conozco? No sé... desde hace dos o tres años.
 ‘Since when have I known her?...Two or three years ago, perhaps’

Being a genuine question, A's utterance presents the falling contour of unmarked constituent interrogatives, and only B's echo can be uttered with a rising-falling intonation. What is important to notice is that, although B's utterance also admits the unmarked pattern, it is absolutely impossible to exchange both contours when A's utterance is a genuine question. This is exactly what one should expect given the analysis of falling-rising intonation suggested before. (See section 4.1 above.)

However, there is a point in which my analysis seems to make the wrong prediction. If my approach were correct, one would expect that also reclamatory questions should present a rising-falling contour; however, this is not the case. In a dialogue like the one in (18) it is never possible to have echoic intonation in B's reply:

- (18) A: —¿Se lo has dicho?
 ‘Did you tell him?’
- B: —¿Si le he dicho qué?
 Whether I told him what?
 ‘Did I tell him what?’
- A: —Si le has dicho lo del aumento de sueldo
 Whether you told him about the pay rise.
 ‘Did you tell him about the pay rise?’

Nevertheless, reclamatory questions do not constitute a counterexample to my proposal, but rather provide evidence to strengthen it. They neatly differ from other repetitive interrogatives in a significant way: they are manifestly used to elicit an answer from the hearer, an answer that the speaker would regard as relevant to herself. Echoes and dittoes, on the other hand, communicate an attitude towards one of the interlocutor’s representation. Thus, reclamatory questions do not acquire their relevance as interpretations of *attributed* thoughts, but as interpretations of *desirable* thoughts. Put in more informal terms, reclamatory questions ARE questions, while echoes and dittoes are not. Given that the restriction on higher-level explicatures induced by the rising-falling pattern is not compatible with the eliciting of information, the fact that reclamatory questions reject the rising-falling contour is exactly what one should expect from the analysis of unmarked intonation presented above.

4.2.2. *Attributed statements*

A second class of interrogatives that are relevant as representations of attributed thoughts can be found in those cases in which the speaker anticipates the words that she supposes that her interlocutor was to utter.

- (19) A: —La única solución consiste...
 ‘The only solution is...’
- B: —¿En recortar los tipos de interés? Nunca me ha convencido.
 ‘Trimming the interest rates? That has never convinced me.’
- (20) A: —Y hasta podemos hacer...
 ‘And we can even...’
- B: —¿Dejar un cabo de vela sólo?
 ‘Leave a candle stump only?’

A: —Eso es.
‘That’s it.’

In these dialogues, B produces an utterance that continues A’s interrupted conversational turn. The rising-falling intonation in B’s utterance unequivocally indicates that she transmits not a thought of hers, but one of another person’s —in this case, one of the hearer’s — the fact that in the present situation it is the hearer does not imply that it is a part of the intonation’s meaning; remember that the identity of the person to whom the representation is attributed is never encoded.⁷ It does not necessarily imply, however, that B wants to dissociate herself from the representation she has uttered: although it is the case in (19), it is not in (20). As suggested before, the speaker’s particular attitude is not encoded, but must be gathered from contextual assumptions.

4.2.3. *Attributed answers*

Other cases of rising-falling interrogatives can be found in those situations in which the speaker asks a real question and she answers it by herself, anticipating again the hearer’s next conversational turn.



- (21) A: —¿Qué se creía usted? *¿Que yo era un analfabeu?*
‘What did you think? That I was illiterate?’
B: —No, no, Dios me libre. ¡Yo no creía nada!
‘Oh, no, God forbid. I didn’t think anything!’

- (22) *¿Y qué quieres tú? ¿Que digan todo?*
‘And what do you expect them to do? To tell everything?’


The sequences in italics represent an answer that the speaker attributes to the other. In the whole sequence, the speaker acts out as herself when asking the question, and as the hearer when answering it. The rising-falling intonation of the second segment (the attributed answer) contrasts starkly with the falling-rising pattern of the previous question. Again, although the sequences in italics could also be uttered with the unmarked interrogative intonation, the rising-falling contour could never appear in the preceding interrogatives.

4.2.4. *Attributed questions*

Finally, attributions can also be made without a previous statement or a previous question:

- (23) a.  *¿Si tenían éxito?* Les iba estupendamente.
 Whether they were successful? They were thriving
 ‘Were they successful?. They were thriving.’
- b.  *¿Que cuándo te lo devuelvo?* Mañana sin falta, de verdad
 That when should I give it back to you?
 ‘When will I give it back to you? Tomorrow without fail, honest.’

