Removing question force from interrogative clauses: the West Flemish particle *kwestje*[*]

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1.　　Background: Conditions on questions

Utterances can be used to perform different speech acts[1], where there is a loose fit between form and function in that for instance, declaratives typically correspond to assertions and interrogatives to questions.

　　　The canonical forms for asking questions in English are illustrated in (1) with (1a) a root *yes-no* question, and (1b) a root *wh*-question. Both utterances are used as canonical questions, i.e., requests for information, by means of which a speaker tries to obtain some information from the addressee.

(1)　　*Context: The interlocutors are talking about their friend George, usually resident in the UK, who is currently in Greece with family. A has been in touch with George recently, so B asks:*

　　a.　　Is George coming back to the UK?

　　b.　　When is George coming back to the UK?

For questions such as (1a) and (1b) we can informally state the following conditions. In (1a) the speaker conveys that they do not know whether the proposition (2) is true:

(2)　　George is coming back to the UK.

(1b) gives rise to the (cancellable) inference that (2) is true, i.e. that George will indeed be coming back to the UK (cf. Fitzpatrick 2005), but the speaker communicates that they do not

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[1] We use the term 'speech act' here as West Flemish is principally a spoken language, but we would argue that the claims made here about 'speech acts' should also apply to utterances and conversational turns in signed languages if they are to be generally applicable to natural languages.

know when this inferred event will take place. Similarly to (1a), a speaker who is sincere in asking (1b) signals that they would like to obtain this missing piece of information, implies that they believe the addressee may be able to supply the missing information, and commits the addressee to providing some response if the conversation is to continue without disruption.

The informal condition that the speaker does not know the answer to their question echoes an intentionalist, Searlean approach to questions, specifically Searle's preparatory rule 1, as summarized in (3). Searle also stated that the speaker communicates by asking (1a) that that they want to know whether (2) holds or not (the sincerity condition in (3)).

(3)   *The felicity conditions for canonical questions*:
Propositional content: "Any proposition or propositional function."
Preparatory rule 1:   "S[peaker] does not know 'the answer'"
Preparatory rule 2:   "It is not obvious to both S and H[earer] that H will provide the information at that time without being asked."
Sincerity condition: "S wants this information."
Essential condition: "Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H."

(Searle 1969: 66)

We might also claim that the speaker believes that the addressee may be able to supply this information. This latter does not map onto a single Searlean condition, though it is implied in preparatory rule 2 in (3).

A more recent development in the pragmatic literature is the emergence of explicitly non-intensional, commitment-based approaches, such as Geurts (2019), which focus instead on the consequences of a canonical question like (1a) for the discourse. Geurts (2019: 10, 19) argues that the speaker's utterance of (1a) commits the addressee to commit to either (2) or its negation. The use of the term *commit* twice here is intended, and refers to how the discourse participants promise to act or expect their interlocutor to act in the discourse to follow. In this case, the speaker is explicitly and directly pursuing their goal of getting an answer to their question (the first instance of *commit*) and they expect that the addressee will not derail the conversation, i.e. they will act to provide that answer by confirming (2) or by negating it (the second *commit*). A similar goal-based approach to questions is also adopted by Farkas (2022, and earlier works with Kim Bruce). Farkas (2022: 297) frames the expectation of "addressee compliance" as a "characteristic propert[y] of [a] canonical question act" along with three others, which we summarize below:

(4)   a.   Speaker Ignorance   (the speaker does not know the answer)

         b.   Addressee Competence (the speaker assumes the addressee knows the answer)

         c.   Addressee Compliance (the speaker assumes the addressee will promptly give the answer)

         d.   Issue Resolution Goal   (the speaker's main aim "when raising an issue is to have it resolved in the immediate future of the conversation")

<div align="right">(Farkas 2022: 297)</div>

Farkas's and Geurts's approaches principally diverge from Searle's in terms of the speaker's assumptions about their addressee. Searle's speaker only assumes that the addressee will not provide the relevant information without being asked; we can only infer from this that the speaker assumes the addressee to possess that information. Farkas explicitly builds this factor into her definition in (4), while Geurts appears to assume a global speaker tendency "only to undertake commitments that are likely to be shared by their addressees" (2019: 10). With respect to the assumption of addressee compliance, on which Searle is silent, both Farkas and Geurts consider this factor characteristic of typical questioning acts. Geurts stresses further that the speaker is committed to ensuring addressee compliance (2019: 9-10), while Farkas appears to include a temporal condition, namely that "the addressee will provide [the] information in the immediate future of the conversation" (2022: 297).

We will adopt in this paper Farkas's characteristic properties of canonical question acts, noting, as Farkas does, that there are a number of non-canonical uses of questions where some of these characteristics are met but others are not. Most notable for this paper is that the assumption of Addressee Competence (condition (4b) can hold while Addressee Compliance (condition (4c) does not; for example in embedded 'indirect question' contexts.

(5)   *Context: You and Mary are no longer speaking and I'm your mutual friend. Mary is holding an open party tonight and knows you'll have heard about it.*

       Mary told me to ask you if you were coming to the party tonight.

In (5) the context is such that Speaker Ignorance and Addressee Competence ((4a,b)) are met, but the choice made by the speaker to embed (indeed, double embed) the question in an *if-*clause means that Addressee Compliance (4c) does not hold. The addressee may choose to

respond to the embedded question, but they are not obliged to do so in the same way that they would be to a root question.

Moreover, as shown in (6), polar responses require some continuation to make clear that the embedded clause is targeted (cf. Holmberg 2016: 14-15) while *why*-fragments target the reason or purpose behind the matrix clause rather than the speech act itself; both these facts show that (6) is still fundamentally an assertion of some (complex) propositional context, in which case Issue Resolution Goal (4d) cannot hold. For contrast, polar responses to the root question in (7) are licit, as is metacommunicative *why,* which targets the speaker's motivation for asking the question (Woods and Vicente 2021).

(6)   A: Mary told me to ask you if you were coming to the party tonight.

       B: Yes #(I am); No #(I'm not); Why (did Mary ask that/#are you saying this)?

(7)   A: Are you coming to the party tonight?

       B: Yes (I am); No (I'm not); Why (are you asking this/#doesn't Mary ask me herself)?

It is also true that Addressee Compliance (4c) can be met without Addressee Competence (4b) holding. This may be expected given that, as already mentioned, (4b) is itself only implied in Searle's rules, but the implication typically holds true nonetheless. To be clear, here we are principally concerned with contexts like (8) in which (4b) is undefined, rather than where the negation of (4b) holds, as in (9).

(8)   Addressee Competence (4b) is undefined (S doesn't know if A can provide a true answer)

       Context: The speaker calls their mobile phone provider as a special offer of unlimited texts seems not to be working. They are listening to a list of options, waiting for the option to speak to the contracts team, but accidentally hit a random number on their keypad and are put through to a service but they don't know which one.

       Call-centre worker: Hello, Geordie here, how can I help?

       Caller: Hi, I don't know I've got the right person but what happened to the unlimited texts special offer?

(9)   The negation of condition (4b) holds (S believes that A cannot provide a true answer)
        Context: The speaker is managing a project at work and feels unkindly towards their colleague, Taylor, working under them. They know that Taylor hasn't yet done the work assigned to them. The speaker is feeding back on the project in a work meeting and addresses Taylor during their report:
        And now Taylor – did you also find that people were in favour of the proposed build?

Note that in (8), the conditions of Speaker Ignorance, Addressee Compliance and Issue Resolution Goal (4a,c,d) hold even though (4b) does not – the call-centre worker cannot simply hang up and the speaker is seeking a resolution. In (9), none of the conditions in (4) hold apart from, arguably, Addressee Compliance (4c) on the basis of social norms: Taylor will be expected to account for their assigned work (whether honestly or dishonestly). Hence (9) is interpreted as insincere, perhaps to the point of being bullying.

Having established the criteria that we will use for identifying question acts, we now turn to their use in understanding non-canonical questioning acts. Farkas (2022) develops these criteria to discuss the Romanian particle *oare,* which combines with interrogative clause types to mark them as questions that do not require an answer. In other words, it is optional for the addressee to respond to *oare*-marked questions directly.

(10)   Oare e acasă Amalia?
        oare is home Amalia
        "Is Amalia home (I wonder)."

                                                                        Farkas (2022: 295)

Farkas refers to *oare*-marked questions as in (10) as non-intrusive questions as they "weaken" the addressee compliance that is characteristic of canonical questions or, in other words, fail to put the addressee on the spot (2022: 333). *Oare* itself is termed a 'de-marker', as it marks that a potential question does not have all of the characteristics in (4).

