INDIRECT QUESTIONS IN THE ENGLISH OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

BARBARA LEWANDOWSKA

University of Łódź

The term *indirect question* is used in the traditional literature[1] of the English Grammar rather freely not only for the type:

(1) *I asked him where he was going,*

but also to indicate constructions such as

(2) *It does not interest me at all what time it is*

or

(3) *I'd like to know what's he doing here.*

In the transformational — generative grammar of English such structures are usually called embedded questions (Jacobs and Rosenbaum 1968: 179 - 182). It seems however, that while for the dependent clauses in (1) and (2) the term may be justified, in the case of (3) the sentence may be considered a question as a whole but the complement is neither an indirect nor embedded question.

J. Katz and J. Postal (1964: 110) discuss structures containing a class of "parenthetical" verbs including *wonder, notice, think*, which may take complements in form of questions, either with the auxiliary shift:

(4) *When did John come home, I wonder*

or without it:

(5) *I wonder when John came home.*

Katz and Postal try to explain this fact assuming that the complement in (4) contains initial Q in its P-Marker whereas the embedded sentence in (5) does not. All further argument follows this assumption.

In such a treatment, however, sentences (4) and (5), though seem to be perfect paraphrases of each other, would have distinct underlying structures: (4) containing Q, while (5) without it. This would consequently contradict

[1] cf. Jespersen, O. 1949. *A modern English grammar on historical principles.* Part II. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., p. 392.

one of the main assumptions of the transformational — generative theory stating that if two or more sentences have different superficial structures but their meaning is entirely the same, they must have identical deep structures. For that reason, Katz and Postal's explanation does not seem satisfactory in this respect.

For the author of the present paper the differences between questions in (1), (2) and (3) on the one hand and (4) and (5) on the other, do not seem to reach so deeply as the underlying basic structures of these sentences, e.g.,

(6) *Tell me how many pictures you sold yesterday*

(7) *Tell me how many pictures did you sell yesterday*

are understood as perfect paraphrases of each other. It is only the transformational component, i.e. different transformational rules, that may be responsible for blocking the embedding in (7), and therefore also for the differences in the surface structure of the questions included in these sentences. The next pair of examples:

(8) *I ask you how many pictures you sold yesterday*

which is an exact paraphrase of (6) and (7), and

(9) *I've just asked you how many pictures you sold yesterday*

differ only in the verbal component of the matrix clause, which affects the semantic interpretation of the whole construction. There are no syntactic differences, however, in the deep structure of embedded questions themselves in (8) and (9). To point out then, that the deep structures of the questions in constructions such as (6 - 9) are identical, such sentences will be called constructions including questions. In order to carry on the classification up to the surface structure, the subclasses of *embedded questions* (ex. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9) and *explicit*[2] *questions* (ex. 3, 4, 7) will be postulated when referring to distinct transformational rules responsible for their derivation.

This paper is an attempt to prove that in the English of the fifteenth century interrogative structures in explicit questions did not undergo the process of embedding because of the specific character of the matrix clause henceforth called *an explication*. The material considered here is the corpus of sentences of the language of Sir Thomas Malory, one of the best known English writers of the fifteenth century, the author of the popular romances of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. The examined linguistic material is historical but there might be some reasons to suppose that the basic assumptions concerning the classification and generative origin of constructions including questions may be held for all stages of development of the English language.

[2] The term *explicit* questions was first suggested by Bolinger, D. L., 1957. *Interrogative structure of American English (The direct question)*, (University of Alabama Press, Publication of the American Dialect Society 28), but it referred to both inverted and non-inverted questions preceded by an explication. In the present treatment the term denotes only included questions with inversion.

