

The syntax of *embu* wh-questions in Cypriot Greek: similarities with *est-ce que* in French and *é que* in Portuguese

Abstract

This paper proposes a novel syntactic analysis for *embu* wh-questions in Cypriot Greek (henceforth CG) (cf. the example in (1); a wh-question structure which is similar to the *est-ce que* interrogatives in French and the *é que* interrogatives in Portuguese.

- (1) a. *Pcos* (embu) emilise?
who.NOM spoke.3.SG
“Who has spoken?”

Embu has been analysed as the contracted form of the copula *en* (*is*) and the complementiser *pu* (*that*) (Grohmann et. al. 2006, Agouraki 2010). However, there is a discrepancy in the literature as to whether *embu* is inert for inflection. In particular, Grohmann et. al. (2006) and Panagidou (2009) argue that *embu* may bear inflection, whereas Agouraki (2010), Kanikli (2011) and Papadopoulou (2014) support that it cannot.

The case is reminiscent of the discrepancy which exists in the literature of the *est-ce que* interrogatives in Romance languages. Obenauer (1977), Harris (1978), Lefebvre (1982), Blanch Benveniste et al. (1984), Rooryck (1994), Cheng and Rooryck (2000) and others argue that *est-ce que* is inert for inflection, whereas others, such as Langacker (1965), maintain that *est-ce que* may bear inflection. Munaro & Pollock (2005) claim that *est-ce que* is inert for inflection only in embedded interrogatives and *que*, *pourquoi* and *comment* root interrogatives. As far as Portuguese wh-questions are concerned, Duarte (2000) argues that *é que* cannot bear inflection, whereas Soares (2003) supports that it can.

The inflectional status of the copula assumed to be involved in these structures is an important argument on the basis of which the authors propose their analysis. In order to be able to proceed to pursue a syntactic analysis for *embu* questions, the synchronic inflectional status of *embu* had to be clarified. Hence, an experimental investigation was conducted in order to test the inflectional status of *embu* as well as other properties of the *embu* questions.

On the basis of the findings of this study, I propose a mono-clausal analysis for *embu* wh-questions. In particular, adopting a Split-CP analysis, I argue that *embu* is a Wh head; an

analysis which accounts for the syntactic properties of these questions: the distribution of adverbs, negative markers, quantifiers and left periphery elements.

I argue against the idea of analysing *embu* questions as deriving from a cleft structure. The semantics of wh-elements are incompatible with an exhaustive identificational interpretation, which is the meaning that clefted constituents bear in CG (cf. Kanikli 2016).

Given the similarities of the *embu* structures with the *est-ce que* interrogatives in French and the *é que* interrogatives in Portuguese, I also examine syntactic properties of the French and Portuguese wh-questions which are similar to the *embu* interrogatives and explore whether the analysis that is proposed for *embu* questions could accommodate this data as well.

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