

Commitment attribution and root complementizers in Catalan

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Abstract

This article is centered on a root-clause usage of Catalan *que*. It focuses on the meaning the particle contributes to assertions and polar questions. In particular, it proposes that *que* serves to attribute a commitment to a proposition to the addressee. The article adopts a recent idea from speech act theory that views commitments as social obligations speakers take up when performing speech acts. While most previous work on assertions focuses on speaker's commitments, the main contribution of *que* is an (attributed) addressee's commitment. The effect of *que* on the dynamics of the conversation are analyzed adopting Malamud and Stephenson's dynamic framework and a first formal analysis of the expressive meaning of *que* is developed by drawing from Krifka (2023a) and Gutzmann (2015).

Keywords: commitment; expressive meaning; epistemic modifiers; evidential modifiers; complementizers; biased questions; Catalan.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the meaning the Catalan complementizer *que* contributes when it is used in root-clauses. This use is somewhat unexpected, as *que* is generally assumed to be a regular complementizer responsible for sentential subordination in this

language. The data that will be focused on in this article are illustrated in (1)-(3).¹ In (1a) and (1b) *que* appears in a declarative sentence. In (1a), it is the first element of the sentence, in (1b) it is preceded by a modifier expressing certainty.²

- (1) a. Que té nou anys.
 QUE has nine years
 ‘He’s only nine.’
- b. Esclar que m’has de creure!
 clear QUE me- have to believe
 ‘Of course you have to believe me!’

The example in (2) shows that *que*, preceded by a modifier or not, can be placed in front of the answer particles *sí* and *no*. This shows that *que* does not require a full sentence to be grammatical.

- (2) (Clar) que sí/no.
 clear QUE yes/no
 ‘Of course it is/isn’t.’

Finally, in (3), it appears in a polar question.

- (3) Que plou?
 QUE rain
 ‘Is it raining?’

In addition to the contexts presented here, the particle also appears in verum sentences following *sí* and in wh-exclamatives following the wh-expression. These cases will not be discussed in this article, but for an account on them, please refer to Kocher (2022). Leaving out the particle in (1)-(3) does not lead to ungrammaticality. Consequently, *Té nou anys*, *Esclar m’has de creure*, *Clar(ament) sí/no* and *Plou?* are perfectly grammatical in Catalan, but the meaning of these utterances is different from the ones in (1)-(3). The particle does not contribute to the propositional level of meaning; instead *que* operates on a use-conditional level of meaning (Kaplan 1999, Gutzmann 2015). In particular, in the sections of this article, I will argue that what *que* contributes is an attribution of a commitment to the proposition to the addressee.

Apart from contexts relevant to the present study, there are other root-clause attestations of *que*, where it receives a reportative meaning. In Kocher (2022) I discuss the minimal examples shown in (4) and (5).

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, the Catalan data come from caWaC (Ljubešić & Toral 2014) or ebook-cat, my self-compiled corpus of Catalan ebooks.

² See Kocher (2022) for arguments why *esclar* is an adverbial modifier in modern Catalan. And see Kocher (2014/2017/2022) for arguments why the structures in (1b) and (2) are monoclausal and, in spite of their adjectival appearance of the modifiers, function as adverbs.

- (4) Mare: Té nou anys.
 mother have.3SG.PRS nine year.PL
 Pare: Eh?
 father huh
 Mare: Que té nou anys.
 Mother QUE has nine years
 Mother: S/he is nine years old. Father: Huh? Mother: [reportative:] S/he is nine years old.' (Kocher 2022, 126: ex 41)
- (5) Pare: És dolent demanar a un fill que llegeixi un llibre
 father is bad demand of a son that read.SUBJ a book
 Mare: Que té nou anys.
 mother QUE has nine years
 'Father: Is it a bad thing to ask your son to read a nook? Mother: He's only nine!'

The meaning of *que*, relevant in the present article, is illustrated in (5). The same *que*-initial assertion is uttered in a different context. The father asks whether it is a bad thing to make one's child read a book. The mother does not answer the question directly, but asserts that their son is nine years old, implicating that the book the father had chosen is not deemed appropriate by her. The content of the assertion, i.e. the son's age, is known to the father. The use of *que* has an emphatic effect.

As stated above, I will propose that *que* serves to attribute a commitment to the proposition to the addressee. I adopt the notion of commitment proposed in recent speech act theory, which assumes that commitments are social obligations arising when performing speech acts. Usually, the commitments that are of concern, are the ones the speaker takes up, but in the case of *que*, the main contribution affects the (attributed) addressee's commitments. I will use Malamud and Stephenson's dynamic framework to clarify the contribution of *que* to conversational states in assertions like (1a/b) and polar questions like (3) and present a first formal analysis of *que* as an expressive drawing from Krifka (2023a) and Gutzmann (2015).

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 establishes the theoretical background essential for my analyses. Section 2.1 presents the previous analyses. In section 2.2, I summarize the notion of commitment I adopt, in section 2.4, I describe the dynamic conversational scoreboard and in section 2.3, I describe two formal models of commitment. Section 3 presents the core empirical data in the light of the theoretical notions from section 2. In section 4, I develop my analyses. The discourse contribution of *que* is analyzed in the conversational scoreboard model in section 4.1 and a formal analysis of the expressive meaning of *que* is given in section 4.2. Finally, section 5 concludes the article.

2. Previous analyses and theoretical background

In this section, I summarize the previous analyses of *que* in Catalan root clauses and present the central theoretical notions and the analytical frameworks I will use in the article.