These examples constitute prototypical cases of what classical rhetorics called *subjectio*: a figure of speech in which the speaker asks herself a question (attributed to a virtual hearer) and gives an answer to it in the same conversational turn, producing a fictitious dialogue. Attributed questions are thus the reverse of self-answers, and could be called *self-questions*: the speaker plays the role of someone in her audience in the question, and plays her own role in the answer. Again, as one would expect, the rising-falling intonation can be applied both to *yes/no* interrogatives — such as (23)a — and *wh*-interrogatives —such as (23)b . So-called expository or didactic questions (those used in a monologue to make the subject advance and to create interest in the audience) also fall into this category, since they are particular instances of attributed questions.

- (24)  *¿Van a bajar los tipos de interés?* A corto plazo creo que sí
 Are the interest rates going down? I think so, in the short term

The examples in this section have shown that it is possible to give a unified account of all interrogatives with a rising-falling final contour in terms of a single and systematic property, namely the attribution of the utterance’s content to another individual. The intonation thus encodes a procedural restriction on the construction of higher-level explicatures, which guides the hearer to an interpretation that must be fully compatible with the assumption that the speaker does not present herself as responsible for the representation contained in her utterance.

4.3. Attributed Interrogatives, ‘Echo Questions’ and Mood

In the preceding sections I have suggested an account of a number of sequences as ‘attributed interrogatives’. Now, one could argue that most of the examples discussed under that heading are indeed attributed, but are not interrogative, and that a different and more

suitable explanation could be forwarded, say, in terms of ‘echo questions’. In this section I will try to show that the analysis as attributed interrogatives offers an explanation that is both more powerful and more restricted than the alternative one.

Two recent accounts of ‘echo questions’ have been suggested from a relevance-theoretic perspective: Blakemore (1994) and Noh (1995). Though sharing a common framework, they attain to different conclusions. Blakemore (1994) tries to show that, despite the fact that they do not have an interrogative syntax, echo questions are interrogative since they convey a “questioning attitude”. Noh (1995) claims that they are a sort of free indirect speech (Noh (1995: sect 4.1), and points out that they “do not have the properties of interrogative sentences, such as inverted word order or *wh*-fronting.” (Noh (1995: 108). I think that Noh (1995) is right when she argues that Blakemore’s (1994) proposal is hardly tenable, that ‘echo questions’ are interrogative only on semantic grounds. But Noh’s (1995: 122) suggestion that “they are apparently not interrogative syntactically”, though they still express an attitude of “wondering about”, is also difficult to maintain, if not merely a different way to put the same idea, unless a more detailed account of how this can be the case is provided. Although they are used to support different proposals, both Blakemore’s and Noh’s approaches depart from the same point, i.e., that internal syntax is the crucial property. When arguing against the interrogative status of ‘echo questions’, only structural aspects are considered; when arguing for it, it seems that only overall meaning can be invoked.

A treatment of attributed interrogatives as ‘echo questions’ is based, then, on two assumptions: first, that some of them are not interrogative; second, that ‘echo questions’ are not interrogative — at least not from a syntactic point of view. I would like to address them independently.

Take examples (25) and (26).

(25) A: —¿*Le habrá ocurrido algo?*

To-him will-have happened something?

‘Might something have happened to him?’

B: —¿*Ocurrirle qué?*

Happen to-him what?

‘(Happened) what?’

(26) ¿*El Ministro ha dimitido?*

‘The Minister has resigned?’

Apparently, they have almost nothing in common with canonical interrogatives: in fact, (25) shows *wh- in situ*, and (26) does not exhibit subject/inflected-verb inversion. The label ‘echo question’ was suggested to define a territory in which to confine sequences such as the ones in (25)-(26) that did not fully comply with the linear requirements of interrogatives. Their

syntactic anomaly could be easily explained by the fact that they were repetitions. At the root of the distinction between interrogatives and ‘echo questions’ one can find the idea that a certain word order is the defining property of an interrogative.

Thus the term ‘echo question’ has to refer both to some syntactic properties of a sentence, and to its particular position as an utterance in a discourse: ‘echo questions’ should be at the same time *yes-no* questions without subject/verb inversion (or *wh*-questions without fronting), and repetitions of (part of) a previous utterance. Of course, the result of combining these two different criteria is a well defined set, but one that does not seem to have any extra interesting property as such — it has no more interest than any other set defined by two randomly chosen conditions.

The theoretical problem with this notion is that a class cross-cutting structural and discursive domains can hardly have any explanatory power either for syntax or for pragmatics. Even from a purely descriptive side, the notion of ‘echo question’ presents several inadequacies. Consider examples such as (15), repeated here:


- (15) *¿Que si tenían éxito?*
 That whether they-had success?
 ‘Were they successful?’

It presents all the prototypical features of repetitive utterances (quotative particles *que*, ‘that’, and *si*, ‘whether’, and circumflex intonation) but it does not repeat any preceding discourse. Is it to be seen as an instance of an ‘echo question’?

