

Imperative Questions in Greek (and German)¹

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1. Introduction

- Questions as in (1), henceforth *salt*-questions, have been shown to convey a request instead of an information-seeking question, hence their tag as *indirect requests*, *whimperatives* (Sadock 1972, 1974, Searle 1975, Holmberg 1979, Asher and Lascarides 2001).

(1) Could/can/will you (please) pass me the salt?

- In this talk, I deal with a similar type of interrogatives in Greek (and German), which however does not involve an overt modal/future operator. **Imperative Questions (IQs)** as in (2) are ambiguous between their regular meaning and a second interpretation which constitutes *a request to the addressee* to open the window.

(2) a. Anigis (ligo) to parathiro (se parakalo)? *Greek*
Open.IND.IMP.2SG REQ-PART the window CL.2SG please

b. Öffnest du (bitte) (mal) das Fenster? *German*
open. IND.IMP.2SG you please REQ-PART the window

M1: Do you open the window? / Are you opening the window right now?

M2: Could you (please) open the window? / Will you please open the door?

- **IQs** are non-canonical questions since they are not information-seeking rather they convey a request to the addressee, i.e. they function as *directives* of some sort.
- **The BIG puzzle:** Mismatch between sentence type (question) and illocutionary force (request)

#Hypothesis 1 (H1): *salt*-questions are semantically requests not questions. They are ambiguous like ‘*kick the bucket*’ idioms (Sadock 1972, 1974).

- IQs are good candidates for H1, because they do not involve an overt modal operator. We can re-introduce Sadock’s (1974) hypothesis in a Portnerian way:
- The question is shifted to an imperative, adding a property to Addressee’s To-Do-List.

#Hypothesis 2 (H2): Semantically, there is a question. How do we derive the request?

- Holmberg (1979): The request is a pragmatic inference.
- Lascarides & Asher (2001): complex *question•request type* in Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT).
- Evidence in favor of H2, but we still have to figure out the exact mechanism for the derivation of the request interpretation.

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- The ‘**small**’ puzzle: What makes *present imperfective* IQs available in Greek/German but not in English?
 - I argue that the critical factor for the emergence of modal-less IQs with present imperfective, are the properties of imperfective + present in the language.
 - In Greek, imperfective aspect allows a bouletic modal interpretation (*Are you willing to...*). In German, Present tense is used extensively for future events (*Will you...*)
 - But English lacks both of these properties, therefore not licensing IQs.
- **Outline**
 - §2 Properties of IQs
 - §3 Modality in IQs and beyond
 - §4 IQs as hybrid interrogative-request type
 - §5 Summary and further questions

2. Properties of IQs

I. *IQs: mixed properties patterning both with questions and requests.*

- First, as we show the request particle *ligo/mal* and *se parakalo/bitte* ‘please’ is licensed similarly to other types of requests (e.g. imperatives). In the following, we use compatibility with *ligo/mal* as a test that we are dealing with a genuine *request*.
- In order to get a request interpretation, the subject must be addressee-oriented. This doesn’t necessarily mean 2nd person agreement:

(3) Greek

- a. Anigi (ligo) *(**kapjos**) to parathiro (sas parakalo)?
 Open.IND.IMPF.3SG REQ somebody.NOM the window CL.2PL please
 ‘Could somebody open the window please?’
- b. Anigume (ligo) to parathiro (se parakalo)?
 Open.IND.IMPF.1PL REQ the window CL.2 SG please
 ‘Could we open the window please?’

(4) German

- a. Öffnet jemand (bitte) mal das Fenster?
 Open.IND.IMPF.3SG somebody.NOM please REQ the window
 ‘Could somebody open the window please?’
- b. Öffnen wir mal das Fenster?
 Open.IND.IMPF.3PL we REQ the window
 ‘Could we open the window please?’

