

Embedded Rising Declaratives

There is a controversy in recent literature on Rising Declaratives (RDs): do RDs denote questions (e.g. Farkas & Roelofsen 2017 (FR), Jeong 2018) or do they achieve their information-requesting discourse function in spite of possessing non-question denotations (e.g. Gunlogson 2001, Nilsenová 2006, Malamud & Stephenson 2015, Westera 2018)? This paper argues that the stubbornly quotative behavior of embedded rising declaratives lends support to the latter view, and prompts a revision to Lahiri's (2002) seminal analysis of quotative-embedding speech act verbs.

RDs Under Speech Act Verbs RDs can appear embedded under speech act verbs with a prosodic break and absence of complementizer, as is characteristic of embedded quotation:

- (1) Bill {said, uttered, shouted, whispered}, 'You got a haircut?'

FR observe that embedded rising declaratives are acceptable with rogative speech act verbs (2a) but unacceptable with anti-rogative speech act verbs (2b):

- (2) a. Bill {asked, wondered}, 'You got a haircut?'
b. #Bill {asserted, claimed}, 'You got a haircut?'

FR argue that this pattern supports a question-denoting view of RDs, as their acceptability patterns with the verb's (dis)preference for interrogative complements. However, this analysis does not predict that embedded RDs can only be interpreted quotatively, as a report of a prior utterance.

Embedded RDs are quotations Indexicals in embedded RDs cannot be interpreted relative to the context of the utterance of the matrix clause:

- (3) [*Context: Alvin is talking to Bertha about a conversation he had with Cynthia.*]
a. A: Then Cynthia asked me, 'You're married?' You = A: ✓ You = B: #
b. A: Then Cynthia asked me, 'Are you married?' You = A: ✓ You = B: #
c. A: Then Cynthia asked me if you're married. You = A: # You = B: ✓

Call embedded quotations Q-complements (Qcs), and standard clausal complements D-complements (Dcs). In interrogative Qcs (3b), indexicals must be interpreted relative to the context of C's utterance, not the context of A's utterance (q.v. Sharvit 2008).¹ In interrogative Dcs, indexicals must be interpreted relative to the context of A's utterance (3c). RDs pattern like Qcs—there is no way of reading (3a) that allows the embedded indexicals to take their meaning from the context of A's utterance. One might suspect that this is because RDs can't be properly embedded, perhaps for intonational reasons. For that reason, FR consider slifted RDs. Observe that embedded interrogatives are felicitous with first-person subject and matrix present tense, even though the slifted interrogative has the morphosyntactic profile of a matrix clause (Ross 1973):

- (4) What exactly is going on here, I {wonder, ask}?

The denotation of the interrogative specifies what it is that the speaker is currently asking or wondering about. It does not report the form of a prior utterance; i.e. it is a Dc. This is not possible with RDs, even in slifting contexts that are felicitous with matrix-like interrogatives:

- (5) a. #'You're married?', I {wonder, ask}. b. #I {wonder,ask}, 'You're married?'

Embedded RDs cannot be used to specify what the speaker is currently asking or wondering about; they stubbornly remain Qcs (i.e., reports of a prior utterance) even in syntactic contexts that allow slifted complements that display phenomena usually exclusive to matrix clauses. This asymmetry—that embedded RDs can be Qcs, but not Dcs, to rogative verbs—does not follow from an analysis in which RDs and interrogatives share a denotation. This asymmetry is better explained

¹Temporal indexicals display the same behavior as that shown here for pronouns.

by an account that assigns different denotations to interrogatives and RDs: RDs can serve as Qcs to rogative verbs because their SPEECH ACT FUNCTION is of the kind described by such verbs, but they cannot serve as Dcs to rogative verbs because their denotation is not of right semantic type.

Speech Act Verbs: Qcs vs. Dcs Lahiri (2002) proposed a semantic ambiguity between Qc-embedding (6a) and Dc-embedding (6b) versions of speech act verbs, regulated by a meaning postulate (6d). Assume that quotations are semantic objects of type q .²

- (6) a. $\llbracket ask_1 \rrbracket = \lambda q. \lambda x. [ask_1(q)(x) \wedge QU(q)]$ b. $\llbracket ask_2 \rrbracket = \lambda Q. \lambda x. [ask_2(Q)(x)]$
 c. $\llbracket QU(q) \rrbracket = 1$ iff $\llbracket q \rrbracket$ is a question d. $ask_1(q)(x) \leftrightarrow [\exists Q : \llbracket q \rrbracket = Q]ask_2(Q)(x)$

This proposal incorrectly predicts that any sentence that can be a Qc to a rogative V should be able to be a Dc to it, as it assumes Qcs and Dcs to share a denotation. I propose a revision to it below.

Uttering RDs I assume, following Gunlogson (2001), Truckenbrodt (2006), Westera (2018), and Rudin (2018), that RDs simply denote propositions, just as other declarative sentences do, and that rising intonation signals lack of speaker commitment to that proposition. Lack of speaker commitment is also a feature of utterances of interrogative sentences. RDs and interrogatives therefore share the feature of eliciting addressee response via withholding of speaker commitment.

Proposal: Qcs vs Dcs revisited I propose the following revision to Lahiri’s semantics of Qc-embedding and Dc-embedding versions of speech act verbs:

- (7) An utterance is a function $u : \langle s, sp, c_n \rangle \rightarrow c_{n+1}$; $s(u)$ is the sentence argument to u , $sp(u)$ is the speaker argument to u , and $c(u)$ is the context argument to u .
- a. $QU(u) \leftrightarrow u$ elicits addressee response via withholding speaker commitment
 b. $\llbracket ask_1 \rrbracket = \lambda q. \lambda x. [\exists u : sp(u) = x \wedge s(u) = q]QU(u)$
 c. $\llbracket ask_2 \rrbracket = \lambda Q. \lambda x. [\exists u : sp(u) = x \wedge \llbracket s(u) \rrbracket^{c(u)} = Q]QU(u)$

The verb *ask* predicates of an utterance that it elicited addressee response via withholding speaker commitment. Qc-embedding *ask* predicates of its embedded quotation that it was the sentence uttered; Dc-embedding *ask* predicates of its complement that it denotes the semantic content of the uttered sentence. On this view of the relation between Qc-embedding and Dc-embedding versions of speech act verbs, it follows that, if RDs do not denote questions, they will be licit Qcs, but not licit Dcs, to rogative speech act verbs.

Extension to speech act nominals The word *question* can be used to describe RDs as well:

- (8) **A:** You got a haircut? **B:** What an impertinent question!

This can be accounted for by treating *question* as a predicate of utterances like so:

- (9) $\llbracket question \rrbracket = \lambda u. QU(u)$

Other information requests Requests for information can also be carried out with imperatives:

- (10) a. ??She asked, ‘Tell me your address.’
 b. **A:** Tell me your address. **B:** ??What an impertinent question.

The markedness of (10a) and (10b) supports the proposal that the relevant notion is response elicitation *via commitment avoidance*, not response elicitation *simpliciter*.

Conclusion The sensitivity of embedded RDs to the (anti)rogativity of the matrix verb is not a clear argument in favor of RDs denoting questions. Rather, the fact that embedded RDs can only be interpreted as quotations suggests a semantic distinction between RDs and interrogatives. Closer examination of the properties of the discourse moves carried out by various classes of utterances can inform our understanding of the semantics of speech act verbs and speech act nominals.

²My notation differs from Lahiri’s for reasons of presentational simplicity.

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