In this paper, we will turn to the West Flemish (WF) dialect of Dutch, which contains a specific particle, *kwestje,* that also combines exclusively with interrogatively-typed clauses.

Often described by non-linguist users as meaning something like "God knows whether…",[2] *kwestje* radically weakens Addressee Compliance when it combines with bona fide interrogative forms corresponding to canonical questions, i.e., requests for information. What this means is that the addressee of a *kwestje*-utterance is expected *not* to give an answer to the question expressed by the interrogative clause, so that a compliant addressee, in this case, looks most like (but not identical to) the compliant addressee of a declarative clause. As a result, the Issue Resolution Goal of a canonical question can no longer hold. We will also see that while the Speaker Ignorance condition typically holds in *kwestje*-utterance, Addressee Competence is not a necessary condition either. We will therefore discuss to what extent interrogative clause types containing this particle can still be considered questions, thereby contributing to the discussion of what makes a question, a question.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 is descriptive. It introduces the empirical data which will be the focus of our paper. Section 3 draws on this description to summarize the conditions on the use of *kwestje* and to identify the crucial discourse factors that license it. Section 4 is theoretical and aims to provide a formal analysis. We use the Table model as developed by Farkas and Bruce (2010) and offer an analysis of *kwestje* based on Farkas's 2022 analysis of Romanian *oare*. Section 5 sets out some remaining questions for future research, both on the descriptive side and on the theoretical side.

2.   West Flemish 'kwestje' and the neutralization of question force

2.1.   The data

(11) is the WF equivalent of (1), with (11) a root *yes-no* question and (11) a root *wh*-question. For these examples the felicity conditions listed in (4) hold without restriction:

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(11) *Context: The interlocutors are talking about their friend George, usually resident in Knokke, who is currently in Greece with family. A has been in touch with George recently so B asks:*

 a. Komt George were nor Knokke?

   Comes George back to Knokke

 b. Wanneer komt George were no Knokke?

   When comes George back to Knokke

Now consider (12), built on the exchange in (11), in which the questions provided in (11) are preceded by the formative *kwestje*. We cannot provide a translation for this form, nor unfortunately is the etymology clear to us at this point, so we will gloss the item as KWESTJE. The particle is always utterance-initial.

(12) *Context: The interlocutors A and B are talking about their friend George, usually resident in Knokke, who is currently in Greece with family. Neither A nor B has been in touch with George recently. B says:*

 a. Kwestje komt George were nor Knokke.

   KWESTJE comes George back to Knokke

 b. Kwestje wanneer komt George were no Knokke.

   KWESTJE when comes George back to Knokke

The examples in (12) contain the same root interrogatives as those in (11), but their felicity conditions differ. Notably, while Speaker Ignorance and Issue Resolution Goal hold, Addressee Competence need not hold: the utterances in (12) do not entail that the speaker believes that the addressee can supply the relevant information, as indicated by the context provided. In fact, in the normal case (see also examples such as (16)), the speaker probably doubts that the addressee *could* provide an answer to the question, such that the utterances in (12) would be somewhat unexpected in contexts such as that given in (11).

 Relatedly, Addressee Compliance is radically weakened: the addressee is not expected to confirm George's return or when that might occur. Despite this, *kwestje* utterances are very much a product of interaction rather than self-reflection. While in principle we cannot rule out that, for some speakers, *kwestje* utterances *could* be self-addressed, they are naturally used in out-loud interactions with a second person, with whom the lack of information encoded in the utterance is shared and are not a feature of inner speech. This addressee typically will

acknowledge the *kwestje* utterance overtly, as we will show, but not by providing an answer to the question.[3]

In terms of clause types, *kwestje* is not compatible with declarative (13) or with imperative (14) clauses:

(13) **Kwestje* hij komt donderdag were.
KWESTJE he comes Thursday back

(14) **Kwestje* kom donderdag were!
KWESTJE come Thursday back!

We assume, following e.g., Farkas (2022), that addressee compliance in declaratives and imperatives means that an overt linguistic response – specifically the expression of agreement – is possible but not necessary. Consequently, (13) and (14) demonstrate that the contribution of *kwestje* does not reduce to the fact that the addressee need not reply, or else it would be acceptable in these contexts. Rather, it modifies an interrogative clause to ensure that it is not interpreted as a request for information, as would be typical if a non-modified interrogative were deployed in a discourse.

In other words, *kwestje*-marked utterances such as those in (12) illustrate a split between 'interrogative form' and 'question force' in that they contain root interrogative forms (either as a root yes-no or wh-question) which simply posit an issue, but in which the speaker does not make a request of the addressee to supply the missing information.

2.2.   Speech act particles

Kwestje utterances as in (12) are not compatible with WF speech act particles that may typically accompany information-seeking questions. One such particle is *da* (Haegeman 2014), which is typically associated with questions and conveys that the speaker is somewhat surprised at the propositional content in the question:

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[3] We thank an anonymous reviewer for querying whether *kwestje* utterances can be self-addressed, leading us to elaborate on this point.

(15)　a.　*Context: The speaker had heard that a bar had lost its alcohol license, but their friend suggests getting a beer there.*

　　　　Meugen ze doar nog alcohol schenken, da?

　　　　May they there still alcohol serve, DA

　　b.　*Context: B needs some information; A knows Monique has that information*

　　　　A:　K'goan't an Monique vroagen

　　　　　　I go it to Monique ask

　　　　B:　Wanneer zie-j Monique, da?

　　　　　　When see-you Monique, DA

In (15a), the speaker is surprised to hear that the bar might be able to serve beer; in (15b), B concludes from A's utterance that A is going to meet Monique, at which they express some surprise.

　　　　Questions tagged with *da* are incompatible with *kwestje*: while the interrogative components of (15) are compatible with *kwestje* (16), the resulting *kwestje* utterances is incompatible with *da* (17).

(16)　a.　*Context: The speaker doesn't know the area and can't tell if an establishment is a coffee bar or a pub*

　　　　Kwestje meugen ze doar alcohol schenken.

　　　　KWESTJE may they there alcohol serve

　　b.　*Context: B needs some information; A knows Monique has that information*

　　　　A:　K'goan't an Monique vroagen

　　　　　　I go it to Monique ask

　　　　B:　Kwestje wanneer zie-j Monique.

　　　　　　KWESTJE when see-you Monique[4]

(17)　a.　*Kwestje meugen ze doar alcohol schenken, da.

　　　　KWESTJE may they there alcohol serve, DA

　　b.　*Kwestje wanneer zie-j Monique, da?

　　　　KWESTJE when see-you Monique, DA

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[4] In uttering (16)b, B suggests that it is totally unclear when A will see Monique. Their utterances could be paraphrased as 'Who knows when you'll see Monique, if ever'.

Conversely, WF features a particle *wè,* which marks a speaker's authority to make a particular claim (Haegeman 2014). *Wè* is compatible with declaratives and imperatives (18)-(19) but is incompatible with regular interrogatives (20):

(18)　Voor mensen die met Frans bezig zijn is dat anders, wè.
　　　for people who with French busy are is that different WÈ
　　　'For people working on French, things are different, you know."

<div align="right">(Haegeman 2014: 122)</div>

(19)　Zet　je　　mo　　wè.
　　　sit　you　PRT　WÈ
　　　'Do sit down.'

<div align="right">(Haegeman 2014: 122)</div>

(20)　a.　*Meugen ze doar alcohol schenken, wè?
　　　　　May they there alcohol serve, *wè*
　　　b.　*Goa ze kommen, wè?
　　　　　Goes she come, *wè*

However, at least for some WF speakers *kwestje* utterances such as those in (16) are compatible with *wè:*

(21)　a.　*Context: The speaker is talking about a coffee bar that she has been to in the past but where so far she only drank non-alcoholic drinks.*
　　　　　%Kwestje meugen ze doar alcohol schenken, wè.
　　　　　KWESTJE may they there alcohol serve WÈ
　　　b.　*Context: A and B are supposed to have dinner at C's house. A has arrived. C suggests waiting for B,*
　　　　　A:　%Kwestje goa ze kommen, wè, eur kleinste is ziek.
　　　　　　　KWESTJE goes she come WÈ, her youngest is ill

The distributional restrictions on the particles suggest that despite containing an interrogative clause, *kwestje* utterances are not requests for information and do not pattern with

interrogatively-typed clauses that are uttered and interpreted as such. In a *kwestje* utterance the speaker encodes that they are lacking knowledge about a proposition, but they do not request the missing information from their addressee.