2.1. Previous analyses

Although root instances of complementizers are relatively common phenomena in Romance and cross-linguistically, their presence in Catalan assertions has been somewhat overlooked so far.³ There are some previous studies that are dedicated to the use of *que* in polar questions (Rigau 1984, Mascaró I Pons 1986, Cuenca 1997, Payrató 2002, Prieto 1997/2002, Celadrán et al. 2005, Rigau & Prieto 2005, Hernanz & Rigau 2006, Prieto & Rigau 2007). The most extensive study is by Prieto and Rigau (2007). The authors focus on the dialectal differences and intonational contours of polar questions with and without *que*. They find that in a large part of the Catalan speaking countries, the particle appears in biased polar questions, with the exception of Minorcan Catalan, where, according to Prieto & Rigau (2007), the particle is practically obligatory in polar questions. In some contexts, polar questions with *que* also carry a special falling intonation distinct from the raising intonation of the *que*-less counterparts. As for other speech acts, Castroviejo (2006) mentions the presence of *que* in Catalan wh-exclamatives, but does not analyze its meaning. Villalba (2003/2024) treats *que* as a clause-type marker of exclamatives.

The two more extensive studies on root clause *que* in Ibero-Romance that also address assertions are Corr (2022) and my own previous work Kocher (2022). Corr (2022) studies the syntax and pragmatics of *que*-utterances in various Romance varieties, using the term *illocutionary que* to refer to them. She distinguishes between three subtypes: The first type is *presentative que*, which she uses for the reportative uses I illustrated in (4). The second type is *dialogical que*, in which *que* is used to construct discourse cohesion. And finally, the third type is *affective que*, which most closely matches the uses relevant in this article. In this subtype, the author argues that *que* is an expression of the speaker's expressive affective stance (Corr 2022: 159). This characterization is compatible with my analysis of *que* as an expressive (see section 4.2).

In Kocher (2022), I investigate Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese *que* in different clause types. Based on their pragmatics and syntax, I conclude that the complementizers serve to ascribe a commitment to the proposition to an addressee. The analysis is modeled in a discourse framework à la Malamud and Stephenson. The present article builds on the generalization from Kocher (2022) for Ibero-Romance but takes a closer look at Catalan and develops an enriched semantic analysis.

2.2. Commitment

I adopt the view from recent speech act theory, which assumes that with speech acts speakers express social commitments towards their addressees (cf. Peirce 1994, Brandom 1983/1994/2000, Kibble 2006a/b, MacFarlane 2011, Geurts 2019, Shapiro 2020, Krifka 2023a, among others). Social commitments are defined as obligations towards other agents that arise when performing a speech act. With assertions,

³ See Kocher (2022) for an extensive overview over previous analyses of root complementizers in Ibero-Romance.

speakers commit themselves to vouch for their truth in front of the addressees. According to Brandom (1983/1994/2000), asserting a proposition involves two dimensions, namely taking up a *responsibility* for a proposition and taking up *authority* over a proposition (see Marsili 2020 for a slightly different conception of commitment distinguishing *accountability* and discursive *responsibility*). The first dimension means that, when asserting a proposition, the speaker takes up a responsibility to show that they are entitled to the commitment. In other words, they are responsible for defending the proposition and if challenged or unable to do so, they have to retract their assertion of the proposition (similar in Kibble 2006b). The second dimension means that the speaker authorizes further assertions and the commitments they express. These can either be inferential or communicational, in the sense that an addressee, when challenged for their (re)assertion of a proposition, can pass justificatory responsibility to the original asserter of the proposition (cf. Shapiro 2020). Although I will not go into a detailed discussion on the merits of the opposing approaches (but see Kibble 2006b, MacFarlane 2011, Kneer 2018, Geurts 2019, Krifka 2023a), there is an alternative view in the literature that assumes that speech acts primarily express mental attitudes like beliefs (Bach & Harnish 1979, Truckenbrodt 2006, Zaefferer 2001/2006).⁴ Commitment-based theories acknowledge that mental attitudes such as beliefs and intensions play a role in communication and can be fundamental for commitments (see Northrup 2014). Additionally, if agents follow a *Maxim of Sincerity*, beliefs and social commitments will be aligned nevertheless (see Geurts 2019, Krifka 2023a).

Returning now to the issue at hand, an important conceptual distinction to account for Catalan *que* is what Brandom (1983/1994) describes as acknowledged and consequential commitments. Acknowledged commitments are commitments that speakers consciously undertake when they assert a proposition like Anna does in (6a), or when they express agreement with a proposition asserted by a different speaker like Bea does in (6b).

- (6) a. Anna: I have class later.
- b. Anna: We have class later. Bea: Right.

With asserting *p* in (6a), Anna acknowledges a commitment to having class later that day. In (6b), Anna undertakes a commitment to having class together with Bea later that day. By stating agreement with Anna's assertion, Bea also acknowledges her commitment to the proposition.

Consequential commitments, in turn, are inferential commitments that an agent either authorizes when asserting a proposition, or which are attributed to an agent based on the content of the common ground. Brandom (1994) discusses a case of semantic entailment to exemplify this notion: When asserting *Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia*, a speaker undertakes a consequential commitment to *Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh* whether they are aware of it or not.

⁴ MacFarlane (2011) actually distinguishes between four types of theories of assertions. In addition to the two already mentioned, there is one approach that treats assertions as moves in a language game (Stenius 1967, Williamson 1996) and another that centers on the potential of assertions to change the common ground (Stalnaker 1978).

