Isn't it that propositional term answers automatically lead to exhaustification in inferentials? The view from Hungarian *nem-e* interrogatives

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The talk explores the form and interpretation of an understudied negative polar interrogative clause type to be referred to as *nem-e-*INT(errogative) in Hungarian, illustrated in (1-b), comparing it regarding form and interpretation to the so-called "inferential constructions" (cf. Delahunty 1990; Delahunty and Gatzkiewicz 2000; Delahunty 2001; Declerck 1992; Ikarashi 2014; Otake 2002) in various languages on the one hand, and to the Scottish Gaelic propositional cleft (cf. Sheil 2016), on the other.

- (1) a. A: Miért nincs még itt Mari? 'Why isn't Mari still not here?'
 - b. B: Nem-e le-késte a buszt? nem-e-INT nem-Q VM-missed the bus.ACC 'Isn't it that she missed the bus?'

A *nem-e*-INT contains the surface constituent *nem-e*, consisting of the negative particle *nem* and the interrogative particle *-e*. Whenever *nem-e* is followed immediately by a prefixed verb, the prefix (a verb modifier, VM) is situated immediately in front of the verb, as in positive declaratives and interrogatives. This property distinguishes *nem-e*-INTs from the two "canonical" negative interrogative form types in Hungarian, in (2-a)–(2-b) below, which are marked by a rise-fall prosody and by *-e* cliticized onto the verb, respectively, and both of which display VM-V inversion. (The *nem* V VM order is due to the V being attracted to NegP, cf. É. Kiss 2009.)

a. Nem késte le a buszt ∧ ? 'Didn't she miss the bus?' negative ∧-INT
b. Nem késte-e le a buszt? 'Didn't she miss the bus?' negative -e-INT

Nem-e-INTs were shown in Gyuris (t.a.) to contain *outside negation* (cf. Ladd 1981), require epistemic but be incompatible with non-epistemic (deontic or bouletic) speaker expectation biases, and not being available for encoding indirect reproaches, offers, requests, or rhetorical questions.

Further properties of *nem-e-*INTs that our semantic account will closely rely on include, first, that *nem-e-*INTs, as opposed to the two other negative interrogatives in Hungarian, are infelicitous out of the blue, in contexts with no unresolved question under discussion (QUD, cf. Roberts 1996). (Cf. Otake 2002.)

- (3) A to B: I have to ask you something.
 - a. #Nem-e át-ment János a vizsgán? 'Isn't it that János passed the exam?'
 - b. Nem ment-e át János a vizsgán? / Nem ment át János a vizsgán ∧ ? 'Didn't János pass the exam?'

Second, types of unresolved QUDs for *nem-e*-INTs include, in addition to questions asking for a reason or explanation, in (1) (cf. Ikarashi 2014), *how*-questions asking for a method, in (4) (cf. Sæbø 2016), and questions asking for a result, in (5) (inspired by an example by U. Eco, cited in Delahunty and Gatzkiewicz 2000):

- (4) A to B: How did this guy leave the apartment?

 A/B: Nem-e le-csúszott az ereszen? 'Isn't it that he slid down the gutter?'
- (5) A to B: What happens when men stop believing in God?

 A/B: Nem-e el-kezdenek nem hinni semmiben? 'Isn't it that they start not believing in anything?'

Third, utterances of *nem-e-*INTs cannot felicitously be followed by the isolated response particle *igen* 'yes', *de* G. 'doch', or *nem* 'no'. Felicitous answers to (1-b) in the relevant context include those in (6).

- (6) a. (Nem,) nem késte le. '(No,) he didn't miss it.'
 - b. (Nem,) a kocsija romlott el. '(No,) his car broke down.'

These data suggest that nem-e-INTs of the form 'nem-e α ' are not simply used to ask whether the denotation p of α is true, but whether p constitutes a term answer to the QUD. For (1-b), the QUD corresponds to the denotation of (1-a), and a full answer to the latter would be of the form 'She is not here because she missed the bus'. This means, in general, that nem-e-INTs are to be interpreted schematically as $\mathcal{P}(p)$?, where \mathcal{P} is a variable that stands for a property of propositions, whose value is specified by the QUD.