Take now examples (27) and (17) (repeated below):

- (27) A: — *Lo vi cuando se casó María.*
 I saw him when got-married Maria
 ‘I saw him when Maria got married’
 B: — *¿Se casó María?*
 Got married Maria?
 ‘Maria got married?’

- (17) A: — *¿Desde cuándo la conoces?*
 ‘Since when have you known her?’

B: — *¿Desde cuándo la conozco?*  *No sé... desde hace dos o tres años.*
 ‘Since when have I known her?...Two or three years, perhaps’

They reproduce a previous utterance, but they do have subject/verb inversion and *wh*-fronting. Are they to be considered ‘echo questions’?

What these examples suggest is that neither “declarative syntax” is a necessary condition for repetitions, nor is the existence of an actual repetition a necessary condition for the use of a “syntactically anomalous” interrogative. If the answer to the above questions is a negative one, some interesting generalisations seem to be missing; but an affirmative answer would not yield a better result either.

Of course, there is a possible solution, but it is only a paliative one: to modify the notion of ‘echo question’ by dispensing with one of the original conditions — the discursive one. Notice that this proposal entails that ‘echo questions’ are no longer “echoes”, at least not in the usual sense (I put aside for the moment the question whether they are echoes in the relevance-theoretic sense). In other words, we are left with a purely syntactic notion. This could be considered as a welcome result, but it has to face at least one more problem: there is no convincing characterisation of ‘echo questions’ in purely syntactic terms; we have only rather impressionistic accounts, such as Radford’s (1988:464): “Morphologically and syntactically echo questions seem to have more in common with the sentence types they are used to echo than with the corresponding nonecho questions.”; or Huddleston’s (1984:377): “We will analyze echoes as belonging to the same clause type as the corresponding examples.”

These proposals claim that ‘echo questions’ are not interrogative. We have already accepted that ‘echo questions’ are not necessarily “echoes”; if they are not interrogative, can we still maintain that they are “questions” in any sense?

Some “questioning” or “wondering” attitude seems, in fact, to be an intrinsic property of these sequences, and this is the generalisation that Blakemore (1994) tries to capture when she suggests that they are indeed interrogative. In fact, it is hard to see how they can convey such an attitude without being interrogative, as Noh (1995) claims. Of course, one could argue that a “questioning attitude” can be encoded by a non-interrogative marker. But if this point is to be accepted, a consistent explanation must be offered for the fact that languages should have the same “attitude” encoded by two different, and unrelated means. If they do not share *any* property with interrogatives, what is the relevant indicator in the case of ‘echo questions’? If no further details are provided, the claim that they encode such an attitude without being interrogative seems to lack a solid foundation.

To clarify the matter, I would like to turn now to the first assumption: that (at least) some of the examples are not interrogative; it is so because a certain word order is considered as the defining property. This seems to be the received view on interrogatives. However, this approach is a particular manifestation of a widespread confusion between grammar and syntax, which is responsible for the fact that the relationship between syntactic and prosodic features has not been well understood, and that some crucial properties have been systematically neglected. In fact, there is another perceptible property of the interrogative stimulus that must be taken into account: its intonation pattern.

To begin with, even in a language like English, in which “canonical interrogativity” is always visible, some particular interrogative contour always appears together with subject/auxiliary inversion. Does it mean that intonation is simply redundant? On the other hand, for a number of languages, which include Spanish, among others, the traditional approaches have usually assumed that intonation is the only relevant feature: most *yes-no* interrogatives cannot be distinguished from their corresponding declaratives but for their intonation pattern; moreover, in pro-drop languages, subject/verb inversion is not usually visible in the linear order of elements, so it is word order that seems to be the dispensable property. But is it really superfluous? Furthermore, it is a fact that a special, interrogative contour is found, both in English and Spanish, with non-sentential sequences (NPs, PPs, small clauses...):

- (28) a. *¿Juan?*
 ‘John?’
 b. *¿Tú por aquí?*
 ‘You here?’

These examples show that there are some mood indicators that can appear no matter what the internal structure of the sentence is; they can appear even in a string that does not constitute a sentence at all. This is true not only for the interrogative contour, but also for declarative or exclamative intonation.

What these facts seem to suggest is that (at least) some mood markers can be independent from the internal structure of the sequence. A reasonable hypothesis is, then, to suppose that what we usually call “mood” is not a basic, simple notion, but one that needs to be “split” into different constituents. A possibility worth considering is that intonation, word order and other lexical or morphological properties — usually seen as simultaneous manifestations of a single mood — could in fact be different indicators pointing in different

(though not necessarily contradictory) directions. Defining mood only and always as a sentential property would simply leave a number of phenomena unexplained.