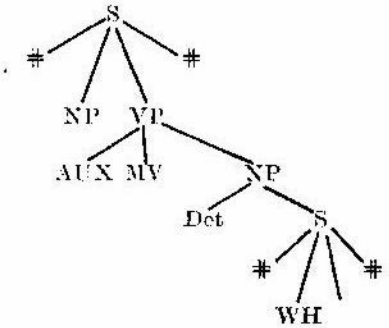
In the present model *Alternative Questions* including a group of *yes — no Qs* are based on disjunction and are generated from two structures conjoined by the question initiating alternative element WH OTHIR:

$$S \rightarrow S\ CONJ\ S$$
$$CONJ \rightarrow WH\ OTHIR$$

The generating of a *Special Question* is initiated by an ARTicle node with the subcategorial feature [+ *Wh*] present in its deep structure[3].

The constructions with embedded questions as well as explicit questions are derived from the nominal node in the base constituting a noun complement:

Diagram (1)



The reason which may justify the assumption of the occurrance of Determiner in the P-marker underlying constructions including questions is the usage of Determiner *that* as a subordination marker of embedded structures:

(10) *They asked of kynge Marke yf that he knewe hym.* (603[4])

The function of this marker is the blocking of the inversion in the embedded clause[5].

The embedded questions are characterized by the fact that in the process of embedding, the inversion of the noun in the subject position and the verb is blocked:

[3] The base component and the transformational rules generating interrogative structures in the language of Thomas Malory, have been postulated in Lewandowska, B. 1971. *Some aspects of Thomas Malory's syntax*. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Łódź.

[4] Vinaver, E., [ed.]. 1948. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. The number in brackets indicates the page.

[5] There is some mention of this function of *that* in the discussion of embedded constructions by Klima, S. 1964. "Relatedness between grammatical systems". *Language 40*: 1 - 20.

(11) *I mervayle what knyght that he ys with the rede sleve* (1073)

Questions with the matrix sentence *telle me, I wolde wete*, or *I mervayle* can take the option and may be either embedded to form a sentence with embedded question or else not be embedded, which allows the generation of the explicit question with the reversed word order in the included sentence.

(12) *Than telle me what hyt ys.* (841)

(13) *Now telle me, how far am I frome Camelot?* (148)

The underlying P-markers for both such strings are identical since the semantic interpretation of the sentences is not affected by this operation.

The first transformational rule initiating the generation of embedded and explicit questions in the examined corpus is the DETERMINER rule which allows either for the phonological realization of Det from PS rule or in the case of explicit questions deletes it preserving the sentence boundaries.

T. I

SI:	x	NP [ART	[+*Def*]	#	S	#]	#
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Conditions:

1) If x in 1=*Explication*, apply either (a) or (b)
2) Otherwise apply (a) obligatorily

SC:	1	– 2	– 3	– 4	– 5	– 6	– 7
a)	1	– 2	– *that*	– ∅	– 5	– ∅	– 7
b)	1	– ∅	– ∅	– 4	– 5	– 6	– 7

The deep structure of the explication may be presented in the form of one of the following strings and may enter the set of conditions of the rule above either in this form or as a [+*Explication*] marker assigned to Verb:

NP [ART [+*II*, −*Pl*] N[+*Pro*]] VP [AUX[IMP] MV [*telle*]] PREP NP [ART [+*I*, −*Pl*] N[+*Pro*]]

thou IMP *telle* *to* *I*

telle me

NP [ART [+*I*, −*Pl*] N[+*Pro*]] VP [AUX[+*Pres*] MV[*mervayle*]]

I *mervayle*

I mervayle

NP [ART [+*I*, −*Pl*] N[+Pro]] VP [AUX [*wolde*] MV [*wete*]]

I *wolde* *wete*

I wolde wete

The lexical item *wolde* in *I wolde wete* is assigned [+*Present*] tense-marker, since in the explication it does not refer to the past but to the present action.

Condition (1) in T rule I states that if *x* in 1 stands for *Explication* the string may be optionally applied either SC (a) or SC (b). If (a) is chosen the rule converts ART[+*Def*] into *that* with the simultaneous erasing of sentence boundaries, which triggers one of the next transformational rules of WH EXTRAPOSITION to yield, e.g.,

(14) *I have mervayle, where that sir Launcelot, you(r) brothir, ys.* (941)

If the second variant of the SC is chosen for the string, the rule erases $_{\text{ART}}$[+*Def*] totally, leaving [+*Wh*] element within the interrogative sentence boundaries, which triggers the transformations characteristic for direct questions: WH FRONTING and AUX, V or COP ATTRACTION (ex. 13)[6].