The speaker does not have a responsibility to defend unacknowledged consequential commitments (see also Shapiro 2020), although they have authority over them. This means that when a speaker asserts *I like German cities*, they acknowledge their commitment to this proposition. Hearers can attribute consequential commitments to the speaker, like, for instance *They like Tübingen*. However, the speaker is not responsible for defending this consequential commitment. If challenged, say the speaker complains about Tübingen and the addressee calls them out by saying *Wait a minute, I thought you liked German cities*, the speaker can say *Tübingen is not a proper city, I meant large cities like Berlin, Hamburg and Munich*, without retracting their initial commitment.

Consequential commitments appear to involve different types of inferential meaning, the two discussed examples were cases of semantic entailment that are directly linked to the expressions involved in the asserted proposition. The relation can also be more loose and consequential commitments can also be implicatures like in (7).

- (7) Bea: Are you coming for lunch?
 Anna: I had a big breakfast.
 Bea: So you're not coming?
 Anna: No, I will, I'll just order soup.

Anna's assertion in (7) of having a big breakfast can implicate different things. In the example, Bea suspects that Anna is answering her questions whether she will come to lunch by declining it. Thus, she ascribes a consequential commitment to Anna that she will not be coming to lunch. Bea tries to make Anna acknowledge the consequential commitment by asking a confirmation question. Anna, however, answers negatively and she does not acknowledge or defend the consequential commitment that was ascribed to her. This exchange is perfectly felicitous and does not result in contradiction, since all Anna committed herself to was that she had a big breakfast.

2.3. Conversational scoreboards

I use the framework from Malamud and Stephenson (2015), which is a further development of the model by Farkas & Bruce (2010), to model the discourse contribution of Catalan *que*. The basic idea these frameworks rely on was formulated in Lewis (1979) namely that speech participants keep track of past, current and projected, i.e. future, conversational states during an exchange. The conversational states are tracked on a (mental) scoreboard. Each utterance has the potential to change the content of the elements of the scoreboard. One of the elements speakers keep track of that is particularly important to the present article, are the discourse commitments for each interlocutor. Discourse commitments are sets of propositions each interlocutor is committed to. The intersection of sets of public discourse commitments constitutes the common ground. The scoreboard also contains a set of issues to be resolved which is called the table.

The representation of Malamud & Stephenson (2015) is a modified version of the scoreboard by Farkas & Bruce (2010). The modification concerns the inclusion of projected versions of each element of the scoreboard, as opposed to only a projected common ground in Farkas and Bruce (2010). This modification grants the possibility

to model tentative commitments for speakers and addressees, which will also be employed in the analysis of Catalan *que*.

The scoreboard for a regular assertion is given in table 1. Malamud & Stephenson (2015) propose that, when a speaker asserts a proposition, three elements of the score-board change. The proposition is added to the set discourse commitments of the speaker, reflecting the view that assertions express commitments (see section 2.2). The proposition is placed on top of the stack on the table, as an issue to be resolved in the next conversational move. It is, furthermore, added to the projected common ground. The idea behind this last addition is the view that assertions are suggestions to add propositions to the common ground (see Stalnaker 1978).

	current	projected
CG	{}	CG*
DC _{Speaker}	{p}	DC* _{Speaker}
DC _{Addressee}	{}	DC* _{Addressee}
Table	<p>	Table*

Table 1. Asserting *p* (from Malamud & Stephenson 2015, building on Farkas & Bruce 2010 and Lewis 1979)

Although the authors model the role of commitments in conversation, they do not offer a formal definition of what commitments are in their view. I believe, however, that the framework is perfectly compatible with the social conception of commitments presented in section 2.2. In the following section 2.4, I will present two recent linguistic models formalizing this social notion of commitments.

2.4. Formal linguistic models of commitment

There are two formal linguistic models of commitments that have recently been proposed. One is by Geurts (2019), the other one by Krifka (2023a). I will use the model by Krifka (2023a) in the remainder of this article but will briefly introduce the main ideas of Geurts' model here. The objectives of the two approaches are different: While Geurts is interested in determining how commitments play out in different speech acts, Krifka's main focus is on assertions and he also aims at isolating layers of meaning involved in this speech act. Both accounts adopt a social conception of commitments. Geurts (2019) claims that each speech act causes a public commitment towards a proposition made by a speaker *a* to an addressee *b*, written as $C_{a,b} p$ (with *C*: commitment, *a*: speaker, *b*: addressee, *p*: proposition). Different types of speech acts are modeled by distinguishing telic from atelic commitments, where the former commit the interlocutors to a goal and the latter do not. A public commitment in Geurts (2019) means that an interlocutor acts in a way that is consistent with the truth of the proposition. Assertions encode public atelic commitments of a speaker towards an addressee. These public commitments also entitle addressees to act on *p*. If a proposition turns out to be false, the addressee can hold the speaker accountable. Commissives, like promises, express telic public commitments, with which a speaker commits to a goal, in other words, they commit to make *p* true. Directives also express telic public commitments, but in their case it is the addressee and not the speaker that has the responsibility to see to their truth.

The model by Krifka (2023a) deals with the layers of meaning involved in assertions. In the model, these layers are mapped onto syntactic structure. The syntactic part of the model is not central in the context of the present article, and will, therefore, not be laid out here. The layers of meaning are presented by hierarchically ordered semantic operators. Each assertion contains a judgment operator $J-$, a commitment operator \vdash and a speech act operator \bullet . The closest operator to the core proposition is the judgment operator $J-$, which makes a judger j available which in most cases is bound by the speaker, who judges the proposition to be true. The semantic analysis of the application of this first operator is given in (8).