However, *kwestje* utterances are not assertions or commands either, that is, they do not contribute to the discourse like a typical declarative or interrogative. The declarative in (18) contributes a new proposition to the interlocutors' shared knowledge and, by virtue of the imperative, (19) communicates what the addressee should do next, both based on the speaker's authority. In (21), a question is communicated as being unresolved, again based on the speaker's own authority.

2.3. *Responses*

Responses to *kwestje* utterances further illustrate that though question-like in terms of speaker ignorance, they are unlike questions in terms of the discourse commitments resulting from their use. A common response to a *kwestje* utterance is to confirm that no-one knows the answer, or that only God knows.

That said, an addressee may suggest that a speaker *should* know the answer. Both B1 and B2 in (22) are available and they encode that B challenges A's claim of ignorance.

(22)   A: Kwestje wanneer goa ze kommen.
          KWESTJE when goes she come
       B1: Ge weet gie da wel!
          you know you that so
          "You know that, don't you! (Don't pretend you don't.)"
       B2: Ge weet da toch!
          "You know that, don't you?! (Don't pretend you don't.)"

In terms of responses to the propositional content under *kwestje,* it is highly unexpected that the addressee will give a contentful answer, or even an explicit admission of their individual ignorance. In the examples below, an initial ! marks an unexpected response which would elicit surprise from the questioner:

(23)   A: Kwestje wanneer goa ze kommen.

            Kwestje when goes she come

       B: !Donderdag/!noaste weke/?K en-weten't niet.

            Thursday/next week/I don't know

B's response in (23) *k en- weten't niet* ('I don't know') might be possible accompanied by a big sigh or some other indication that the addressee's ignorance is total and shared by others. However, more natural responses would be as in (24):

(24)   A: Kwestje wanneer goa ze kommen?

            Kwestje when goes she come

       B: K weten't ook niet.

            I don't know also

       B′:   K vroagen't men ook of.

            I ask it myself also part

            'I am also wondering.'

       B″:   Ja, kwestje wanneer.

            Yes, Kwestje when

       B‴:   Ja, moesten we dat weten.

            Yes, should we that know

       B⁗:   [silence]/[change of topic]

The *kwestje* utterance may even be directly referred to as a question, yet the fact of its questionhood cannot be agreed with or challenged, and neither can the truth of its propositional content:

(25)   A: Kwestje komt Monique dissendag?

            Kwestje comes Monique Tuesday?

       B: Dat is de vroage.

            That is the question

       B′:   #Dat is (niet) woar.

            That is (not) true

       B″:   #Dat is juste: da weten we niet.

            That is right: that know we not

(25B′-B″) indicate that by using *kwestje*, a speaker is not explicitly marking their ignorance or the addressee's ignorance, because the issue of the interlocutors' ignorance cannot be directly challenged (25B′) or agreed with (25B″). In other words, the informational contribution of *kwestje* is not-at-issue (cf. Simons 2007, Simons et al 2010, *i.a.*). Instead, use of *kwestje* seems to license the inference that neither speaker nor addressee know the answer. To demonstrate that this is only an inference, we show in section 3 that Addressee *In*competence is not, in fact, a necessary condition for the felicitous use of *kwestje*.

In conclusion, while *kwestje* utterance posit a 'question', they fail to function as questions in the discourse exchange.

However, while they are somewhat like assertions that bring to the fore the fact of a question concerning a proposition (cf. the use of speech act particles in section 2.2), their use is also different from canonical assertions. In (26), A postulates that there exists an issue (a 'question') about a certain proposition. B can then reinforce this and confirm that they are aware of this issue. This response is not available to a *kwestje* utterance (27B) and again, the meaning contribution of *kwestje* itself cannot be directly challenged (27B′).

(26) *Context: Monique is a weekly visitor to A and B is aware of that. The day of the visit changes from week-to-week.*

    A: De vroage is wanneer da Monique nog een keer goa kommen.

           The question is when that Monique once again will come

           'The question is when Monique is coming next time.'

    B: Ja, dat beseffen-k ik.

           Yes, that realize I

           'Yes, I am aware of that.'

    B′:   Dat is toch geen vroage: ge weet da toch.

           That is TOCH no question: you know that TOCH

           'That's not a question: you know that, don't you?'

(27) A: Kwestje wanneer goa Monique nog een keer kommen.

KWESTJE when goes Monique once again come

B: #Ja, dat beseffen-k ik.

Yes, that realize I

'Yes, I am aware of that.'

B′: #Dat is toch geen vroage: ge weet da toch.

That is TOCH no question: you know that TOCH

'That's not a question: you know that, don't you?'

These response patterns demonstrate that the addressee will typically recognize the speaker's question act and may overtly align themselves with it, but that direct responses to the propositional content that such a question has arisen are highly unexpected.

2.4. Direct speech reporting

The observation that *kwestje* utterances pattern like assertions is also evident in direct reporting of *kwestje* utterances, which are introduced by verbs like *say* rather than *ask*:

(28) a. Valère zei/*vroeg: Kwestje meugen ze doar alcohol schenken.

Valère said/*asked: KWESTJE may they there alcohol serve

b. Valère zei/*vroeg: Kwestje hoe lange goat da deuren.

Valère said/*asked: KWESTJE how long will that last

Note, however, that *kwestje* is incompatible with embedded questions under *ask* (29), *say* (30) and rogative predicates like *know not* (31):

(29) a. Je vroeg (*kwestje) hoe lange goat het deuren/dat da goat deuren.

He asked KWESTJE how long goes it take/that goes take

b. *Je vroeg kwestje schenken ze daar wijn.

He asked KWESTJE serve they there wine

(30) a. Kzeggen dat ik *niet* weet hoe lang het goat deuren.

   I-say that I don't know how long it will take

   b   *Kzeggen (dat) kwestje hoe lang goat het deuren/dat het gaat deuren

   I-say (that) KWESTJE how long goes it last/that it goes last

   c. Kzeggen dat ik niet weet of ze daar wijn schenken

   I-say that I not know if they there wine serve

   d. *Kzeggen kwestje schenken ze daar wijn.

   I-say KWESTJE serve they there wine

(31) a. *Ik weet niet kwestje hoe lang dat het goat deuren.

   I know not KWESTJE how long that it goes take

   b. *Ik weet niet kwestje schenken ze daar wijn.

   I know not KWESTJE serve they there wine

There are additional syntactic constraints on *kwestje*. The particle may introduce both root *wh*-questions (with V2) and (verb final) non-root *wh*-questions; while the particle is compatible with a root *yes-no* question (with V2), it is incompatible with non-root *yes-no* clauses introduced by *ofdat* (lit. 'if that') and with verb final word order:

(32) a. *Kwestje of dan ze daar alcohol mogen schenken

   KWESTJE if that they there still alcohol can pour

   'But can they serve alcohol there?'

   b. *Kwestje of dat ze daar ooit over zal geraken.

   KWESTJE if that she there ever over will get

   'Who knows if she'll ever get over this'

We will not discuss the syntax of *kwestje* further here and direct the reader to Haegeman and Woods (2023, in prep).

3.   Conditions on the use of kwestje

Returning to the issue of speaker assumptions about the addressee in asking questions, there are two conditions to consider: addressee competence (4b) and addressee compliance (4c), repeated here for convenience in (33) and (34).

(33)   Addressee competence   (the speaker assumes the addressee knows the answer)

(34)   Addressee compliance   (the speaker assumes the addressee will promptly give the answer)

Consider the exchange in (35):

(35)   *Context: Monique is a frequent visitor to A's house; B is A's guest*
    A: Monique komt 't noaste weke.
        Monique is coming next week
    B: Wanneer goa ze kommen?
        when goes she come

(35B) is a regular *wh*-interrogative used as an information-seeking question. Speaker B uses it because she assumes that A can supply the information and in so asking, she expects A to do so.

    The interpretation of the *kwestje* utterance (36B) is different: starting from the same utterance (35A)=(36A), *kwestje* radically weakens Addressee Compliance (34): B indicates that they do not expect A to reply overtly. As a result, a further inference may arise that B expects A to be *unable* to reply, which would constitute a cancellation of Addressee Competence (33).