- Conjunction facts (Mittwoch 1976): IQs can “conjoin” both with a question and a request:

(5) Greek:

- a. Anigis (ligo) to parathiro? Ke fere mu ki ena potiri nero! IQ+IMP
 Open.IND.IMP.2SG REQ-PART the window And bring.IMP and a glass water
 ‘Can you please open the window? And bring me a glass of water please!’
- b. Pote ftani o Petros? #Ke ftiakse tu kati na fai. #Q+IMP
 When arrive.3sg the Peter.NOM And make.IMP him something to eat.3SG
 ‘When is Peter arriving? #And make him something to eat.’
- c. Mu dinis (ligo) to aftokinito su? ?Ke pote to thelis piso? IQ+Q
 CL.1SG give.2SG the car your and when IT.CL want.2SG back
 ‘Could you please give me your car? And when do you want it back?’
- d. dose mu ligo to aftokinito su. #Ke pote to thelis piso? #IMP+Q
 Give.IMP CL.1SG REQ the car your and when IT.CL want.2SG back?
 ‘Give me your car. #And when do you want it back?’

(6) German

- a. Machst du (mal) das Fenster auf? √ Und bring mir ein Glas Wasser!
 Make.IMP.2SG you REQ the window PART And bring.IMP CL.1SG a glass water
- b. Wann kommt John? #Und koch ihm etwas.
 When comes John? And cook.IMP him something
- c. Gibst du mir mal dein Auto? √ Und wann brauchst du es zurück?
 give.2SG you CL.1SG REQ your car and when IT.CL need.2SG you it back
- d. Gib mir dein Auto. #Und wann brauchst du es zurück?
 Give.IMP CL.1SG your car and when need.2SG you it back?

- YES/OK answers (Lascarides & Asher 2001):

(7) A: Anigis (ligo) to parathiro (se parakalo)?
 Open.IND.IMP.2SG REQ the window CL.2SG please
 ‘Could you please open the window?’

B: NE (YES) /OK

(8) A: Anikse (ligo) to parathiro (se parakalo)!
 Open.IMP REQ the window CL.2SG please
 ‘Please open the window’

B: #NE (YES) / √OK

II. Intonation of IQs

- IQs in Greek are realized with the default intonation of polar questions in Greek. The default pattern for polar questions in Greek is a NPA accent on the verb (then de-accenting) and an H-L% boundary tone which aligns with the last stressed syllable (following Baltazani and Jun 1999, Baltazani 2002, Baltazani 2007).

- A question as in (9) is ambiguous between its regular meaning and a request-reading if realized with a NPA on the verb (Fig.1) but if the NPA falls on a different constituent (Fig.2), it is unambiguously an information seeking question:

(9) Potizis ta luludia?

water.2sg the flowers

M1: Do you water the flowers L* H- L%

M2: Could you please water the flowers? ----> Po ti zis ta luludia?

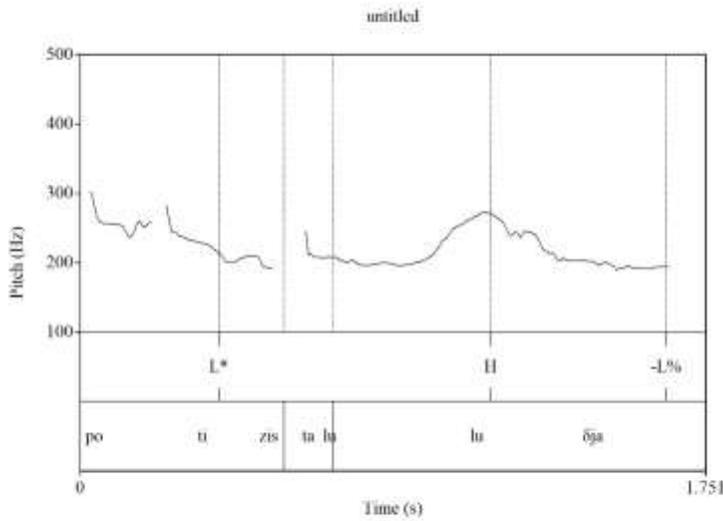


Figure 1: Default pattern for polar questions (L* on the verb – H-L%)