Conveying a certain attitude is a property we attribute to utterances, not to sentences, and it can be guided by various indicators, including prosodic means. ‘Clause types’, on the other hand, are to be related to sentences, not to utterances. It has been usual to melt both notions, and to suppose, for example, that an utterance has a certain word order because it is an interrogative. On the contrary, if we take the interrogative contour as the defining property of interrogatives, we can offer a principled account of the above phenomena. The sequences in (28) do not have sentential status, let alone “interrogative syntax”; nevertheless they give rise to the same sort of interpretations as an interrogative sentence. If they do so, it is because intonation is playing its “normal” role, encoding a procedural restriction on the construction of higher-level explicatures — which is not, after all, an unexpected result, since higher-level explicatures are properties of utterances, not of sentences. Although one can assume that the complete interpretation of these utterances requires the recovering of a fully propositional form, it is clear that the instruction encoded by the intonation is consistently given before some propositional form is recovered and it is not parasitic on it.

What then about word order? I think it plays a major role in interrogatives, but one that affects their interpretation, not their grammatical status. I have argued elsewhere (Escandell-Vidal (1998)) that even Spanish neutral *yes-no* interrogatives exhibit obligatory subject/verb inversion. Although I cannot develop it here, the explanation can be summarised as follows. From a syntactic, and hence also from a semantic point of view, interrogation acts as an operator: it takes a certain scope over some constituents. For a constituent to fall under the scope of the operator it must be grammatically specified as focus. *Wh*-fronting and auxiliary raising are just particular instances of the usual means some languages have to characterise a constituent as focus. If so, it is not the syntax of interrogatives, but the identification of the domain of the interrogative operator, what may require subject/verb inversion or *wh*-fronting. Changes in word order are then a secondary feature — a feature that is not directly linked to interrogative mood as such, but rather is related to focus assignment. What we usually consider to be the proper syntax of interrogatives could be merely the syntax of focus marking. Only if this is the case, can there be an explanation for the otherwise striking similarities that are found in non-related languages between both the syntax and the semantics of focus and interrogative mood (Rooth, 1992).

Intonation and word order are two independent, though sometimes related markers encoding different pieces of procedural information. When appearing together, they give rise to the interpretation that has usually been associated with interrogative mood, which is not *the* canonical interpretation, but is simply *an* interpretation fully compatible with both of them. When only intonation appears, an interpretation consistent with the encoded instruction must be found. In any case, the overall interpretation is merely a function of computing the instructions encoded in the form of the utterance.

To characterise the difference in the interpretation of ordinary and echo questions, Noh (1995: 133) follows a suggestion by D. Wilson according to which “the attitude of echo questions is one of ‘wondering about’, (...), while the attitude expressed in ordinary questions is ‘wondering whether, what’, etc.” Now, my proposal offers a natural explanation for this fact. When the interrogative operator has a defined domain — i.e., when it finds a constituent characterised as focus —, its interpretation is specified, and the ‘wondering attitude’ concentrates on a particular string (*whether, what, who...*); when its domain is not syntactically defined, the attitude is left unspecified and therefore the ‘wondering attitude’ can affect any of the aspects of the attributed representation — how they are selected is a matter of pragmatic inference.

In the previous discussion I left aside the relationship between ‘echo questions’ and ‘echoic or interpretive use’ in relevance-theoretic terms. The idea that ‘echo questions’ are specialised for echoic use, as suggested by Noh (1995) is, no doubt, tempting. If we could show that ‘echo questions’ in the syntactic sense are always and only used for attributing thoughts (regardless of the fact that they had been previously uttered or not), we could recover an attractive correlation between linguistic form and interpretation. Apparently this is the case for most of the examples considered before. However, there are some facts that do not seem to support that possibility. Consider again the utterance in (25):

- (25) A: —¿*Le habrá ocurrido algo?*
 ‘Might something have happened to him?’
 B: —¿*Ocurrirle qué?*
 Happen-to-him what?
 ‘(Happened) what?’

B's reply has *wh-* in situ, so it is a prototypical instance of 'echo question' in the syntactic sense. However, this utterance acquires its relevance as a 'real questions' (i.e., as an interpretation of a desirable thought, one that the speaker would regard relevant to herself if true). Although it is an actual repetition, it systematically rejects the circumflex pattern, and its intonation contour is necessarily the unmarked one. What we have then is a case in which a syntactic 'echo question' is not an echoic utterance.