In the case of all the other compound constructions which have a question in their underlying P-markers the application of SC (a), which yields *that* and erases the interrogative sentence boundaries, is obligatory. Such an operation triggers one of the obligatory WH EXTRAPOSITION rules.

The conclusion that may be drawn from the analysis of the above rule is that a question present in the underlying string of a matrix S must not always be treated as a matrix dummy which triggers the embedding. In the case of questions with *the explication* the process of embedding does not necessarily have to be completed.

This fact incidently confirms the statement given on some other occasion by J. MacCawley in his review of *Current Trends in Linguistics*: "Chomsky's proposal that every embedded sentence must undergo some transformation, 'combining' it with the sentence in which it is embedded, is inadequate, since it ignores the role of the verb in determining whether it is necessary for a transformation to apply. Given the kind of underlying structures proposed in 'Aspects', *try* would require that the transformation of Equi-NP-deletion apply: i.e., the structure roughly sketched as */John tried / John open the door//* would underlie *John tried to open the door*, but */John tried/Arthur open the door//* would not underlie anything" (Mc Cawley, 1968: 564). The present treatment of T rule I takes into consideration the structural characteristic of the matrix S proposing that the contents of the whole sentential environment be not ignored in deciding whether the embedding will be completed or not.

Before the rule of EXTRAPOSITION PROPER may be applied to the appropriate strings, another EXTRAPOSITION rule must operate, which refers only to more complex embedded questions of Alternative type. A sen-

[6] The transformational rules of WH FRONTING, WH SPREADING and AUX V, or COP INVERSION, and eythir-INSERTION, characteristic of direct questions in the examined material, have been postulated in Lewandowska, B. 1971. Chapter III.

tence that will be quoted below represents a structure which permits a few different paraphrases, one — simple alternative disjunction, and three others — a composite conjoining type of alternative:[7]

(15) *They all askyd hym whethir he sye sir Launcelot other sir Trystram.* (587)

The above sentence allows the following paraphrases:

They all askyd hym:

1) *whether that he sye sir Launcelot other he sye sir Trystram.*

— simple conjunction patterning of exclusive disjunctive alternative, type a_2: S_X — S_X [antonym]

2) *whether that he sye sir Launcelot or nat other he sye sir Trystram or nat.*

— composite conjunction patterning of exclusive disjunctive alternative — S_X — S_X [α *set*] [α *set*]

3) *whether that he sye sir Launcelot or sir Trystram other he sye nat sir Launcelot nother sir Trystram*

— composite conjunction patterning of alternative denial.

4) *whether that he sye sir Launcelot or sir Trystram other he sye sir Launcelot and sir Trystram.*

— composite conjunction patterning of inclusive disjunctive alternative.

The rule responsible for the extraposing of the lowest WH-elements from within the composite conjunction pattern is the LOW WH EXTRAPOSITION applicable to Alternative Questions dominated by the matrix S and the subordinating *that*.

T. II

SI:

$$\underset{1}{NP}\left[\underset{2}{\text{that}}\ \underset{3}{S}\left[\underset{4}{S}\left[S\ WH\ OTHIR\ S\right]\ \underset{5}{WH}\ \underset{6}{OTHIR}\ \underset{7}{S}\ \underset{8}{\left[S\ \begin{pmatrix}AND\\WH\end{pmatrix}\ \underset{9}{OTHIR}\ \underset{10}{S}\right]}\right]\right]$$

Condition:

If 8 — 9=AND, apply SC (b), otherwise apply SC (a).