(36)   *Context: Monique is a weekly visitor to A and B is aware of that. The day of the visit changes from week-to-week.*
    A: Monique komt 't noaste weke.
        Monique is coming next week
    B: Kwestje wanneer goa ze kommen?
        KWESTJE when goes she come

We will now address the interplay between the use of *kwestje* and Addressee Competence more closely. *Kwestje* may be used in contexts where question forms are used to indirectly challenge an addressee's knowledge. To demonstrate this, we start from the unmarked exchange in (37), in which an assertion by A is quizzed by B:

(37)   *Context: Monique isn't expected until the weekend.*

    A: Monique komt donderdag.

       Monique is coming Thursday

    B: Komt Monique donderdag?

       Comes Monique Thursday?

By the *yes/no* question (37B), which redeploys the propositional content of assertion (37A,B) indicates that A's assertion in (37A) is surprising, i.e. it does not fit into his background assumptions, and that they expect some kind of clarification from A as to how they know this. (37B) is near-rhetorical: obviously B knows the answer that A will give already, since A has just supplied it in (37A).

Consider now the exchange (38) with a *kwestje* utterance in reaction to an assertion: while the *kwestje* utterance (38B) is grammatical, the utterance is not an appropriate alternative to (37B) in this context.

(38)   *Context: Monique isn't expected until the weekend.*

    A: Monique komt donderdag.

       Monique is coming Thursday

    B: #Kwestje komt Monique donderdag.

       KWESTJE comes Monique Thursday

Even though (38B) is used in a context where B does not expect A to reply, *kwestje* is not felicitous because both A and B already know that A would claim to be able to answer the question. However, if *komt* in (38B) is stressed, for example if B wishes to strongly challenge A, then (38B) could be used to convey that A may well think that Monique is coming Thursday but that B is far from sure. In the case that *komt* is stressed, B could naturally add the discourse particle *wel*:

(38)   B′:   Kwestje *komt* Monique donderdag wel.

In (38B′), there is the sense that although A has, on the face of it, given an answer to the question of whether Monique is coming on Thursday, B′ must have sufficient reason to believe the question is still open and that A cannot, in fact, give an informed answer.

However, *kwestje* is always incompatible with wh-in-situ echo questions such as (39).

(39) #Kwestje komt Monique *wanneer*?!

Thus, it appears that *kwestje* is compatible with challenges to the assumption of Addressee Competence or straightforward expressions of addressee incompetence.

Despite this, *kwestje* may also be used in contexts in which the addressee *does* know the answer to the question and the speaker is aware of this – for example, questions with second-person subjects that query the addressee's direct experience.[5] If *kwestje* inherently encoded a lack of Addressee Competence, then in such a context a *kwestje* utterance would be illicit. We demonstrate such a context in the exchange in (40).

(40) *Context: A is B's grandson. They are talking on Sunday morning. A was out on Saturday and B knows that A usually stays out very late.*

  A: Kzyn lyk moeg vandoage.

    I am like tired today

    'I kind of feel tired today.'

  B: Kwestje hoe loate zy'j gisteren tusgekomen?

    KWESTJE how late are you yesterday home come

In (40), B indicates that they attribute A's tiredness to A coming home late based on A's habits (rather than B's certain knowledge). Moreover, (40B) remains fully natural when B assumes that A knows exactly when he arrived home. We conclude from such data that a lack of Addressee Competence is not the precondition for the felicitous use of *kwestje*. Instead, we have demonstrated that Addressee Competence and Addressee Compliance can be completely decoupled, and that it is the latter that is crucial in the deployment of *kwestje* – in other words, the utterer of a *kwestje* utterance does not expect the addressee to overtly respond. (40B) merely indicates that B suspects that A was in bed late but that s/he simply does not want to ask or

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[5] An anonymous reviewer asked whether *kwestje* utterances were similar to "cannot find the value" (CFV) questions, as examined by Obenauer (1994, 2004), in which utterers express that a question remains unanswerable despite their best efforts (e.g. English "Where on earth *are* my glasses?"). Obenauer (2004) writes that CFV questions are typically self-addressed and incompatible with second-person subjects. As the context discussed here and demonstrated in (40) shows, *kwestje* utterances must therefore be distinct from CFV-questions.

wants, perhaps teasingly, to wonder aloud about the grounds for A's tiredness. B could continue as in (41).

(41)   B′   K goan't mo nie vroagen!

              I go but it not ask

        B″   Durvje-t zeggen?

              Dare you it say

        B‴ Kmoeten't nie eens weten!

              I must it not even know

              'I don't even want to know.'

The continuations in (41) are appropriate in a situation in which B is familiar with A's pub-going habits and simply signals that therefore s/he knows why A is tired, but that this is not something s/he wants to go into.

       (42) is the unmarked exchange on which (40) was built. Assertion (42A) is followed by a *wh*-interrogative (42B) that seeks to obtain from some information, which will provide an explanation for the content of (42A). Here, B would typically expect A to supply the information about his (presumably late) arrival.

(42)   *Context: A is B's grandson. They are talking on Sunday morning. A was out on Saturday and B knows that A usually stays out very late.*

       A: Kzyn lyk moeg vandoage.

            I am like tired today

            'I kind of feel tired today.'

       B: Hoe loate zy'j gie tusgekomen?

            how late are you you home come

By adding the particle *eigenlijk* to the interrogative (42B), as in (43), the speaker indicates that she is keen to get a (precise) reply:

(43)   B′: Hoe loate zy'j gie eigenlijk tusgekomen?

            how late are you you actually home come

            'As a matter of fact, when did you get home?'

            'Actually, when did you get home?'

Eigenlijk is not appropriate in a *kwestje* utterance because where *eigenlijk* reinforces the speaker's request for information, as *kwestje* instead marks that she does not expect a response.

(44)   B″:   #Kwestje hoe loate zy'j gie eigenlijk tusgekomen?
         KWESTJE how late are you you actually home come

As a consequence of the fact that *kwestje* utterance, though containing an interrogative clause, do not function as questions which would elicit a response from the addressee, they cannot be used in contexts where questions conventionally aim to elicit a response, such as quiz questions or exam questions:

(45)   #Kwestje wanneer is Napoleon geboren?
     KWESTJE when is Napoleon born?

Note also that quiz questions can be used felicitously where the speaker knows that the addressee does not know the answer, for example in the case of a (somewhat cruel) teacher who knows that some student has not done the required reading. This teacher may not expect a (sensible) response but is effecting as if they do to embarrass the student. Even in this circumstance, *kwestje* is still blocked as it specifically marks that the speaker does not expect a response.

The above observations result in the implication that 'question' force, such as it is retained in *kwestje* utterances, boils down, simply, to the combination of an interrogative clause type with Speaker Ignorance[6], as this is the only characteristic property retained in all of the felicitous *kwestje*-marked interrogatives presented here.

We turn now to one final data point. WF *nu were* ('now again, yet again') can be used in interrogatives in two senses: as a modifier of the event to indicate repeat occurrences, or in order to elicit a repetition of in formation previously provided by the addressee. Thus (46a) has two interpretations: (i) 'When is Monique coming back?' or (ii) 'Remind me (i.e. tell me again) when Monique is coming.' (46b) is a *kwestje* utterance embedding an interrogative with *nu*

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[6] Note that if this holds across question acts, then quiz or exam-type questions can no longer be classed as questions as the speaker does (or is not presumed to not) know the answer. We return to this issue in section 4.2.2.

were. In this utterance only the eventive repetition reading is available. (46b) cannot be used as a 'remind me' request.

(46)   *Context: Monique is a weekly visitor to A and B is aware of that. The day of the visit changes from week-to-week.*

  a. Wanneer komt Monique nu were?   = eventive; remind me

    When comes Monique now again

  b. Kwestje wanneer komt Monique nu were?[7] = eventive; *remind me

    KWESTJE when comes Monique now again

This is expected by our account so far: the reminder utterance with *nu were* implies that the addressee has already provided the information requested. In other words, the addressee (i) knows the relevant information, and thus is able to supply it, and (ii) the speaker can legitimately ask him to provide it. But it is also true that if *kwestje* indicates that the speaker expects no response from the addressee, then the "remind me" interpretation would create a contradiction, effectively meaning "remind me but don't tell me…". As a result, the eventive repetition only remains.

    In conclusion of this data survey, *kwestje* utterances posit a 'question' insofar as they mark Speaker Ignorance with respect to some proposition. However, they fail to function as questions in the discourse exchange in that they explicitly mark that the speaker does not expect the addressee to provide an answer, that is, they do not have the same Addressee Compliance condition as typical information-seeking questions. To examine this claim further, we will now demonstrate how *kwestje* affects the integration of information in discourse and which future acts are permissible in that discourse.