- (8) $[\text{Max snores loudly}] = \lambda j \lambda i [\text{Max snores loudly, according to } j, \text{ in } i]$
 (with j : judger, i : world-time index; adapted from Krifka 2023a, 125: 20)

The next operator \vdash is the commitment operator that turns the judgment into a public commitment, analyzed as in (9).

- (9) $\vdash [J-[\text{Max snores loudly}]] = \lambda j [j \vdash_i \lambda i$
 $[\text{Max snores loudly, according to } j, \text{ in } i]]$
 (with j : judger, i : world-time index; adapted from Krifka 2023a, 125: 21)

Finally, the assertive operator \bullet is responsible for the performative common ground update of an assertion (as proposed in Stalnaker, 1978).

- (10) $c + \bullet = \{i' \mid \exists i \in c [i \circ \bullet i' [p]]\}$
 (with c : common ground with i : world-time index, $i \circ \bullet$
 $i'[p]$: i' means that i' immediately follows i and differs insofar as p is true at i' ,
 Krifka 2023b, 126: 22)

The semantic contribution of the operator \bullet is given in (11).

- (11) $\bullet [\vdash [J-[\text{Max snores loudly}]]] =$
 $\lambda c \{i' \mid \exists i \in c [i \circ \bullet i' [s \vdash_i \lambda i [\text{Max snores loudly according to } s, \text{ in } i]]]\}$
 (with s : speaker, i : world-time index, e : commitment event, adapted from Krifka 2023a, 126: ex 24)

In short, the meaning of an assertion will be written as given in (12).

- (12) $\bullet \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} p]$
 (with s : speaker, i : world-time index, e : commitment event, adapted from Krifka 2024, 55: ex 3)

Being committed to a proposition in this model results in the desired meaning that the judger, bound by the speaker, is publicly responsible for the truth of the judged proposition.

In section 2.2, it was mentioned that there is an alternative conception of assertions that view them as expressions of mental attitudes. Commitment-based theories do not negate the importance of mental attitudes like beliefs in speech acts. For instance, in the model by Geurts (2019), a distinction is drawn between private and

social commitments. Social commitments are what I have called *commitments* so far, they give rise to social obligations towards other interlocutors. Private commitments are obligations one takes up to oneself, such as beliefs and intentions. Applying the distinction between telic and atelic commitments to private commitments, Geurts (2019) treats beliefs as private atelic commitments and intentions as private telic commitments.

In Krifka (2023a), mental attitudes are represented by the judgment operator, encoding speakers' private judgments of a proposition. In the model, the judgment operator J -scopes below the commitment modifier \vdash . Krifka (2023a) builds his model on empirical evidence from expressions that modify these particular semantic operators. He distinguishes commitment modifiers like *really*, or *by God*, which are expression that modify commitments directly, from judgment modifiers, his cover term for evidential, epistemic and evaluative modifiers like *certainly* or *apparently*. He also states that both types of modifiers can have similar overall effects, suggesting that mental attitudes can impact commitments. See Kocher (forthcoming) for an experimental study of these modifiers in Spanish.

3. Commitment and *que*

With these concepts in place, in the present section I return to the issue at hand: Catalan *que*. I propose that it is a tool a speaker uses to attribute a commitment to the addressee.

3.1. Commitment Attribution and its Pragmatic Effects

My principle claim is that *que* is used when the speaker wants to express that the addressee is or should be committed to p according to them. In other words, the speaker attributes a commitment to p to the addressee. Often *que* appears in contexts where the addressee in fact asserted p before. So, assuming and expressing that the addressee is committed to p is uncontroversial in these context. This is the case in (13).

(13) **previously asserted p** (Lluís Llach Somniem, 1979)

- a. A: Potser t'he de creure B: Esclar que m'has de creure
 maybe you-have to believe clear QUE me-have to believe
 'A: Maybe I have to believe you. B: Of course you have to believe me!'
- b. VOLEU MASSA! Clar que sí: Volem massa... Més, tot!
 want too-much clear QUE yes want too-much more all
 'YOU WANT TOO MUCH! Of course we do! We want too much... we want more, we want it all!'

In (13a), speaker A asserts p , but mitigates their commitment through the use of the weak epistemic modifier *potser*. B reasserts p , introduces it by *que* and uses *esclar* to express a strong epistemic judgment towards the proposition, giving rise to a strong commitment. The use of *que* creates the effect of an even stronger commitment, since it establishes that, in the view of speaker B, the addressee, speaker A, is also committed to p . The example in (13b) comes from a song from the Catalan singer Lluís Llach

who in the 1970s was involved in a political movement proclaiming the use of Catalan. Here *voleu massa* is presented as a quote, as something critics told the author. The author emphatically agrees and uses *clar que sí*. to make his assertion even stronger. This examples shows that *que* is not restricted to introduce full declarative sentences like in (13a) but can also appear with pro-forms like the affirmative *sí* and the negative *no*. In both examples in (13), *p*, or a modified version of it, has been previously asserted by the addressee and the speaker reasserts *p* introduced by *que*. The fact that the addressee is committed to *p* is uncontroversial in these cases because of their assertion of it. The contribution of *que* appears superfluous and obvious. The effect that arises from marking something that is obvious, is that of insistence, emphasis and strengthening.