To sum up, intonation is the defining property of interrogatives, the one that determines the mood of the utterance and the one that encodes the 'wondering attitude'. The Spanish circumflex contour adds to the default interrogative instruction a new piece of procedural information, namely the need to process the content of the utterance as an attributed thought. Characterising an utterance as an 'attributed interrogative' amounts to saying that it has a contour that encodes the instruction to process it both as an interrogative (first degree of interpretiveness) and as an attributed representation (second degree of interpretiveness). This is thus a grammatical characterisation, but not a discursive or a syntactic one. It does not make any claim about the position of the utterance in a discourse, nor about the need for an actual repetition, thus allowing for non-repetitive attributions. It says nothing about its syntax either, nor about the need for a sentential status. The fact that the internal structure of the sequence may reflect that of the attributed representation is merely a predictable consequence, given that it will contribute to the same interpretation; but it is never a necessary property. For the same reason, even sentences with a "normal" interrogative syntax can occur as attributed interrogatives when marked with the proper intonation (Cfr. example (17))

I have argued for a 'split' approach to mood. Mood indicators may be independent from the sentential status of an utterance, and from other mood markers. These include intonational patterns, particles and probably word order. Each encodes an autonomous piece of procedural information. When appearing together, the only requirement is to find an interpretation compatible with all of them. Using this framework, 'attributed interrogatives' are defined as a single grammatical class sharing only a particular intonational contour, to which a procedural semantics is associated: that of interrogatives and that of interpretive use. In this way, a number of phenomena are explained, without resorting to the vague notion of 'echo question'. If my proposal is on the right track, then there seems to be no consistent ground on which to reject the interrogative status of so-called 'echo questions'.

4.3. *The rising contour: Attribution to self*

A uniformly high-rising intonation characterises the third class of interrogatives. What I want to suggest is that it adds the attribution of the utterance's representation to the speaker. The utterance is again a second-degree interpretation, since it represents a "desirable" thought of the speaker's (that is, a thought relevant to someone if true) which is an interpretation of another thought entertained by herself. The utterance at the same time poses a question to the hearer *and* is an interpretation — is in a relationship of interpretive resemblance to — a thought of the speaker (the expected answer). This implies that she is not neutral regarding the content of this representation; moreover, she is in a position to provide the hearer with the true representation if required. Let's reconsider some crucial examples in this light.

4.3.1. *Some examples*

The italicised sequences in (10), repeated here, have been presented as good instances of the use of rising intonation:

(10) a. *¿Pero qué creéis? ¿Qué cree la gente?... ¿Que yo estoy enamorada del profesor?*

'But what do you think? What do people think? That I am in love with the teacher?'

b. Pero, tonta, *¿qué crees que he estado haciendo? ¿contándote cuentos?* Pues no.

'But, you silly girl, what do you think I have been doing? Telling you stories? Not at all.'

They both represent thoughts that interpretively resemble one of the speaker's representations — that is, interrogatives for which the speaker manifestly has an answer. In fact, she offers it by herself in (10)b (*Pues no*), and she could have done the same in (10)a.

However, one could argue that these two utterances can also be analysed as good examples of attributed answers ^(See section 4.2.3 above), i.e., of a situation favouring the rising-falling pattern instead, since in both cases the speaker first asks a question (*¿Qué cree la gente?* in (10)a, and *¿Qué crees que he estado haciendo?* in (10)b), and then gives an answer to it — an answer that could have been given by her interlocutor; they are indeed

absolutely parallel examples to the ones in (19) and (20) given above as instances of attribution to other.

These are in fact the critical cases that have been described in the literature (See Fernández Ramírez (1957-59), and section 2.3) as allowing an hesitation between the rising-falling and the rising contour. I will try to show that there is a natural explanation for this apparently random behaviour⁴. But before attempting this, I would like to continue with the analysis of other examples with rising intonation.

The clearest examples of the use of a rising contour are found in utterances such as the ones in (29):

- (29) a. *¿En qué mano lo tengo?*
 ‘Which hand is it in?’ [hiding something behind her back]
- b. *¿Cuál es el colmo de la paciencia?*
 ‘What is the height of patience?’

The example in (29)a can be typically used as a guessing game, and (29)b is a riddle. As in the case of rising-falling intonation, the rising pattern can also be used with *wh*-interrogatives to transmit the same computational information.

Now, one could think that these are, after all, two conventional situations, so in these cases it is precisely the situation that makes the intended interpretation arise. However, whenever the rising pattern occurs, this interpretation obtains no matter what the content of the utterance is, no matter what the external circumstances are. For instance, the examples in (30) cannot be seen either as a conventional guessing game, or as a riddle:

- (30) a. *¿Sabes quién ha venido?*
 ‘Do you know who’s come?’
- b. *¿Le han dado el puesto?*
 ‘Has he been given the post?’

If the attribution to herself is really encoded in the intonation, one would expect that no other interpretation should be allowed. This is in fact what we find: the utterances in (30) could never be understood as genuine questions, nor as representations attributed to another individual.

The intonational pattern definitely rules out any interpretation contradicting its procedural instructions.

The same holds for a dialogue such as the one in (31):

- (31) A: —¿*Y quién sabía lo de la herencia?*
 ‘And who knew about the inheritance?’
 B: —¿El secretario? / ¡El secretario!
 ‘The secretary? / The secretary!’
 A: —¡Exacto!
 ‘Right!’