4. Modelling kwestje's contribution to discourse

To demonstrate the effect of *kwestje* on discourse structure we will use the Table model of Farkas and Bruce (2010), updated by Farkas (2022), to track what happens to the different parts of the content of a *kwestje* utterance. There are two bundles of content to track: (a) the set of propositions communicated by the interrogative clause, that is, the truth-conditional content, and (b) the discourse-related information communicated by *kwestje*. Through adopting this

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[7] Note also that in (46)b, *nu were* cannot operate over the meaning of *kwestje* to result in a meaning like "I'm again wondering when Monique is coming".

model we will demonstrate precisely how *kwestje* differs from another particle that modifies interrogatives, Romanian *oare,* the focus of Farkas (2022), which we briefly described in section 1. This will help us some way towards Farkas's broader aim of developing a typology of non-canonical questions, specifically those that the speaker uses to weaken the assumption of addressee compliance.

4.1.   *A brief introduction to the Table model and canonical utterances*

First, we introduce the terminology necessary to apply and understand the Table model for our purposes. Unless otherwise noted, the definitions given in this section are taken from Farkas (2022).

Declarative and interrogative clauses denote a set of propositions (that is, a set of sets of worlds), referred to as an issue, or *I.* The union of all the propositions at issue in *I* is referred to as info(*I*), which Farkas calls the "informative content" of *I.* This includes not only that which is typically considered the 'propositional content' of the utterance (i.e. the information conveyed within a complementizer phrase that can be challenged) but also speaker-oriented, non-challengeable material, such as that conveyed by evidentials, speech act adverbs, and sentence-final particles.

Declaratives and interrogatives differ in the valency of info(*I*); unmodified declarative clauses denote a singleton set while the *I* denoted by unmodified interrogatives contains more than one proposition.

Issues and their constituent propositions do not exist in a vacuum, however. They stand in relationships with the individual interlocutors in a discourse depending on who has uttered them and how, or who has responded to them and how. They are also evaluated relative to the existing shared discourse context, specifically whether or not they are already part of it. To track these relationships and how they change, Farkas and Bruce (2010) built on decades of research from Stalnaker (1978) through Gunlogson (2001, 2008) and other later works in developing the three-part Table model, which maps the movement of issues and propositions from private to public discourse commitments, through a negotiable space, into projected future discourse moves.

The first component is the space dedicated to the discourse commitments of the participants, or, "the set of propositions [that an interlocutor] has publicly committed to in the course of the current conversation" (Farkas 2023: 304). An interlocutor's private commitments are expected to be consistent with their public ones if they are acting sincerely.

The second component is the Table itself on which issues are placed to be resolved. Farkas (2022: 304) defines an issue as resolved in a given context if some proposition from that issue is accepted into the interlocutors' shared commitments in that context, otherwise known as the common ground (Stalnaker 1978). If issues remain on the Table, the conversation is considered "unstable".

This can be explained by reference to the third component of the model, the projected set. This is a set of possible, or rather preferred, next discourse moves as envisioned by the speaker on making a particular utterance, otherwise described as a list of possible commitments (Meriçli 2016, Farkas 2022). These discourse moves consist of the commitment that the speaker expects some interlocutor, typically the addressee, to make (Meriçli 2016, modified by Farkas 2022), as the first step towards adding the committed-to content into the interlocutors' shared commitments. The commitment that the speaker anticipates their fellow interlocutor to make must contain some sub-proposition of the issue raised by the speaker, or else the eventual common ground will be less informative than the speaker's public commitments (Farkas 2022). As we will see, this commitment is typically a straightforward commitment to the truth of some proposition on the Table. However, given relevant linguistic marking, it might also be a commitment to a more complex object represented in some other part of the discourse structure, namely the speaker's unTabled, not-at-issue, discourse commitments.

The full discourse structure outlined above is represented in Figure 1:

Discourse Commitments of speaker (DC$_{Sp}$)	Table	Discourse Commitments of addressee (DC$_{Ad}$)
	Projected Set (ps)	

Figure 1: Basic discourse structure (Farkas 2022: 305)

In terms of how an issue *I* maps onto this discourse structure when it is uttered, the propositional content (i.e., *I* itself) is placed onto the Table. The broader informational content (info(*I*), which includes, for example, the speaker's commitment to with respect to *I*) is placed into the speaker's discourse commitments. The projected set is then generated; this consists of adding

to the addressee's discourse commitments each proposition contained within I[8], assuming that any of the propositions contained within I would constitute a canonical response to the utterance if the addressee were to commit to them.

How this plays out for a declarative utterance is quite straightforward, and here we summarize Farkas (2022: 307-308). When a speaker utters a declarative, they commit to an issue I consisting of a single true proposition p (i.e. info(I)=p). They place p on the Table, and project a single future discourse move, namely that the addressee will commit to p too. This is demonstrated in Figure 2.

$\mathbf{DC_{Sp}}$	Table	$\mathbf{DC_{Ad}}$
Info(I)[9]	$\{p\}$	
	ps: $\{DC_{Ad} \cup \{p\}\}$	

Figure 2: Conversational state following the utterances of a declarative with propositional content p (Farkas 2022: 308)

If the addressee is compliant, they will respond as projected (i.e. as expected by the speaker) and commit to the truth of p. As p is now in both interlocutors' set of public commitments, this can be reduced to the addition of p to the interlocutors' shared discourse commitments, p can be removed from the Table and issue I can be considered resolved.

Interrogative utterances are slightly more complicated, and here we will, like Farkas, limit ourselves to polar interrogatives, though the basic idea also holds for constituent interrogatives. In a polar interrogative, the speaker commits to an issue I consisting of two propositions, p or not p. Assuming that the speaker is ignorant as to the truth of p and not p, and assuming that the issue has not before been raised in the discourse, info(I) does not correspond to a single proposition, but rather to worlds containing p and worlds containing not p – in other

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[8] As noted above, this is just the first step to adding some proposition to the interlocutors' shared commitments. Ultimately, if the interlocutors' public commitments match, these can be reduced to a shared commitment in the common ground and removed from their individual commitment space; in this way the common ground is augmented.

[9] In Farkas (2022), the update to the speaker's discourse commitments is marked as Info(I)=W to demonstrate that worlds in which p is true and worlds in which p is not true together constitute all the possible worlds compatible with the current discourse context. She does not mark the update of an *oare* sentence as contributing Info(I)=W but rather just Info(I). It is not clear what the difference is between the two so we treat it as a notational variant and, given our aims, stick here to the simpler Info(I).

words, all possible worlds that are compatible with the current discourse context. This reduces to a commitment by the speaker that issue I is open in the current discourse context, and this is added to their public discourse commitments. The set $\{p, \neg p\}$ is added to the Table to be resolved. The projected set consists of the addressee committing to either p or not p, i.e. the canonical response to a polar interrogative is to respond yes (committing to p) or no (committing to not p). A response such as "I don't know" is not canonical because in a canonical question, the utterer of the question assumes addressee competence (condition (33)), i.e. that the addressee knows the true answer, and so will not expect an "I don't know" response.

We map the utterance of a canonical polar interrogative onto the discourse structure in Figure 3:

DC$_{Sp}$	Table	DC$_{Ad}$
Info(I)	$\{p, \neg p\}$	
	ps: $\{DC_{Ad} \cup \{p\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\neg p\}\}$	

Figure 3: Conversational state following the utterance of a polar interrogative querying p (adapted from Farkas 2022: 312)

Note that in the case that the projected set contains a single possible move, the addressee can respond canonically (i.e., perform a move in line with some item in the projected set) by default, that is, by not responding overtly at all. In the case that the projected set contains more than one possible move, an overt response becomes obligatory, otherwise the speaker will not know which of the options in the projected set is being performed to resolve the issue. Farkas (2022: 309) refers to this as putting the addressee 'on the spot'.

4.2.   Modelling non-canonical-question particles

In this section we will apply the Table model to two types of non-canonical question: Romanian *oare*-marked questions and WF *kwestje* utterances. We will lay out Farkas's analysis for *oare*-marked questions first (section 4.2.1), then our own analysis for *kwestje* utterances (section 4.2.2), comparing the similarities and differences between the two.

4.2.1. Romanian 'oare'

Recall that the Romanian particle *oare* combines exclusively with interrogatively-typed clauses to mark them as questions that do not require an answer. Farkas (2022) terms questions like

(47), taken from Ivan (2013), as 'non-intrusive', as the speaker's assumption of addressee compliance is weakened and the speaker does not expect a response.