Que can also be used in contexts where *p* has not been explicitly asserted by the addressee but the fact that the addressee is committed to it can be inferred from the context. This is the case in (14), in which a debate is mentioned in the context. The fact that it has importance, i.e. the content of the *que*-sentence, can be inferred from the way it is described. In this context, the speaker exploits the meaning contributed by *que* to manage the common ground and move the conversation forward. Although *p* has not been asserted, introducing it by *que* implies that it is common ground and uncontroversial.

(14) **inferred *p***

Els retalls, en definitiva, són un debat de com distribuïm allò generat. [...]
the cuts ultimately are a debate on how distribute that produced

Evidentment que aquest és un debat important, ara bé, hi ha un debat
Evidently QUE this is a debate important however there have a debate
tant o més important.
as or more important

‘The tax cuts are ultimately a debate about how to distribute what has been produced. Evidently, this is an important debate, however there is a debate that is as, if not, more important than this one.’

There are also cases where *p* is not asserted nor can it be inferred, like in (15) (repeated from (5)).

(15) ***p* is common ground**

Pare: És dolent demanar a un fill que llegeixi un llibre?
father is bad demand of a son that read.SUBJ a book

Mare: Que té nou anys.

mother QUE has nine years

‘Father: Is it a bad thing to ask your son to read a book? Mother: He’s only nine!’ (Kocher 2022, 125: ex 40)

In this example, the speaker uses *que* to express that they think that *p* is part of the common ground and that they think the addressee should also be committed to it. The mother reacts to the father’s rhetorical question (‘Is it a bad thing to ask your son to

read a book?’) by uttering *Que té nou anys*. ‘He’s only nine!’, implying that the book the father chose was not age-appropriate. The content of the mother’s proposition, the son’s age, can be assumed to be something that both father and mother are committed to. With *que*, she stresses that she attributes a commitment to *p* to the father. The father has not asserted *p* nor is it implied in the previous context, but the mother can assume that the father is committed to it. The imposition of a commitment to the proposition in (15) is relatively uncontroversial. Sometimes, however, speakers use *que* with more controversial propositions to persuade the addressees of their truth or express their surprise that the addressee behaves as if they were not committed to them. A case like this is given in (16).

(16) **previously asserted $\neg p$**

- A: Mirava la llista: Oh! Ja has vingut!
 looked the list Oh already have arrived
 B: Que no, que no he vingut!
 QUE no QUE no have arrived
 ‘A: I checked the list: Oh! You already arrived! B: No! I haven’t arrived!’

In this example, speaker A actually asserted $\neg p$. With the simple use of *que*, speaker B can express that speaker A is wrong and the opposite of what speaker A uttered is the case and they believe that speaker A should have been aware of this fact. Therefore, also here, *que* is used by the speaker to express that they think the addressee should be committed to *p*. Speaker B most likely wants to express surprise about speaker A’s wrong assumptions.

The commitment to the proposition introduced by *que* can be acknowledged. This can be seen in the examples in (13), where the addressee has asserted the proposition or agreed to it previously. However, an acknowledged commitment is not necessary to license the use of *que* since the commitment can be consequential. This means that it can be inferred from the context as in (14) or that the proposition can be part of the common ground as in (15). In all cases the assumption that the addressee is committed to it is uncontroversial. But even in cases in which it is controversial, when the addressee has, in fact, explicitly asserted $\neg p$, *que* can be used to ascribe a consequential commitment to the addressee, as in (16). The speaker thereby expresses their disbelief or disagreement with the addressee being committed to $\neg p$.

The last piece of data is *que* in polar questions. *Que*-initial questions in Catalan are biased towards a congruent answer (cf. Rigau 1984, Mascaró i Pons 1986, Cuenca 1997, Prieto 1997; Prieto 2002, Payrató 2002, Celdrán et al. 2005, Rigau and Prieto 2005, Hernanz and Rigau 2006, Prieto and Rigau 2007, Kocher 2017b; Kocher 2022). In a congruent answer, the polarity of the answer matches the polarity of the question. The biased polar question in (17) is a positive question, therefore, the speaker expects a positive answer. If the question was negative, i.e. *Que no plou?*, the speaker would expect a negative answer.

(17) **expecting positive answer to *p*?**

- La Caterina va entrar i va córrer cap al lavabo amb el paraigua
 the Caterina PST enter and PST run to- the bathroom with the umbrella
 que regalimava
 that dripped

A: Que plou?

QUE rains

‘Caterina entered and ran to the bathroom with a dripping umbrella.

A: Is it raining?’

In the context of (17), the dripping umbrella constitutes contextual evidence supporting the assumption that it rains. This gives rise to the speaker’s expectation of a congruent, positive answer to their question. I would like to argue that the basic function of *que* is the same in polar questions and assertions. Questions suggest alternative continuations of conversations (Krifka 2015). In polar questions the alternatives are that the addressee commits to *p* by giving an affirmative answer or does not commit to *p* by giving a negative answer. The speaker’s bias towards a congruent answer, therefore, boils down to attributing a commitment to *p* to the addressee.

The discussion of these examples illustrates that the presence of *que* can have different pragmatic effects: It can result in a strengthened commitment, as the speaker can use it to establish a shared perspective, it can be a tool to express obviousness, and it can be used to manage the common ground. A speaker can also signal surprise with *que* about what they think are wrong assumptions of the addressee. Finally, in polar questions, commitment attribution via *que* results in a biased question reading.