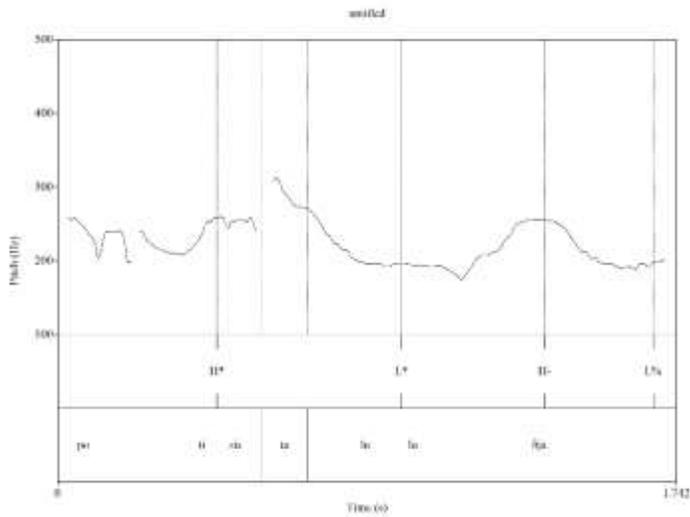


Figure 2: Polar question with NPA (L*) on the object.

- Notice that in the case of a question with an overt modal the meaning differs depending on the height of the negative operator:
 - (15) a. **Den** boris na aniksis ligo to parathiro se parakalo?
Not can.2SG SUBJ open.2SG REQ the window CL.2SG please
'Couldn't you please open the window?'
 - b. Boris na **min** aniksis ligo to parathiro se parakalo?
can.2SG SUBJ not nopen.2SG REQ the window CL.2SG please
'Could you please not open the window?'
- In German, on the other hand, negation seems to contribute its regular meaning:
 - (16) Machst du (bitte) nicht das Fenster auf?
Make.2SG you please not the window PART
'Could you please not open the window?'
- This difference might be because of the different properties of negation in the two languages (Haegeman 1995, Zanuttini 1997, Merchant 2006).

V. Aspect mismatch in IQs

- Although the verb is obligatorily marked with imperfective it doesn't correspond to an imperfective interpretation.
 - (17) *in-test: employer to his employee:*
epidiorthonis afto to ruho (mesa) **se dio lepta**,
repair. IND.IMPF.2SG this the cloth in two minutes,
...gia na di o pelatis oti ginete?
for NA see.3SG the customer that become.3SG
'Could you please repair this cloth in two minutes, so that the customer can see it's possible?'

3. Modality in IQs

- Is there modality encoded in IQs beyond their request reading? i.e. semantically is there a modal operator?
 - Is there modality in other environments which do not function as requests (i.e. non-performative)? ->YES
 - Can we get a non-performative reading for IQs in the right context? ->YES
- Modality in non-performative contexts:

Context: *We have a discussion about things that prove true friendship. One of this is whether somebody is willing to give his car. In this context, the following utterances do not have a habitual or even a future interpretation but rather a modal "willing to" interpretation. In this*

context, it may be common ground that the subject is never going actually to give his car because there will be no need to do so.

(18) Greek

- a. Su dini o Petros to aftokinito tu?
CL.2SG give.IMPF.3SG the Peter.NOM the car his
'Is Nick willing to give you his car?'
- b. Anarotieme an o Petros mu dini to aftokinito tu.
wonder.PRES.1SG if the Peter.NOM CL.1SG give.IMPF.3SG the car his
'I wonder if Nick is willing to give me his car.'
- c. Pistevo oti o Petros mu dini to aftokinito tu.
Believe.PRES.1SG that the Peter.NOM CL.1SG give.IMPF.3SG the car his
'I believe that Peter is willing to give me his car.'
- d. Ah telika o Petros mu to dine to aftokinito tu...
Ah finally the Peter CL.1SG CL.IT give.IMPF.PAST the car his
- At this point, things appear to be different in German. Whereas similar sentences as in (20a-c) are perfectly, native speakers report that they get a more futurate reading rather than a *willing-to* reading as in Greek. It is also not possible to have past tense as opposed to the Greek sentence in (18d). For the sentences below a context like "We are planning a trip, but we don't have a car and so we are wondering what we will do..." is more appropriate for the following utterances.

