

Factivity and question embedding: The view from factivity alternating languages

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Languages like Turkish have verbs that are used both in attitude reports that are factive, as in 1a), and in ones that are non-veridical, as in 1b) (Özyıldız 2017, 2018). Capitals indicate the position of nuclear stress.

- 1a) Karen [yağmur yağdığını] BİLİYOR/HATIRLIYOR.
Karen rain precipitate.NMZ.ACC know/remember
“Karen knows/remembers that it's raining.”
↪ It's raining.
- 1b) Karen [YAĞMUR yağdığını] biliyor/hatırlıyor.
Karen rain precipitate.NMZ.ACC know/remember
“Karen thinks that/has the potentially false memory that it's raining.”
↪ It's raining.

As seen in 2., these verbs can also embed questions. When they do, the resulting sentences entail that the attitude holder believes the true answer to the question, as indicated in 2a). There is no reading of sentences like 2. where the attitude holder believes a potentially false answer to the question, as paraphrased in 2b).

2. Karen [yağmur yağıp yağmadığını] biliyor/hatırlıyor.
Karen rain precipitate.OR precipitate.NEG.NMZ.ACC know/remember
“Karen knows/remembers whether it's raining.”
a) → Karen believes the true answer to the question.
b) Unavailable reading: Karen has a (potentially false) belief about whether it's raining.

The unavailability of the reading in 2b) is surprising. Usually in question embedding, veridical predicates like *know* and *remember* give rise to the entailment that the attitude holder believes a true answer to the embedded question. Non-veridical predicates like *be certain* and *agree* give rise to readings where the attitude holders believe an answer, but not necessarily a true one (Lahiri 2002, Spector & Egré 2015, a.o.).

- 3a) Karen knows/remembers whether it's raining.
→ Karen believes the true answer to the question.
- 3b) Karen and Henrik are certain/agree (on) whether it's raining.
↪ Karen and Henrik believe the true answer to the question.

The sentence in 2., then, does have a true answer reading that corresponds to the veridical use of the verbs *bil-* and *hatırla-* shown in 1a). It is missing a potential answer reading that corresponds to the verbs' non-veridical use in 1b).

I use the asymmetry between 1. and 2. to assess the predictions of current theories of the distribution and the interpretation of embedded questions, where the notion of veridicality plays a central role, and work towards a novel theory of question embedding (Egré 2008, Uegaki 2015, Theiler et al. 2017, Mayr 2018, a.o.).