3.2. Addressee commitment

I have argued that what is foregrounded with utterances containing *que* is the addressee’s commitment. In particular, I stated that with *que*, the speaker attributes a (consequential) commitment to *p* the addressee (see section 2.2, and see also Geurts 2019 on commitment under entailment). The addressee can have expressed and acknowledged their commitment to *p*, but it can also be inferred from the context or be part of the common ground. Interestingly, with *que*-utterances a speaker does not necessarily publicly commit to the unmodified proposition. A speaker can retract or mitigate their commitment to the bare proposition without provoking contradiction. This is illustrated in (18) and (19).

- (18) Anna: Has llegit l’últim llibre de Jaume Cabré? Es fantàstic.
 Anna have read the-last book by Jaume Cabré is fantastic
 Bea: Evidentment que és bo. Però a mi no m’agrada gaire el seu estil.
 Bea evidently QUE is good but to me not me-like a-bit the his style
 ‘Anna: Have you read Jaume Cabré’s last book? It’s fantastic.
 Bea: Evidently it’s a good book. But I don’t like his style a bit.’
 (constructed example, judged by native speakers)
- (19) Anna: Has vist en Jordi? S’ha fet super maco
 Anna have seen the Jordi him-has made super cute
 Bea: Potser que sigui maco. Però no é spas el meu tipo.
 Bea maybe QUE is.SUBJ cute but not is at-all the my type
 Bea: Potser que sigui maco. Però no é spas el meu tipo.
 Bea maybe QUE is.SUBJ cute but not is at-all the my type

‘Anna: Have you seen Jordi? He’s turned out super cute.

Bea: He may be cute but he is not my type at all.’ (constructed example, judged by native speakers)

While not outright asserting the falsity of *p*, with the assertions that follow the one containing *que* in (18) and (19), Bea implies that she is not really committed to *p* and will be reluctant to add it to the common ground or will do so only with reservations. What facilitates Bea’s distancing from the proposition is the evidential modifier *evidentment* in (18) and the weak epistemic modifier *potser* in (19). Epistemic and evidential expressions (termed *judgment* modifiers in Krifka 2023a) have an effect on commitment strength. If these expressions were absent, the continuations in (18) and (19) would be less felicitous and even judged as odd. Apart from the different modifiers, there is an additional difference between the two assertions in verbal mood. The finite verb in (18) is indicative and the one in (19) is subjunctive. Omitting the modifier in (19) is less odd, suggesting that in addition to the modifier, subjunctive mood can have a weakening effect on commitment (see also Farkas 2003, Villalta 2008, Giannakidou & Mari 2021, Mari & Portner 2021, Buchczyk 2022). Epistemic modifiers express degrees of certainty, whereas evidentials specify evidential sources. An explicit relation between those meanings and the strength of commitments has been drawn in Northrup (2014). The author maintains that evidentiality and epistemic modality form the grounds for commitments. He states that different strengths of epistemic and evidential bases (in a sense of Kratzer’s 1981/1991 modal bases) can lead to strengthening and weakening of commitments. Krifka (2023a) also assumes that evidential and epistemic modifiers impact commitments. He draws a distinction between modifiers encoding these meanings, for which he uses the term judgment modifiers, and proper commitment modifiers (like *really*, *truly*), which operate on different levels of meaning. The latter directly modify the commitment while the former do so indirectly. Krifka (2023b) presents experimental work on German that shows that both groups of modifiers do, in fact, impact the strength of the commitment. See also Kocher (forthcoming) on Spanish.

That it is really the addressee’s commitment that is at stake with *que* can be seen in the contrast between (20) and (21). In (20), speaker A declares the pending answer to their question as a false idea and, therefore, as something they are not committed to. The answer of speaker B is infelicitous if it contains the particle *que* because the addressee (= speaker A) retracted their commitment to *p*. If the particle is absent, the assertion is felicitous.

- (20) [A: What’s that wrong idea all students have at the beginning of their studies?
 B: (Que) segurament (#que) acabaran la tesi a temps
 that sure QUE finish.FUT.3PL the thesis on time
 ‘B: (That) they will surely (#que) finish their thesis on time.’
 (constructed example, judged by native speakers)]

Both versions of the assertion are furthermore perfectly fine answers in the context of (21), as an answer to the question ‘What do students say at the beginning of

their studies?', where a commitment of the current speech participants to *p* is not at stake.

- (21) [A: What do all students say at the beginning of their studies?]
 B: (Que) segurament que acabaran la tesi a temps
 that sure QUE finish.FUT.3PL the thesis on time
 'B: (That) they will surely finish their thesis on time.'
 (constructed example, judged by native speakers)

So far, within the recent commitment-based approaches to assertions, the focus has been mainly on the commitment a speaker takes up.⁵ In other types of speech acts the commitments of addressees receive more attention. Usually, with directive speech acts, speakers do not express their own commitment, but rather they require their interlocutor to express their commitment in a question or expect them to commit to a particular action expressed by the propositional content of a command (see Geurts 2019, Krifka 2023a).

Independent from the empirical phenomenon under investigation in the present article, there are expressions that appear to invoke or impose addressee commitment even in assertions. In the literature focusing on evidentials, concepts like egophoricity and intersubjectivity have been applied to account for the fact that some evidentials seem to be specified in such a way that a particular speech participant has to hold the evidential authority. Egophoricity denotes the access to knowledge with egophoric meaning accessible only to the speaker and allophoric meaning accessible to other participants (Aikhenvald 2018: 28). Intersubjectivity distinguishes between speaker-exclusive, subjective meaning and shared, intersubjective meaning (Nuyts 2001, Kocher 2018, Bergqvist & Kittilä 2020, among others).