The utterance in italics cannot be understood but as an interrogative that in turn represents a thought of the speaker’s. The interpretation of this sequence as a genuine question is again automatically excluded by the intonational contour. By means of the intonation the speaker conveys that she is able to offer the right answer, whether she actually provides it or not. The dialogue in (31) shows that there is in fact no need for the speaker to give the answer: it can be the hearer who expresses his guess. What the speaker makes manifest is just that she presents herself as being in a position to answer.

The fact that this information is procedurally encoded explains why a conversation, such as the one in (32), in which A’s second turn overtly contradicts the instruction given by herself in her first turn, is absolutely excluded:

- (32) A: —¿*Y quién sabía lo de la herencia?*
 And who knew about the inheritance?
 B: —*No lo sé.*
 ‘I don’t know’
 A: —#*Yo tampoco*
 ‘Nor do I’

If this approach is correct, one could predict that those situations that require or presuppose that the speaker knows the answer will be natural environments for interrogatives with the rising contour: these clearly include guessing games and riddles, but also exam questions, informative questions, reminders, or expository questions. In fact they all admit the rising contour, as shown by the utterances in (33), since it explicitly reinforces some mutually manifest assumptions:

- (33) a. ¿*Lleva hache intercalada “desechar”?* [profesor a alumno]
 ‘Does “desechar” have an “h” after the “s”?’ [teacher to student]

b. *¿Sabes a quién me encontré ayer?*

‘Do you know who I met yesterday?’

c. *¿Quién se ha dormido hoy?* [dicho al interlocutor, que llega tarde]

‘Who overslept today?’ [to the hearer, who is late]

The utterance in (33)a can be considered to be an exam question; (33)b is an interrogative that offers information; and (33)c can act as a reminder. What is important here is that they share the property of being different developments of a single procedural instruction.

4.3.2. *Rising or rising-falling?*

I have just said that so-called expository questions would also fit into this characterisation quite naturally.

(34) *¿Qué le dio a Simón su coartada?* El tiro disparado por Jacqueline. *¿Qué le dio a Jacqueline su coartada?* La insistencia de Simón....

‘What provided Simon with an alibi? Jacqueline’s shot. What provided Jacqueline with an alibi? Simon’s insistence...’

However, in section 4.2.3, I claimed that these were cases of attribution of a representation to another individual. And the same holds for the examples in (10), which I left aside at the beginning of this section. The same sequence can, thus, appear as attributed to the speaker or to the hearer without any significant change in the interpretation of the utterance. How is this apparent contradiction to be solved?

The utterances in (10) and (34) present a situation in which two related, but independent assumptions play a crucial role in the interpretation. On the one hand, we have the assumption that a virtual hearer may pose a certain question; on the other hand, we have the assumption that the speaker can provide an answer to a certain question.

Now, in the examples under consideration, *both* assumptions happen to be needed at the same time. If so, one of them has to be selected for being explicitly communicated, while the other must be recovered as an implicature, given that Spanish has no formal means for explicitly encoding both instructions. The selection depends on which perspective is being favoured by the speaker. If she adopts the perspective of the hearer, she will present her utterance as an interpretation of a representation of the hearer’s — irrespective of the fact that

she be able to provide an answer —, and will use the rising-falling pattern. If she chooses her own point of view, then she will focus on the representation as being one of hers (with the associated implication that she can offer the answer) — irrespective of the fact that the hearer might pose the same question —, and will use the rising contour.

The prediction of this proposal is that the alleged “hesitation” will never be random: only in those cases in which the speaker *both* asks a question that another individual could have asked *and* gives an answer to it, could we find either contour. The facts seem to support this idea. None of the examples (29)-(31) and (33) can be uttered with a rising-falling intonation without a radical change in the interpretation: in the utterances usually considered as exam questions, information questions or reminders, among others, no relevant conclusion would be obtained by introducing the assumption that the hearer may have asked these questions in the context. On the other hand, the utterances in (19)-(22), although echoic, do not reproduce a dialogue, given that interrogatives are used as statements, not as questions; as predicted, they reject the rising pattern: there is no point in suggesting that one has an answer for a non-existing question. Only examples which present a fictitious dialogue — such as those in (10), (22), (23) and (34) —, on the contrary, admit both possibilities, since either perspective gives rise to a consistent, relevant interpretation.

4.3.3. Discussion

In the preceding sections I have forwarded an account of the contribution of the rising contour to the interpretation in terms of the attribution to the speaker of a thought resembling the representation contained in the utterance. Apparently, a simpler explanation could be suggested along the following lines. In rising interrogatives an extra contextual assumption must be added to the context of interpretation: the speaker knows the answer to her question. Thus any interpretation of an utterance with rising pattern must be compatible with this mutually manifest assumption. In this way, there will be no need for postulating a new level of interpretiveness, as I suggested above.