(47)   Oare Ion a   încuiat ușa   ieri?
       OARE Ion has locked door-the yesterday
       "Did Ion lock the door yesterday (I wonder)."

(Ivan 2013: 4)

Oare-marked questions like (47) fail to "put the addressee on the spot" (Farkas 2022: 333) as there are three possible canonical responses: to confirm that Ion locked the door, to confirm that he did not, or simply to accept that the issue is open. *Oare* is excluded from contexts that force a yes or no answer, e.g. 'cornering' disjunctive questions like (48). *Oare*-marked questions are also preferred over non-marked questions in contexts where the speaker cannot expect their addressee to know the answer, like (49).

(48)   (*Oare) Amalia a   plecat azi   sau ieri?   Da sau ba?
       (OARE) Amalia has   left   today or yesterday yes or no
       'Did Amalia leave today or yesterday? Yes or no?'
       (Farkas 2022: 314)

(49)   *Context: There is a knock on the door in the middle of the night. Maria says to Paul:*
       a.   Oare cine e la ora   asta?
            OARE who is at hour.the this
            'Who could it be at this hour?

(Farkas 2022: 319)

       b.   ?Cine e la ora asta?

(Farkas 2022: 319)

Farkas terms *oare* itself a 'de-marker' because *oare*-marked questions do not have all the canonical question characteristics in (4), or rather, one of those characteristics, Addressee Compliance, is weakened.

To capture the difference between *oare*-marked questions and canonical questions in Romanian, one could add to the projected set of a typical question the option of adding nothing at all to the interlocutors' discourse commitments – that is, that nothing in the current discourse

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context changes. This was suggested for *oare* by Fălăuș and Laca (2014) but rejected by Farkas (2022) on the basis that projected commitment sets must be at least as informative as the speaker's public discourse commitments. She does not completely spell out this idea, but our reading is that a true 'zero change' would be tantamount to the addressee ignoring that the speaker has even uttered the *oare*-marked question, which does not appear to be the effect of such an utterance. There are also mathematical considerations at play: nothing may be cleared from the Table or from the interlocutor commitment sets if nothing is added to the projected set. Hence, Farkas's solution for *oare* is that it adds to the projected set the option that the addressee shares the speaker's commitment that the question is open.

DC_{Sp}	Table	DC_{Ad}
info(I)	$\{p, \neg p\}$	
	ps: $\{DC_{Ad} \cup \{p\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{\neg p\}, DC_{Ad} \cup \{info(I)\}\}$	

Figure 4: Conversational state after an oare-marked utterance (Farkas 2022: 312)

Figure 4 states that *oare*-marked questions pose issue *I*, place the propositional content $\{p, \neg p\}$ for discussion and project three canonical future discourse moves for the addressee[10] to choose from: committing to *p*, committing to $\neg p$, or committing to Info(I), i.e., that $\{p, \neg p\}$ is an open issue. This captures the following characteristics of *oare:*

(50) a. Restriction to interrogatively-typed clauses. Adding Info(I) to the projected set of a declarative would be redundant, as Info(I) in a declarative is equivalent to the single unique proposition expressed by that clause.[11]

   b. Exclusion from contexts where a yes or no answer is forced. $DC_{Ad} \cup \{info(I)\}$ is not an acceptable response.

   c. Acceptability (and preferred status) in contexts when the speaker cannot reasonably expect an answer from their addressee. In these cases,

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[10] Farkas (2022) actually proposes that *oare* adds $DC_X \cup \{info(I)\}$, where X is some discourse participant. This allows flexibility for *oare* to be used in self-addressed questions or self-talk as well as in interactive discourses, capturing the full extent of the data. X is typically contextually fixed to the addressee by default, so we stick to DC_{Ad} for clarity and because, as discussed earlier, *kwestje* utterances are not typical in self-talk.

[11] In other words, a projected move performing $DC_X \cup \{info(I)\}$ is equivalent to $DC_X \cup \{p\}$ when info(I) = *p*.

DC_{Ad}∪{info(*I*)}is an acceptable – indeed, likely the only possible sincere – response.

Finally, Farkas provides an illustration of cases where *oare*-marked questions can be used for certain pragmatic effects thanks to their core meaning as detailed in Figure 4. In her overheard example (65b), given as (51) below, a speaker on the phone asks their interlocutor where they are:

(51)   Oare unde ești?

oare where are.2sg

'Where are you (I wonder).'

(Farkas 2022: 322)

Farkas claims that the use of a non-intrusive question in a context like that in (51) would most likely be a deliberate 'tactful' choice to allow the addressee not to answer directly without causing a conversational breakdown, for example if the speaker has reason to believe that the addressee would not want to reveal that information (2022: 322).

In summary, *oare* has a very similar interpretation and distribution to our particle of interest, *kwestje.* In the section to follow, we will flag the differences between the two, present our analysis of *kwestje*, and demonstrate how its properties are accounted for.

4.2.2.   West Flemish 'kwestje'

From our data survey in sections 2 and 3, we see that a key characteristic of *kwestje* utterances is that a direct response is not only not required, but is not *expected* by the speaker. Rather, a person who produces a *kwestje* utterance is typically ignorant of the true answer, assumes that the addressee is too, and wants to make it known that the content of the question is not settled.

To frame this in commitment terms, the utterer of a *kwestje* utterance commits only to the issue being open of whether proposition *p* or its negation is true, i.e. that neither *p* nor its negation are in the common ground shared between the interlocutors. The speaker does not commit to the expectation that the addressee will answer the question; in fact, the opposite – the speaker actively does not expect an answer. In this way, *kwestje* radically weakens the Addressee Compliance assumption (condition (34)) such that overt, direct answers to a *kwestje* utterance are considered non-canonical.

This is subtly different from the commitment made by an *oare*-marked question in Romanian, where direct answers to the question embedded under *oare* remain canonical responses.

Consequently, we propose that the discourse contribution of *kwestje* is as follows. In uttering a *kwestje* utterance, the speaker expresses that they are committed to the reflecting the open issue contained in the interrogative clause in the shared conversational ground. Therefore, a canonical way to resolve this issue is for the addressee to share this commitment. However, this is the full extent of the addition to the common ground by a *kwestje* utterance. It is not canonical for the addressee to commit to the truth of some subpart of the issue – i.e., to give an answer – and so resolution of the issue by committing to *p* or not *p* is not a projected next move.

DC$_{Sp}$	Table	DC$_{Ad}$
info(*I*)	*{p, ¬p}*	
	ps: {DC$_{Ad}$ ∪{info(*I*)}}	

Figure 5: Conversational state after a kwestje utterance

Given Figure 5, we can summarize the meaning of *kwestje* as follows:

(52)   Where Q represents an interrogatively-typed clause, by uttering *kwestje* Q, the speaker expects that the only available discourse move that can follow by the addressee of that question will be to commit to Q being an open issue in the discourse context.

As a result of the analysis in Figure 5, summarized in (52), it is predicted that a speaker will be surprised if their addressee provides a direct answer, as that is not a canonical response to a *kwestje* utterance. Note also that the projected set in Figure 5 captures the fact that addressee can explicitly express that they are committed to the openness of the issue on the Table (i.e., they are also committed to info(I)), for example in the case that they reply *k weten't ook niet* ('I also don't know'), where *ook* ('also') cannot be deleted (see also (23)). The addressee can also refer anaphorically to the update, as in *Ja, moesten we dat weten* ('Yes, we should know that'). This supports Farkas's (2022) amendment to Fălăuș and Laca's (2014) use of the Table model, namely the claim that zero changes to the Table do not capture the full discourse effect of these sorts of 'de-markers'.

Kwestje's restriction to interrogative clauses falls out because it places a non-singleton set *{p, ¬p}* on the Table, rather than a single proposition *p*. This means that when the addressee

commits to info(I) in response to a *kwestje* utterance, this is interpreted as agreeing that the question is open and not that the positive proposition expressed by the interrogative is the case.

However, as a *kwestje* utterance projects a singleton set containing only DC$_{Ad}$ ∪{info(I)}, *kwestje* is predicted to pattern with declaratives, even imperatives, with respect to properties linked to singleton projected sets. We have already seen that this holds, for example in (21), repeated as (53), where *kwestje* is compatible with the 'authoritative' particle *wè*.