We account for the data by attibuting *nem-e*-INTs a biclausal structure with a partly covert interrogative matrix clause and a focused subordinate declarative clause, illustrated for (1-b) in (7):

(7)
$$[CP_1 \dots [NegP] \text{ Nem } [FocP] \text{ az van-e } [IP_1 \dots [CP_2 \text{ hogy } [IP_2 \text{ le-késte}]] \text{ a buszt }]]]] \dots]$$

not that be-Q that VM-missed the bus.ACC 'Isn't it that she missed the bus?'

In (7), the covert expletive az is the "correlate" of the subordinate declarative, and is situated in the preverbal focus position, followed by the covert copula van 'be.3sG'. The interrogative clitic -e ends up attached to the negative particle nem because both the copula and the correlate are covert. The complementizer hogy, introducing the subordinate clause, also remains covert. (Obligatory covertness is the result of a certain degree of grammaticalization having affected nem-e. For discussion of the trade-off between compositional and construction-specific properties see Reis 1999 and Jacobs 2016.) Since the preverbal focus position within the Hungarian sentence is associated with an exhaustive reading (cf. É. Kiss 2002; Szabolcsi 1994, a.o.), we assume that in nem-e-INTs the embedded declarative clause is interpreted a propositional focus with an exhaustive reading. The structural assumptions can account for the lack of inversion between the verb and the VM.

We assign to (constituents of) the example in (7) the following denotations:

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(8) \quad \text{a.} \quad \mathbb{[CP_2]} = \lambda w'. \ went(m,b,w') \\ \text{b.} \quad \mathbb{[van]} = \lambda r. \ \lambda w. \ \mathcal{P}(r)(w) \\ \text{c.} \quad \mathbb{[FocP]} = \lambda w. \ \mathcal{P}(\lambda w'.went(m,b,w'))(w) \land \forall q \ [q \neq \lambda w'.went(m,b,w') \rightarrow \neg \ \mathcal{P}(q)(w)] \\ \text{d.} \quad \mathbb{[-e]} = \lambda p. \ \{p,\neg p\} \\ \text{e.} \quad \mathbb{[CP]} = \{\lambda w. \ \mathcal{P}(\lambda w'.went(m,b,w'))(w) \land \forall q \ [q \neq \lambda w'.went(m,b,w') \rightarrow \neg \ \mathcal{P}(q)(w)], \\ \lambda w. \ \neg \mathcal{P}(\lambda w'.went(m,b,w'))(w) \land \forall q \ [q \neq \lambda w'.went(m,b,w') \rightarrow \neg \ \mathcal{P}(q)(w)] \}
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The denotation of CP_2 in (7) is a proposition, the covert copula van introduces the variable \mathcal{P} standing for a contextually given property of propositions. The denotation of FocP is a proposition that is true in those possible worlds where 'Mary missed the bus' has property \mathcal{P} but no other proposition does. (8-d) assigns -e the contribution of turning the proposition-denotation of its sister node into a set of propositions (cf. Hamblin 1973, Uegaki 2018), and nem contributes non-propositional (outside) negation, which makes a vacuous contribution to truth conditions. The denotation of the whole structure in (7) is shown in (8-e). The latter makes it clear that the positive answer to a question encoded by a nem-e-INT is not equivalent to the denotation p of CP_2 , but to a proposition that identifies p with the unique proposition that has property \mathcal{P} . It follows from the account why nem-e-INTs require the presence of an unsettled QUD, why the QUD is presupposed to have one true answer only, and why isolated response particles are not felicitous as answers. The proposal is analogous to those by Sheil (2016) and Delahunty (2001) in considering the construction under consideration a propositional cleft. However, it derives the compositional interpretation for nem-e-INTs on the basis of structural assumptions and assumptions about the semantics of the focus position in Hungarian.

We will set apart *nem-e-*INTs from other occurences of *nem-e*, including non-standard negative *-e-*INTs, in (9), with VM-V inversion, and "particle" uses of *nem-e* (with *-e* doubling) to mark the speaker's uncertainty, for politeness, (10), and argue against lumping the three together as "non-(/sub-)standard negative interrogatives".

- (9) ... nem-e estem át valamilyen fertőzésen 'haven't I got an infection.' (Hung. Nat. Corpus)
- (10) *nem-e lehetne-e* privátba megbeszélni 'couldn't we discuss it in private?' (Hung. Nat. Corpus)

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