Some evidential expressions establish a mutual evidential authority between speaker and addressee. This means that an evidential judgment of the proposition is attributed to the addressee by the speaker. South Conchucos Quechua, for instance, has five evidential clitics, encoding direct, conjectural and reportative evidentiality. They use four different forms for direct and conjectural evidentials to distinguish between individual, i.e. speaker exclusive and mutual, i.e. speaker-addressee shared meaning (Hintz & Hintz 2017). Although this has not yet been investigated to the best of my knowledge, it is likely that this shared attributed judgment also leads to the attribution of a shared commitment.

Interesting for the current discussion are also cases where the speaker can distance themselves from the evidential authority, just as in (18), (19). This has been discussed extensively in connection with Cuzco Quechua reportative evidentials, which according to Faller (2002) leaves it open whether a speaker believes or does not believe the modified proposition (see also McCready 2010, Elswyk 2023).

In the model by Krifka (2023a), the possibility for the speaker to distance themselves from a belief or a commitment to a bare proposition can be accounted for straightforwardly. The commitment operator scopes over the judgment operator, therefore with assertions containing judgment modifiers, a speaker does not commit to a bare proposition, but to a subjective judgment over the proposition. Certain

⁵ An exception is Krifka (2024: 55), where the reportative uses of German *soll* in assertions is discussed. He proposes that its semantic contribution is that the commitment is not by the speaker ([$x \vdash i, e p, x \not\models s$]).

expressions modifying judgments, like reportative and other evidentials (like in (18)) or weak epistemic modals (like in (19)), are compatible with weak commitments and thus permit the distancing from *p*. I will return to this in sections 4.1 and 4.2.

4. Analyses

Here I will present my analysis of *que*, adopting the conversation scoreboard framework by Malamud and Stephenson (2015) and some tentative ideas on how to formally analyze Catalan *que* as an expressive building on Krifka (2023a) and Gutzmann (2015).

4.1. Conversational scoreboard analysis of *que*

In this section I apply the conversation scoreboard framework by Malamud and Stephenson (2015) to *que*.⁶ The model permits to track current and projected information states at the point of performing a given speech act. It is a useful tool to illustrate the contribution of expressions or constructions that affect the dynamics of a conversation, impact common ground management, or explicitly addressee discourse commitments. Since *que* does precisely this, the framework forms an ideal basis to better understand the contribution of the particle.

As described in section 2.3, conversational scoreboards track information states at the time of utterance and the projected information states after the utterance was made. They contain discourse commitments for each speech participant, a common ground that is the intersection of the public commitments of the speech participants, and a table where issues and questions under discussion are stacked.

	current	projected
CG	{ <i>p</i> }	CG* { { <i>p</i> } }
DC _{Speaker}	{ <i>p</i> }	DC* _{Speaker} { {} }
DC _{Addressee}	{ <i>p</i> }	DC* _{Addressee} { {} }
Table	< <i>p</i> >	Table* <>>>

Table 2. *Que p.*

With *que*, in contrast to a *que*-less assertion (see 1 in section 2.3), a proposition is placed not just to the set of discourse commitments of the speaker, but also to that of the addressee. Note that this is different from saying that *p* is imposed on the common ground. In cases where a proposition is imposed which require propositional accommodation, *p* is non-at-issue, while in the present case, *p* is at-issue and placed on the table. Just as expected from at-issue content, the proposition can be questioned and denied. The attribution of *p* to the discourse commitment of the addressee explains why the particle is infelicitous in the above-mentioned example (20). The addressee (=speaker A) established in their conversational move that they are not committed to *p*.

⁶ In Kocher (2022) the discourse contribution of *que* in Ibero-Romance is also modeled in the same framework.

- (22) [Is it a bad thing to ask your son to read a book?]

Que té nou anys.

que has nine years

‘He’s only nine.’

In (22) (repeated from (15)) the content of the proposition introduced by *que*, the son’s age, is something that the father should obviously know and be committed to. Therefore, when pointing out that *p* is part of the addressee’s discourse commitments, the speaker states something obvious which results in the emphatic effect described in section 3.

The scoreboard of assertions that in addition to *que* contain epistemic or evidential modifiers such as (23) and (24) (repeated from (13a) and (14)) are given in 3. An unmodified, bare *p* is placed on the table and to the discourse commitments of the addressee. A modified *p* is placed to the discourse commitments of the speaker.

	current	projected
CG	{}	CG*
DC _{Speaker}	{Esclar/Evidentment(<i>p</i>)}	DC* _{Speaker}
DC _{Addressee}	{ <i>p</i> }	DC* _{Addressee}
Table	< <i>p</i> >	Table*

Table 3. *Esclar/Evidentment que p.*

In (23), *p* has been previously asserted by the addressee, however, they used the weak epistemic modifier *potser* ‘maybe’ to mitigate their certainty. This previous assertion means that *potser(p)* is part of the addressee’s public discourse commitments. In the conversational move captured in (23), the speaker repeats the same proposition but uses the modifier *esclar*, which expresses strong or even objective certainty implying obviousness. The use of this strong modifier corrects the addressee’s weaker judgment modifier and conveys a shared strong judgment. The shared perspective is further strengthened by the use of *que* which extends the shared perspective to the commitment.