(19) German

- a. (but the question is...) Gibt Nick mir sein Auto?
give. IMPF.3SG Nick CL.1SG his car
- b. Ich frage mich, ob Nick mir sein Auto gibt...
I ask me if Nick CL.1SG his car give.IMPF.3SG
- c. Aber ich glaube, Peter leiht mir sein Auto.
But I believe Peter lend. IMPF.3SG CL.1SG his car
- In the examples in (18)-(19) there is a modal/future interpretation which intuitively matches the modal flavor in IQs minus their performative character.
 - In Greek, the critical factor for the emergence of modality is *imperfective aspect* which as we saw is also obligatory in IQs. In all of the above environments, we have a perfective interpretation and yet we use imperfective.
 - In German, the critical factor seems to be the extensive use of the present imperfective as a future tense, but I will leave German aside for now.
 - English seems to lack both interpretations for the present, therefore lacking *modal-less* IQs².
 - Imperfective aspect is well-known for appearing in modal environments irrespectively of their semantic aspect (e.g. *counterfactuals*, *dispositional middles*).

² Of course, futurate readings of the present exist in English (e.g. 'Tomorrow I'm visiting Peter.') too but they are not as extensively used as in German.

- In this type of sentences, I take Greek *imperfective* aspect to be associated with a modal operator which has a *prioritizing(bouletic?)* flavor.
- All the examples in (18) are translated using the modal expression *is willing to*. The intuition is that **the subject of the sentence consents to do x**. Notice that the subject can only *consent* to do something, he cannot provide *permission for somebody else*. Syntactically we have a control structure.
- Putting all these together, a simplified meaning for the modal operator associated with imperfective aspect in these contexts is shown in (20). The operator takes as its internal argument a predicate of type $\langle e, st \rangle$ and then an entity x and it states that there is at least one possible world in which x 's plans are followed and x fulfills p in this world.

(20) $\llbracket \text{IMPF} - \text{OP}_{\text{IQS}} \rrbracket^w = \lambda p_{\langle e, st \rangle}. \lambda x_e. \exists w'. w'$ is consistent with x 's plans in w and $p(x)(w')$.

- If we apply this to an example as in (21a), we will get the meaning in (21c):

(21) a. O Petros mu dini to aftokinito tu.
The Peter CL.1SG give.IMPF.3SG the car his

‘Peter is willing to give me his car.’

b. $[\text{TP Peter}_1 \text{ T } [\text{IMPF} \text{ t}_1 \text{ OP } [\text{VP PRO}_1 \text{ give his car}]]]$

c. $\exists w'. w'$ is consistent with Peter's plans in w and Peter gives his car.

- It is worth-mentioning that anchoring to the subject is expected under Hacquard's (2006) approach for the derivation of the modal flavor. Hacquard (2006) suggested that the modal flavor depends on the height of the modal operator.
- A modal which merges below aspect is anchored to the main event and therefore it is anchored to the time denoted by T and is relativized to the participants of the event (most often to the subject). On the contrary, a modal which merges above aspect is anchored to the speech act event and therefore to utterance time and to the speaker or the addressee.
- Hacquard's proposal is illustrated nicely if we compare IQs, where the locus of modality is aspect, with Subjunctive Interrogatives (SIs) in Greek, in which modality is associated with *mood*. In contrast with IQs, the question in (21) asks for the *addressee's permission* and not whether *Peter is willing to give his car*.

(22) Na dosi o Petros to aftokinito tu stin Anna?
SUBJ give.PERF.3SG the Peter.NOM the car his to-the Anna
‘Is it o.k. for you if Peter gives his car to Ann?’

- However, this meaning overgenerates. Assuming that there is a modal operator associated with imperfective aspect which can derive this meaning, we would expect a sentence like (23) to be acceptable, just like its intended paraphrase with *willing* but it is not.

(23) i Anna pleni ta piata.
the Anna wash.IMPF.3SG the dishes
‘Anna washes/is washing the dishes.’