As far as I can see, the predictions of this proposal are not different from those of my analysis, at least on the descriptive side. However, there are some respects in which the more complex account seems to be better. From a theoretical perspective, it would be natural to try to establish restrictions on the sort of information conveyed by procedural expressions; in other words, we would not expect them to be able to encode just any kind of content. Unless conceptual units, procedural expressions are typically associated with abstract computational

instructions — most of the times, not easily accessible to consciousness. Certainly, “Include the following assumption in the context of interpretation: *The speaker knows the answer*” does not seem a typical procedural content.

On the other hand, the distinction between descriptive and interpretive uses has proved to be basic to the proper understanding of a wide range of phenomena. From a formal point of view this distinction is related to mood: mood indicators — those yielding declarative or imperative or interrogative utterances — are responsible for the overt selection between descriptive and interpretive uses — and also between different degrees of interpretiveness. It seems that, other things being equal, an account of intonation (a mood indicator) that could be reduced to this simple distinction should be preferred.

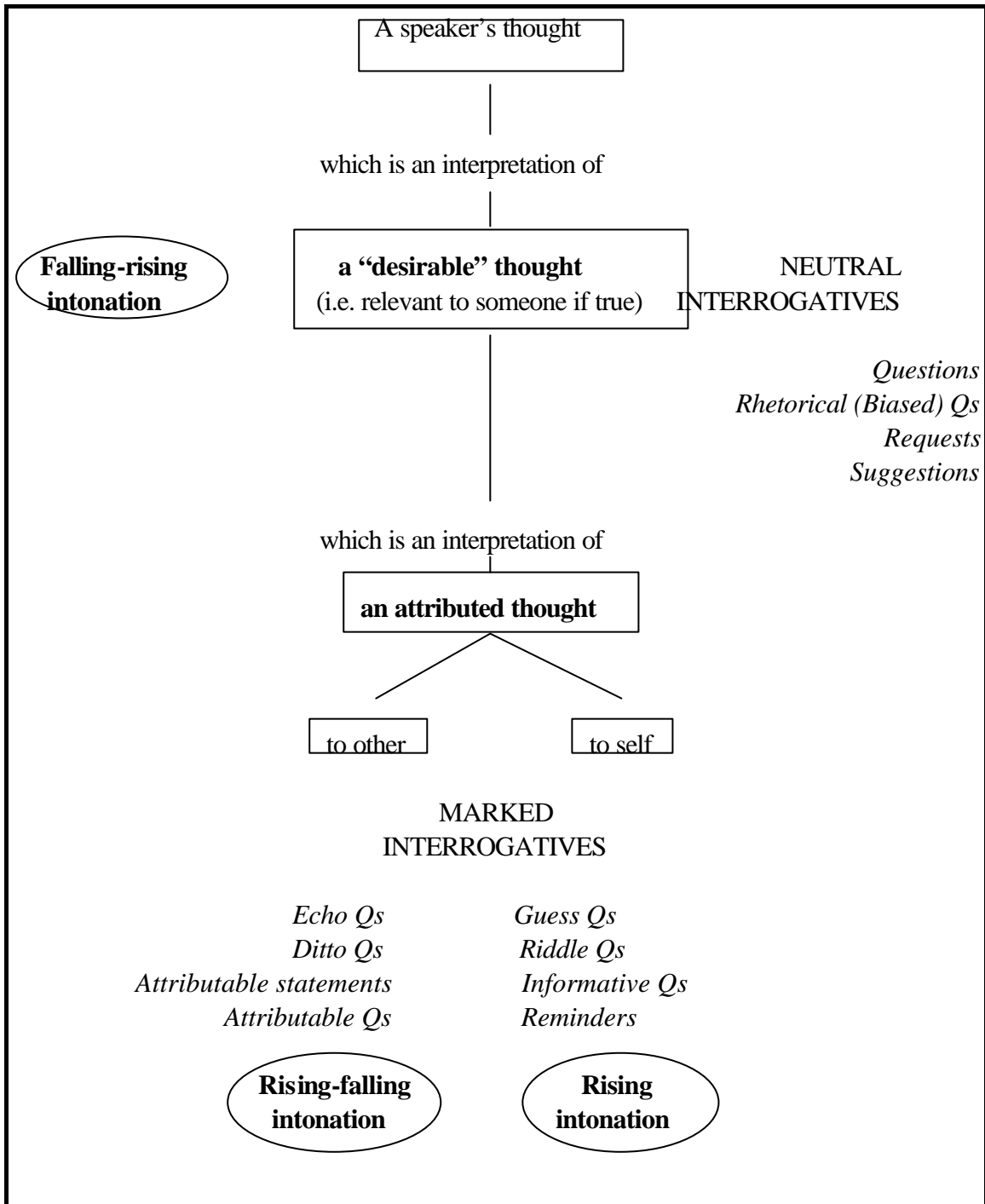
Thus, the high-rising contour can be seen as pointing to the interpretive dimension: what it encodes is an instruction to process the utterance both as a question (the actual question the speaker asks, an interpretation of a “desirable” thought) and as a resembling representation of a thought of the speaker’s (the answer she knows).