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

(a) 1 — 3+ 2 — ∅ — 4 — 5 — 6 — 8+ 7 — ∅ — 9 — 10

(b) 1 — 3+ 2 — ∅ — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

[7] One type of a traditional alternative disjunction and three types of composite conjunctive patterning are postulated for the examined corpus in the analysis of alternative questions. For further details see Lewandowska, B. 1971. Introduction. Cf. also Grodziński, E. (1969) and Kubiński T. (1971).

One of the resultant strings, ((15) paraphrase 2), after the application of *eythir*, — INSERTION and WH EXTRAPOSITION PROPER (see next T rule), which follows LOW WH EXTRAPOSITION, will read as follows:

(15[a]) *whether that whether he sye sir Launcelot or he sye nat sir Launcelot other whether he sye sir Trystram or he sye nat sir Trystram.*

One of the following rules, WH ERASURE, will erase the second and third WH-*eythir* — elements on the grounds that in the examined corpus there have not been encountered any examples of the sentences with more than one item *whether* present in the overt structure[8].

The next rule applicable to all interrogative strings introduced by *that*⌢S is WH EXTRAPOSITION PROPER.

T. III

SI:

$$\underset{1}{S}^{[x]}\ \underset{2}{NP}\left[\underset{3}{\text{that}}\ \underset{4}{S}\left[\begin{bmatrix}S\\x\end{bmatrix}\ \underset{5}{\overbrace{WH\ /PREP/[+\ Wh]x}}\ \underset{6}{\overbrace{OTHIR\ S\ x}}\right]\right]$$

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6

1 — 2 — 5 + 3 — 4 — ∅ — 6

To generate a construction including embedded special question WH EXTRAPOSITION rule transfers the whole nominal or prepositional phrase containing [+*Wh*] to the position preceding the Determiner. In the material under analysis there have been found a few instances of constructions with embedded questions and some more numerous cases of relative structures where the preposition is shifted to the final position of the sentence yielding:

(16) *and all thes drewe them to a counceyle to undirstonde what governaunce they shall be of* (729).

It seems then that the transformational rule of PREPOSITION SHIFT is one of the optional rules affecting the string to generate a stylistic variant of the embedded clause. The formal representation of the transformational rule shifting the preposition to the end of the utterance is as follows:

T. IV

SI:

$$\underset{1}{x}\ \underset{2}{NP}\left[\underset{3}{PREP}\ \underset{4}{NP}\left[+Wh\right]N\right]\ \underset{5}{x}$$

[8] E. S. Klima (1964 : 321) postulates a dummy symbol Σ dominated by *Wh* to account for the usage of double *whether* in Modern English: *They ask whether John must telephone us or whether Mary must bring us the information by foot.* In the present model similar structures might be generated by preserving the WH-marker which introduces the second sentential constituent in the embedded Alternative Question. Since, however, no examples of repeating *whether* have been encountered in the text, the rule of WH-ERASURE will delete these WH-elements which are not marked in the surface structure.

Condition:
1 ... 5 — embedded Q or relative clause configuration

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
1 — 2 — 0 — 4 — 5 +3

The next obligatory transformational rule is WH ERASURE, which deletes repeating WH-*eythir* elements in the embedded alternative questions of composite conjoining patterning.
T. V

SI: x WH+*eythir that* [WH+*eythir* x OTHIR WH+*eythir* x]
1 2 3 4 5 6

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6
1 — 0 — 3 — 4 — 0 — 6

WH ERASURE is the last obligatory transformation in the set of rules causing the embedding of the interrogative structure into a matrix constituent. The series of optional (stylistic) transformations is initiated by the rule of REDUCTION OF EMBEDDED ALTERNATIVE QS. The rule may cause the deletion of identical elements in the second constituent sentence of the embedded alternative question reducing it to NEG element, phonologically realized as *nat* or *none*, or else the total deletion of the second sentential constituent to generate an embedded *yes-no* question, e.g.,

(17) *he wolde wete whether ye wolde do batayle or nat.* (784)

(18) *the yoman asked sir Percivale if he saw ony knyght rydyng on hys blacke steede.* (910)