(53)   a.   *Context: The speaker is talking about a coffee bar that she has been to in the past but where so far she only drank non-alcoholic drinks.*

         Kwestje meugen ze doar alcohol schenken, wè.

         KWESTJE May they there alcohol serve WÈ

    b.   *Context: A and B are supposed to have dinner at C's house. A has arrived. C suggests waiting for B,*

         A: Kwestje goa ze kommen, wè, eur kleinste is ziek.

            KWESTJE goes she come WÈ her youngest is ill

Wè is used when "the speaker has personal experience of the content of the proposition conveyed in a statement and hence expects the addressee to accept what she/he is saying" (Haegeman 2014: 121-122). It is typically compatible with declaratives and imperatives where it marks that the speaker believes herself to be a highly reliable interlocutor (for declaratives) or to have the relevant authority relative to the addressee to compel them to act (for imperatives; see Haegeman 2014: 122 for more details and examples). In Table model terms, the speaker marks that they provide very reliable and solid grounds for the addressee to add p to their public discourse commitments. It is not clear, therefore, what *wè* would mark in a canonical information-seeking polar question, where two equally good discourse moves are available to the addressee and the speaker is expressing ignorance. However, in a *kwestje* utterance, the speaker can mark that they have good authority to claim that the question $\{p, \neg p\}$ is still open.

What about an utterance like (38)B′, repeated in context as (54), where a *kwestje* utterance directly follows an assertion?[12]

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[12] Note that *kwestje* is never permitted as a standalone item; it must always be followed by some overt part of an interrogative clause. In this way, *kwestje* is unlike *oare* syntactically. On the topic of syntax, *kwestje* is banned from embedded polar questions where *oare* may appear in a restricted set of embedded contexts. The analysis given here in fact predicts that *kwestje* will be a root phenomenon given that it is a discourse-level modifier: it

(54) *Context: Monique isn't expected until the weekend.*

    A: Monique komt donderdag.

        Monique is coming Thursday

    B: Kwestje komt Monique donderdag wel.

        KWESTJE comes Monique Thursday WEL.

Taking the assertion in (54) first, its utterer (here A) places its content on the Table and communicates their belief that the proposition p that it expresses is true. The projected set here is that the addressee, B, should also commit to p being true, such that the Table can be cleared of p. This is represented in Figure 6.

DC$_A$	Table	DC$_B$
info(I)=p	$\{p\}$	
	ps: $\{DC_B \cup \{p\}\}$	

Figure 6: Conversational state after assertion by A of p (following Farkas 2022: 308)

Given Figure 6, a *kwestje* utterance by B constitutes a non-canonical response to the assertion by A because it is not the response in the projected set. B does not take any steps to add p to the shared discourse context. Instead, their *kwestje* utterance blocks any steps towards p from being accepted into the common ground. This is represented in Figure 7.

DC$_A$	Table	DC$_B$
info(I)=p	$\{p, \neg p\}$	info(I)
	ps: $\{DC_A \cup \{$info(I)$\}\}$[13]	

Figure 7: Conversational state after B replies to Figure 6 with a kwestje utterance

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modifies the way in which an utterance may contribute to updating the discourse context. We will not, however, present further syntactic analysis in this paper.

[13] The implementation of B's *kwestje* utterance here is a little different from Farkas's analysis of bare uses of *oare* in response to an assertion, which have a similar doubting or uncertainty meaning. In the case of *oare*, Farkas claims that the *oare*-utterer projects a set containing not DC$_A$ $\cup\{$info(I)$\}$, but DC$_A$ $\cup\{p, \neg p\}$ (in addition to DC$_A$ $\cup\{p\}$ and DC$_A$ $\cup\{p\neg p\}$) (2022: 315). It is not clear why in this case, the perspectival content that differentiates DC$_A$ $\cup\{$info(I)$\}$ from DC$_A$ $\cup\{p, \neg p\}$ would not be included, as the addressee would have to abandon their belief in their asserted proposition to move the conversation forward. We will use DC$_A$ $\cup\{$info(I)$\}$, for consistency here.

The effect is that B's *kwestje* utterance adds the negation of *p* onto the table and projects that A (now the addressee) should accept that the question is still open. However, A's commitment to *p* remains in A's discourse commitments, and A would have to drop this already public commitment to *p* in order to respond canonically to B's *kwestje* utterance. If A refuses to do this, A and B will have to pursue some other non-canonical route to resolution, for example agreeing to disagree. Such a route would result in conflicting stances in their individual discourse commitments but still ultimately removes $\{p, \neg p\}$ from the Table (see Farkas and Bruce 2010: 86, 102). *Kwestje* utterances, should, therefore, be interpreted as a stronger challenge to a preceding asserted declarative than an *oare*-marked question. This is perhaps indicated by the compatibility of polarity-reversing particle *wel* in examples like (38B'), but in the absence of WF-Romanian bilinguals to confirm this, all we can do for now is state this as a hypothesis.

Kwestje utterances as in (54) mark that the *kwestje*-utterer, here B, doubts the truth of the preceding asserted proposition. This falls out because *kwestje* is tantamount to an assertion that the issue of *p* is still open for B. Pragmatically this is interpreted as expressing doubt that there is sufficient evidence for the truth of the asserted proposition because B declines to accept its truth, while also explicitly refraining from committing to the truth of its negation (see also Farkas 2022: 314-315 on similar uses of *oare*).

We can also capture the infelicity of *kwestje* (and *oare*) in quiz or exam question contexts because a contentful response is required in such contexts. In the case of *oare*, the fact that it offers the option of simply accepting that the question is open conflicts with this 'contentful response requirement'. In the case of *kwestje* the incompatibility is total: no contentful response is projected and so infelicity results.

In fact, recall in example (44), repeated below as (55), that any attempt by the speaker to seek a specific answer results in *kwestje* becoming infelicitous.

(55)   #Kwestje hoe loate zy'j gie eigenlijk tusgekomen?
        KWESTJE how late are you you actually home come

Our analysis of *kwestje* gives us an indication as to why it is typically used in contexts where the addressee competence assumption is not met. If the speaker has any reason to think that the addressee does know the answer to a *kwestje* utterance, they will be placing the addressee in a situation where they may feel compelled to give a non-canonical response – i.e., an answer –

simply because accepting that the question is open would not be compatible with their private beliefs. Unless the speaker wants to tease the addressee (as in (40)) or put them in a difficult position, they will avoid using *kwestje* utterances when the addressee is likely to know the answer. This is because cooperative speakers generally try to avoid conversational 'crises' where the addressee deviates from the projected set of future conversational moves.

We would also expect *kwestje,* like *oare*, would be preferred in contexts where the addressee cannot know the answer, such as Farkas's (2022) 'knock on the door in the night' contexts (see example (49)). This is indeed the case; a typical WF question in such a situation can be found in (56); a *kwestje*-less question in the same context would have to contain, for example, modality like in (57).

(56) *Context: A & B are alone at night. There is a knock on the door. A moves to open the door:*

      B: Ge moet eerst kyken.   Kwestje wien is het!

           You must first look   KWESTJE who is it

      B′:   Kwestje wien is het! Ge moet eerst kyken.

(57)   B″: Wien zoud dat zyn?   Ge moet eerst kyken

            Who should that be?   You must first look

A non-*kwestje,* non-modalised question like (58) below would be odd as the first utterance out of the blue, as B knows that A cannot, given the context, know who is at the door:

(58)   B‴: #Wien is't?   Ge moet eerst kyken

            Who is-it?   You must first look

Another, related, commonality between *kwestje* and *oare* is their unavailability in 'cornering' disjunction questions (recall example (48) for *oare*).

(59)   #Kwestje komt Monique donderdag - ja or nee?

       KWESTJE comes Monique Thursday   yes or no

The 'yes or no' follow up in example (59) is simply incompatible with a *kwestje* utterance, which projects neither answer as a canonical response.

We conclude our modelling of *kwestje* here by noting a difference in interpretations of *kwestje*- and *oare*-marked questions. Farkas notes that *oare* "has the effect of 'softening' the question, or making it more polite because the de-marker adds a compliant response that does not resolve the issue raised." (2022: 313) There is no such effect with the use of *kwestje*, however. We might therefore argue that a compliant, non-answer does not, in itself, result in politeness; nor does it seem likely that politeness arises because the compliant non-answer is one of several canonical responses to an *oare*-marked question. Rather we would suggest that the politeness effect associated with *oare* will arise from the interaction of its form with cultural and contextual factors and say no more on that here.