Intended but not possible: ‘Anna is willing to washes the dishes’

parenthesis

- A *consent* interpretation for (22) can be forced in a context where we already discuss whether Anna would agree to wash the dishes, suggesting that modality arises only if there is a Question Under Discussion (QUD) *regarding the subject's consent*.
- To capture this intuition, I propose that the modal operator, comes with a presupposition that there is a *consent QUD*.
- $[[\text{IMPF} - \text{OP}_{\text{IQs}}]]$ is defined *iff* there is a question under discussion whether the subject consents to actualize an event.
- This condition for the interpretation of this operator doesn't seem entirely stipulated given what we know in general about utterances providing permission (i.e. Kamp's (1979) *countervailing prohibition* for the emergence of a permission reading)
- In IQs, because of the context they occur in, the QUD can always be accommodated and therefore questions like (24) are perfectly understood as requests.

(24) plenis ta piata?
 wash.IMPF.3SG the dishes
 'Could you wash the dishes'

- In the rest of the cases, however, as in (23) a context is necessary to support a consent-reading.
- We can conclude that IQs involve a consent modal, associated with imperfective aspect.
- However, this cannot be the end of the story. A question as in (2) does not merely ask *if the addressee is willing to open the door*. It asks the addressee to do so. In the following, we turn to this issue of IQs.

4. Towards an account: IQs as hybrid interrogative-request type

- From the discussion so far, the meaning we have for IQs as in (2) is roughly something like the following:

↪ *Are you willing to open the window?*

- However, as we said IQs convey a request and this is not captured by our semantics so far. One could argue that the request interpretation comes about as a pragmatic inference. As Holmberg (1979), Lascarides and Asher (2001) point out, this is not a sufficient explanation because there are also non-conventionalized indirect requests (i.e. '*It's cold in here.*'), which are derived as inferences but they show different properties from conventionalized indirect requests in that they license discourse particles, they can conjoin with imperatives rather easily, etc.
- The 'directive/request' component must be encoded somewhere in the syntax/semantics otherwise we cannot account for the licensing of request particles, which also seem to obey certain rules in their syntactic distribution.
- Although, implemented in a different framework, I would like to adopt the idea from Lascarides and Asher (2001) that indirect requests are of a complex (in their terms dot) type, combining a question and a request type.

- The question is how the request component arises and eventually is typed into the syntax/semantics. Holmberg (1979) provides the following conditions under which a question can be interpreted and typed as a request:

“For any utterance of a sentence to be interpreted as constituting a performance of a directive speech act a number of conditions on the propositional content of directives must be met. Below are three such conditions:

1. *The action is volitional.*
2. *The actor is the addressee.*
3. *Time reference is non-past.”*

- In the context of imperatives, which have also been analysed as modalized propositions, performativity is derived in different ways (i.e. *speaker anchoring, practical context, effective preferences*).
- Schematically, for IQs, we can assume that there are indeed certain conditions which favor a request interpretation. These should definitely involve:
 - i. *Addressee orientation (necessarily the subject being the addressee)*
 - ii. *Modality*
 - iii. *Non-past time*
- When all these factors, and possibly others coincide, then a local inference can be derived that the utterance constitutes a request. This inference should be locally computed in the grammar, so that it can be written as a feature of the illocutionary force of the utterance.
- Following a view under which speech acts are represented in the syntax (Krifka 2001, 2009, Speas & Tenny 2003, Tsoulas & Alexiadou 2006, Zu 2015, Sauerland & Yatsushiro 2014) I suggest that at the level of the CP where the question is interpreted, as long as all the above conditions are satisfied the illocutionary force of the utterance can be tagged as a *request*.
- This is not specific to questions but to all sort of conventionalized indirect requests. The sentence below is a declarative but somehow it must be encoded in the semantics that it expresses a request, if we want to license the request particle ‘ligo’.

(25) Thelo na klisis ligo to parathiro se parakalo.
 Want.1SG SUBJ close.2SG REQ the window CL.2SG please
 ‘I want you please to close the window.’

- An analysis along these lines speaks against a strict mapping between sentence type and illocutionary force, but this mapping has been shown problematic in other environments as well (see non-canonical uses of imperatives).
- The LF of an IQ is represented below. Up to the level of CP we derive compositionally the meaning of the question. Given that it satisfies all the necessary conditions to be tagged as a request, the speech act head is marked with a [+REQ]-feature deriving a request interpretation.