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have argued for an account of three different patterns of intonation as encoding procedural restrictions on the construction of higher-level explicatures. I have tried to show that the contribution of each of these patterns is a constant, systematic one.

- An utterance with a falling-rising ending contour always conveys the instruction to process it as an interpretation of a “desirable” thought, that is, a representation of a thought that would be relevant to someone if true.
- An utterance with a rising-falling contour always imposes a further attribution of the representation to another individual.
- An utterance with a rising contour always imposes a further attribution of the representation to the speaker.

Interrogatives are, according to the standard relevance-theoretic approach, a case of interpretive use. I have tried to show that different levels of interpretiveness are encoded in the intonation. The schema below can summarise the existing possibilities:



These instructions are independent of, though compatible with, the fact that the utterance can be used to perform different verbal actions: the particular illocutionary force of an utterance depends on the combination of its encoded meaning (including procedural information) and contextual assumptions.

Intonation is not, of course, the only way to procedurally guide the interpretation of an interrogative. Word order, particles and negation are other formal means that also can restrict the determination of higher-level explicatures: moreover, some of them are necessary for several interpretations to appear. (For a deeper analysis of the contribution of these markers in interrogatives, see Escandell-Vidal (1998)).

Thus, what is encoded in the intonation is not a particular feeling about the represented content, as had been suggested in other accounts. The speaker's intentions and attitudes are not encoded, but must be inferentially gathered from other contextual assumptions: this explains the differences in the interpretation usually reported by grammarians as surprise, amazement, interest, irony, etc. Nor is encoded any indication about the identity of the individual to whom the representation would be relevant if true, or about the person to whom the attribution is made in the case of rising-falling intonation —on most occasions this underspecification is resolved on the hearer, but this is again a matter of inferential guessing.

This account also offers a natural explanation for the fact that the neutral, falling-rising contour could appear in all situations. Being compatible with all possible interpretations for interrogative utterances, the unmarked contour is always possible. In this latter case, the attribution of the representation either to the speaker or to another individual is not linguistically encoded, but left to reconstruction from contextual assumptions.

Now, there may be still some questions that remain unanswered. I would like to address one of them here. I have claimed that the contribution of each contour is a systematic one. Does not the existence of ambiguous cases (such as the ones discussed in the previous section) weaken the proposal? The right answer is, I think, *no*, and relies on the very nature of procedural encoding. Each one of the intonational contours we analysed transmits a particular piece of *computational* information in a systematic way. The instruction asks to interpret the utterance *as if it were* of a particular class (for instance, as a second-degree interpretation of a thought attributed to another person), but it does not say *how it is really*. In order to adequately use a procedural expression we do not need to know how the events are, or what is their objective relationship; we do not need to look outside, and describe what we see. We just have to look at our internal representations and express how we see them — or how we want the others to see them... It is so precisely because we are dealing with procedural, not with representational encoding.

Procedural expressions, therefore, do not represent external situations or “real” states-of-affairs. They do not describe *the* world; they create *a* world in which things must be conceived as they are presented by the speaker.

NOTES

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¹ Fernández Ramírez (1959:252) intuited that this was indeed an important note in the characterisation of rising-falling interrogatives: “...reflective questions have as their content, as we have seen, the interlocutor’s words or supposed words.” However, he does not explicitly establish that the attribution to the hearer be a consequence of the interrogative contour, nor does he consider the full range of cases that we will analyse.

² Anscombe and Ducrot (1979) used the word *polyphonic* for the same concept: an utterance is polyphonic when more than one voice is heard at the same time. In Escandell-Vidal (1987) and (1990) I applied this notion to the analysis of some interrogative uses.

³ The term is due to Bolinger (1957), and corresponds to one of the three categories that fall under the label of *repetitive questions*: *echo questions* repeat a declarative statement; *ditto questions* repeat an interrogative utterance; and *reclamatory questions* inquire about something that was not explicit enough in the previous turn. Dumitrescu (1994) presents a very detailed description of echo interrogatives in Spanish, but uses *echoes* for Bolinger’s whole class of repetitives, *recapitulative* for echoes, and *explanatory* for reclamatory..

⁴ Fernández Ramírez (1959: 260) suggests that exploratory interrogative forward a spontaneous explanation. This approach is inadequate, since it does not allow any general prediction to explain such a behaviour.

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