4.2.3. *Proposal: 'kwestje' as a marker of non-inquisitorial questions*

The core difference between *kwestje* and *oare,* then, is that *kwestje* utterances do not invite a response from the addressee, whereas the addressee of an *oare*-marked question can choose whether to reply or to decline to reply, without seeming non-compliant.

To capture this, Farkas dubs *oare* a non-intrusive question marker, defining the term as follows:

(60)   Non-intrusive questions A question is non-intrusive iff the [projected set] of its output context state includes $DC_X \cup \{info(I)\}$, where *I* is the issue placed on the Table by the question.

<div align="right">(Farkas 2022: 313)</div>

Under this definition, *kwestje* also marks questions as non-intrusive. However, note that *kwestje* differs from *oare* in that adding $DC_X \cup \{Info(I)\}$ is the *only* projected move – direct answers committing to *p* or not *p* are not expected. In this way, *kwestje* barely imposes on the addressee at all, especially as an addressee can choose to 'share' the speaker's commitment to the open question without comment. *Kwestje* utterances, therefore, behave something like asserted declaratives, differing in that the content added to the interlocutor's discourse commitments by a declarative is co-referential with an item – a proposition – on the Table, whereas following a *kwestje* utterance, the content added to the interlocutor's discourse commitments is co-referential with an item – a relativized set of propositions – in the speaker's discourse commitments.

We therefore propose that *kwestje* marks a subtype of non-intrusive question. A *kwestje* utterance is still inquisitive in the inquisitive semantics sense (Ciardelli et al 2013, 2015) as it

communicates that a set of mutually contradictory propositions are possibly the case. However, it is maximally non-intrusive in that, but it places no commitment at all on any discourse participant to settle which of the set is the case. We therefore dub *kwestje* utterances non-inquisitorial.

This may seem like a contradiction in terms, but we have shown that *kwestje* utterances are at the extreme end of a scale with respect to their encoding of an assumption of addressee compliance while still adhering to the speaker ignorance characteristic of questions that distinguishes them from assertions. Moreover, this captures the data point in (21) that the assertive particle *wè* is compatible with *kwestje* utterances, at least for some[14] speakers. For the speaker to be able to achieve "authority" over the issue contained within their question, they must have strong contextual grounds to conclude that the issue cannot be resolved in the current discourse and the contextually determined right to insist that the interlocutor also accept this rather than attempting to answer the question. These facts justify the subclassification of *kwestje* as a non-intrusive "de-marker" relative to Romanian *oare.*

4.3.   What we have learned about non-canonical questions

In this paper so far we have seen that discourse particles may integrate into interrogative clauses to restrict their syntax and their use in discourse.[15] While many questions remain about the syntactic restrictions they impose, we will now spend a little longer thinking about the details of the restrictions they impose on discourse.

Farkas (2022) laid out four characteristics of canonical questions that we repeat here:

(61)   a.   Speaker Ignorance   (the speaker does not know the answer)

   b.   Addressee Competence (the speaker assumes the addressee knows the answer)

   c.   Addressee Compliance (the speaker assumes the addressee will promptly give the answer)

   d.   Issue Resolution Goal   (the speaker's main aim "when raising an issue is to have it resolved in the immediate future of the conversation")

(Farkas 2022: 297)

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[14] We might, on this account, predict that speakers who do not accept *wè* in conjunction with *kwestje* might be more permissive of a true answer in response to a *kwestje* utterance, such that for those speakers, *oare* and *kwestje* are effectively translation equivalents. We leave this speculation for future work.

[15] Crucially, their truth-conditional semantics appear to be unchanged in that they still express sets of propositions.

Non-intrusive questions, she claims, are questions in which Addressee Compliance is weakened (Farkas 2022: 312-313). However, these characteristics interact – Farkas claims that a speaker may choose to use an *oare*-marked structure indicating weakened Addressee Compliance in the event that they cannot assume Addressee Competence and wish to avoid putting the addressee in a position where they must respond non-canonically. In the case of an *oare*-marked utterance, both Speaker Ignorance and the Issue Resolution Goal are maintained.

The overlaps between *kwestje* utterances and *oare*-marked questions will by now be clear – Speaker Ignorance holds and Addressee Compliance is weakened, while Addressee Competence may be weakened by extension. However, in *kwestje* utterances, Addressee Compliance – in the sense expressed in (61c) – is reduced to acceptance, overt or covert, of the fact that the issue expressed by the interrogative clause is open. The Issue Resolution Goal remains but again in a weakened sense – the issue is resolved in the sense that it is removed from the Table but it is the relativized set of propositions, not a single true proposition from that set, which enters the shared discourse context.

Farkas (2022: 326) claims that both Addressee Compliance and the Issue Resolution Goal as in (61) "carry over" from canonical questions to canonical assertions. This makes sense for the Issue Resolution Goal, but as Addressee Compliance is expressed in question-specific terms, this point seems a little trickier. After all, it is not even clear that a prompt response is required in the case of assertions, given that the response can be as minimal as silence. It would not be theoretically sound to frame Addressee Compliance in terms of non-compliance though, so we propose the following wording as a working definition of Addressee Compliance for declaratives:

(62)   Addressee Compliance (for declaratives)
       The speaker assumes that the addressee will promptly accept the expressed proposition.

Assertions also differ from questions in that ignorance and competence are switched: in uttering an assertion, the speaker projects their own competence and assumes addressee ignorance if their assertion is to be informative (as noted in Farkas 2022: 326).

We can now capture the way in which *kwestje*'s patterns of use straddle those of questions and assertions. While Speaker Ignorance holds as in questions, *kwestje* utterances are assertion-like in terms of Addressee Compliance. They are neither question nor assertion-like in terms of Addressee Ignorance/Competence, because neither is strictly assumed.

The only characteristic that a *kwestje* utterance shares with canonical questions, then, is Speaker Ignorance. We have already seen that Speaker Ignorance is not an essential factor for determining questionhood, as quiz questions do not require it (Farkas 2022: 298, also section 3),[16] and it may be weakened in cases of biased questions (Farkas 2022: 332). That *kwestje* creates such a minimal type of question – and it is clear for WF speakers in terms of intuitions, judgements and use that *kwestje* utterances are still questions – is problematic for commitment accounts that frame questions as acts wherein the speaker commits the addressee to commit to a particular proposition (e.g. Geurts 2019). It is also a problem for intensional accounts that hinge on the elicitation of information (e.g. Searle 1969). Moreover, accounts wherein interrogative clauses express a singleton proposition, e.g. Krifka's (2015) 'monopolar' question account, are in trouble too, as it is the non-singleton set that *kwestje*-marked polar questions put on the Table that semantically differentiates them from declaratives used as assertions.

We have built here upon Farkas's work to demonstrate how markers of non-canonical questions, her 'de-markers', can differ along the Addressee Compliance spectrum, which is just one point of variance along which non-canonical questions can differ. A future step in this research is to consider which settings are possible for each characteristic of questionhood, given that some of these characteristics, in particular addressee compliance and competence, can co-vary. We must then look to see which sets of settings are marked in the world's languages and, if gaps exist, explain why this might be.

5.   Remaining questions

The questions at the end of section 4.3 are not the only questions remaining on this topic as we conclude. We have presented here an empirical survey of *kwestje* and we have formalized its use in discourse, with a view to explaining its restriction to interrogative clauses. However, the following syntactic questions remain:

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[16] Farkas claims (2022: 298) that quiz questions do not even meet the issue resolution goal. We contest this because someone who utters a quiz question still wants their addressee to promptly resolve an issue in the immediate future of the interaction. However, exactly what that issue *is* and how it is represented in Table model terms must differ in quiz questions from typical information-seeking questions. We leave this for future research.

(63)   (a)   What, precisely, is the syntax of *kwestje*? How similar is it to the syntax of *oare* in Hill (2002) or Coniglio and Zegrean (2012)?

         (b)   Why does *kwestje* introduce root and non-root wh-questions, but only root *yes-no* questions (see section 2)?

There are also further empirical questions to entertain. WF has another question particle, *kwesunder*, which also combines exclusively with interrogative clauses to produce non-canonical questions. However, there are subtle differences in the syntax, semantics and discourse uses of *kwesunder* that merit the kind of attention paid to *kwestje* here, as well as inviting a comparison.

It is clear, however, that it will only be through detailed close analysis of particles like *kwestje* and its kin in a wide range of languages and dialects that we will be better able to address a continually fascinating and perplexing question: what is it, ultimately, that makes a question a question?

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