The rule operates on the following Structural Index:
T. VI

SI: NP[WH+*eythir that* [NP TM{V, COP, MOD, *have*, *be*, *do*} x] OTHIR [NP TM{V, COP, MOD, *have*, *be*, *do*} NEG x]]
1 2 3 4 5 6

Condition:
2 = 4 — 6, except for 5 = NEG

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6
(a) 1 — 2 — 3 — 0 — 5 — 0
(b) 1 — 2 — 3 — 0 — 0 — 0

The total erasure of the second constituent clause or its replacing by NEG is the main reason why this rule cannot by yet incorporated into the simple rule of conjunction, where such an operation would not be allowed. The conjoining of embedded Alternative Questions with one antonymous lexical item

in the second constituent, or some members of an [*α set*], however, may be accounted for by a simple conjoining rule which deletes all identical items, preserving the distinct ones.

The last transformation of this family, *that* — DELETION, optionally erases the determiner *that* following the constituent with WH.

T. VII

SI: S[x] NP{WH+*eythir*, /PREP/[+*Wh*]N} *that* S
1 2 3 4

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4
1 — 2 — 0 — 4

A result of this operation is e.g.,

(19) *Sir Launcelot asped whedir syr Trystram yeode.* (681)

Numerous strings do not take the option of erasing *that*, which results in the following examples encountered in the examined corpus:

(20) *Lat me wete how that I cam hydir?* (824)

The last problem discussed in the present paper will be connected with nominalization processes; it will refer strictly speaking to the infinitival type of nominalization. The products of these operations, after the morpho-phonemic rules have been applied, generate the sentences such as:

(21) *Sir Launcelot wyst nat what to do.* (895)

(22) *he wyst nat how to answere her.* (965)

The subject of the embedded question may be deleted in those cases where the NP in the constituent sentence is identical to an NP of the matrix sentence. This process is accompanied by the simultaneous change of the finite form of the MODal *sholde* underlying such structure into the infinitival form of the Main Verb preceded by the preposition *to*. The rule governing this change is the INFINITIVAL WH nominalization:
T. VIII

SI: S[[NP x] S[[PREP][+*Wh*]x Det NP *sholde* MV x]]
1 2 3 [−*Wh*] 4 5 6 7 8

Conditions:
1/ 1 = 5
2/ 4 = null

SC: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 0 — 0 *to*+7 — 8

According to this rule the underlying string *he wyst nat how he sholde answere her*, is transformed into *he wyst nat how to answere her*.

Condition (2) will block the generation of ungrammatical strings:

(22[a]) * *he wyst nat how that to answere her*,

not encountered in the analysed material, while condition (1) will not allow the strings with non-identical NP's to enter the Structural Change. The [-*Wh*] feature does not permit the embedded Qs with the questioned element in subject position to apply the rule.

T rule VIII is the final one in the complex process of question embedding. It is followed only by some segment transformations and morphophonemic rules.

The analysis of constructions including questions presented above allows for the following conclusions: all the included questions have the dominating S in their underlying P-markers, which prepares the embedding process by means of Det^S configuration. Det realized phonetically as *that* in the fifteenth century English is optionally present in the dependent constructions causing the blocking of the inversion process. When the dominating clause is *the explication*, Det is deleted and the blocking of embedding occurs as a result, this causing the application of direct question transformations such as WH-Spreading or Fronting, obligatorily followed by the verbal inversion.

REFERENCES

Jacobs, R. A. and Rosenbaum, P. S. 1968. *English transformational grammar*. Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Company.

Jespersen, O. 1949. *A modern English grammar on historical principles*. II. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Katz, J. J. and Postal, P. M. 1964. *An integrated theory of linguistic descriptions*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Klima, E. S. 1964. *Studies in diachronic transformational syntax*. Unpubl. Ph. D. diss. Harvard.

Lewandowska, B. 1971. *Some aspects of Malory's syntax*. Unpubl. Ph. D. diss. Łódź University.

McCawley, J. D. 1968. Rev. of Sebeok, T. A. (ed.) *Current trends in linguistics*. *Language 44*: 564.