(26) [_{saP} sa_[+REQ] [_{CP} C_{+Q} [_{TP} Peter₁ T [_{IMPPF} t₁ OP [_{VP} PRO₁ give his car]]]]]]

- In this way we can account for the appearance of the request particles. Following, Alexiadou & Tsoulas's (2006) analysis for the particle 're' in Greek, I suggest that the *request particles*, are not inserted post-syntactically. They can appear before spell-out but importantly after tagging the *sa*-head as a *request*.
- Small note on the meaning of *ligo*. *ligo* literally means 'little'. Although, in requests it doesn't have its literal meaning it seems that somehow its function is to modify the content of the request as not being super-difficult, time consuming, etc. This, in turn, derives a politer request as opposed to a particle-less request. We see that we cannot use *ligo* if it is common ground that the request involves a very difficult or a time consuming task.

(27) a. Vlepis ligo afti ti diafimisi na mu peis ti gnomi su?
 See.IMPF.2SG REQ this the advertisement SUBJ CL.1SG tell.2SG the opinion your
 'Could you please watch this advertisement to tell me your opinion?'

b. Vlepis (#ligo) to 'Gone with the wind' na mu peis ti gnomi su?
 See.IMPF.2SG REQ the 'Gone with the wind' SUBJ CL.1SG tell.2SG the opinion your
 'Could you please watch 'Gone with the wind' to tell me your opinion?'

c. adjazis (#ligo) aftus tus deka kadous skupidjon?
 empty.IMPF.2SG REQ these the ten cans trash
 'Could you please empty these ten trash cans?'

- It remains to be seen whether we can somehow compositionally derive the contribution of *ligo* in the meaning of the request or if we should treat it as a presupposition trigger restricting the possibilities for the content of the request.
- At this point the analysis is very sketchy and involves a great amount of magic. However, an analysis in this direction allows us to capture certain properties of IQs.

Dual nature of IQs: Since we have a question embedded under a request speech act, we can understand why it exhibits properties of both.

No focus-movement: As we mentioned focus movement is not consistent with a request interpretation. The question below is o.k. under its modal interpretation but without a performative component:

(28) To KOKINO aftokinito mu dinis?
 The red car CL.1SG give.2SG
 'Is it the RED car that you are willing to give me?'

- Given the analysis, the meaning that we will get at the CP-level is similar to this of a clefted question.
- Because of focus movement we derive a presupposition that the addressee is willing to give a car. Then the question cannot be about asking the intentions of the addressee in general but rather clarifying which car is the one that he can give.
- A request interpretation cannot be derived because the meaning of the question asked cannot derive a request inference.

Negation: Negation is interpreted as in questions.

- Because of the restrictions on IQs, sentential negation in Greek can only be interpreted as preposed negation therefore deriving a bias towards the prejacent.
- In German, on the contrary ‘nicht’ can also attach at the VP-level, therefore being interpreted as true negation.

5. Summary and further questions

- We discussed *Imperative Questions* which do not contain an overt modal operator.
- We have shown that in the case of Greek, there is a covert modal operator which also appears in all environments in which there is a consent QUD. In German, on the other hand, it looks more like a futurate interpretation of the present which is very common in the language.
- English, lacking both the *bouletic* and the extensive *futurate* use of the present, doesn’t have *modal-less* IQs with present.
- The request interpretation is the result of a modalized question plus performativity. The mechanism under which the utterance is marked as request is not worked out and remains to be explored.
- Licensing of the request particles, suggests that the utterance must be semantically marked as a request before spell-out.
- IQs seem to be present in other languages as well. Aside from Greek and German, we have them in Spanish, Catalan and possibly French.

(29) a.	Abres	la	ventana, (por favor)?	<i>Spanish</i>
	Open.IND.IMPF.2SG	the	window please	
b.	Obris	la	finestra, (si us plau)?	<i>Catalan</i>
	Open.IND.IMPF.2SG	the	window please	
			'Could you (please) open the window?'	

- The present analysis predicts that in these languages imperfective aspect is independently associated with a modal/future meaning, something to be tested.
- Finally, one issue we haven’t really understood is the prosodic restrictions on IQs. More research is needed into the prosody of questions and requests in general, in order to understand if these restrictions fall out from restrictions on F-marking or if they come from an independent source.

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