- (23) [Maybe I have to believe you.]

Esclar que m’has de creure

clearly QUE me-have to believe

‘Of course you have to believe me!’

While in (23) a modifier and *que* are used by the speaker to establish a shared strong commitment, in (24) the same tools are used in a context where the speaker’s intention is possibly reverse, namely to mitigate their own commitment. The evidential modifier *evidentment* ‘evidently’ is compatible with an epistemic judgment of an objective and strong certainty. In the present case, this objective, shared judgment is again extended by the use of *que*. By doing this, the speaker passes the authority over *p* to the addressee. Other than in (23), where the shared perspective was used to strengthen the speaker’s commitment, in (24), the speaker uses the same tools to distance themselves from a strong commitment to the proposition. They want to shift the focus from the current issues to a different one, they consider more important. In other

words, they allow for the proposition to be passed to the common ground, but they actually might not be strongly committed to it.

- (24) [The tax cuts are ultimately a debate about how to distribute what has been produced.]
 Evidentment que aquest és un debat important però...
 Evidently QUE this is a debate important but
 'Evidently, this is an important debate but...'

The discourse contribution of *que* which I assume for polar questions is essentially the same as in assertions. The different way this plays out results from the general properties that distinguish the two types of speech acts. In Hamblin (1973), the semantics of polar questions are defined as the partition in two cells corresponding to the potential answers to the question. One cell is the prejacent *p* and the other one its negation $\neg p$. For a question like *Is dinner ready?* the cells are *Dinner is ready*. and *Dinner is not ready*.

Sometimes speakers have an expectation of a particular answer to their question. Krifka (2015) proposes to distinguish monopolar questions from bipolar questions. In bipolar questions, the speaker does not express an expectation of one cell over the other, therefore, they are not biased. Typical cases of bipolar questions are alternative questions involving a disjunction: *Are you coming to the party or not?*. These questions are unbiased and do not suggest either of the cells.

Monopolar questions, in turn, suggest a particular assertion to the addressee. They carry a bias towards a congruent or incongruent answer. They often carry special marking encoding this bias, but note that this is not generally the case. Krifka (2015) maintains that canonical polar questions in English, that is questions that do not carry any particular prosodic, syntactic or lexical marking that indicate bias, are monopolar, i.e. biased towards a congruent answer. One piece of evidence stems from polar questions that contain propositional negation like (25a). Semantically, these questions should not differ from polar questions without propositional negation like (25b), since both amount to the same question cell partitions: *You are coming*. and *You are not coming*.

- (25) a. Are you not coming? (*p*: You are not coming. $\neg p$: You are coming.)
 b. Are you coming? (*p*: You are coming. $\neg p$: You are not coming.)

Still, the negative polar question carries a bias towards the prejacent with the opposite polarity. In other words, when uttering (25a), a speaker expresses that they expected that the interlocutor was coming.

In an experiment, in Kocher (2017b), I found that canonical polar questions in Catalan carry a congruency bias as well. A similar idea based on the concept of highlighting has been developed by Roelofsen and Farkas (2015). They state that, when uttering a positive polar question, the cell corresponding to the positive prejacent is made salient, resulting in a bias towards a positive answer.

As stated above, Catalan polar questions containing *que* express a bias towards a congruent answer (see Prieto & Rigau 2007, Kocher 2017b). This characterization is furthermore supported by the fact that *que* is infelicitous in alternative questions (Prieto & Rigau 2007, Kocher 2017b). With *que*-questions, the speaker suggests an

assertion of p to addressee, because they assume that the addressee is committed to p . When answering affirmatively and asserting p , the addressee takes up a commitment to p . Again, what is important is the expectation that an addressee is committed to p and not what the speaker themselves is committed to. This can be seen from the fact that *que* is licensed in contexts, where the prior belief of the speaker clashes with the contextual evidence that supports an affirmative answer. In the example in (26), Sara thought that Ferran was a vegetarian. When seeing him eating meat, she utters *Que menges carn?* ‘You eat meat?’, indicating that she expects Ferran to assert p , even though she herself was committed to $\neg p$.

- (26) [Sara always thought that her colleague Ferran is vegetarian. She sees him at a restaurant eating a sausage. Sara asks:]
 Que menjes carn?
 QUE eat meat
 ‘Do you eat meat?’ (Kocher 2017b, 19: 43)

In (27), the speaker’s prior belief (‘I didn’t think you were coming with us.’) also clashes with the contextual evidence suggesting that the addressee is in fact joining them on the trip, which licenses the use of *que*.

- (27) Que vindràs a Barcelona? No em pensava pas que ens
 QUE come.FUT.2S t o Barcelona not CL.1s thought NEG that CL.1P
 accompanyessis
 accompany.SUBJ.2S
 ‘Are you coming to Barcelona? I didn’t think you were coming with us.’
 (Prieto and Rigau 2007, 15: ex 30a)

Turning to the analysis for regular bipolar questions Malamud & Stephenson (2015) propose the scoreboard in 4. The propositional content of the questions p is placed on the table and p and its negation $\neg p$ are placed in the projected common ground. This reflects the fact that the addressee can confirm either of the two alternative answers in their next move.

	current	projected
CG	{}	CG* { p , $\neg p$ }
DC _{Speaker}	{}	DC* _{Speaker} {}
DC _{Addressee}	{}	DC* _{Addressee} {}
Table	$\langle p \rangle$	Table* <>>

Table 4. asking p ? (from Malamud and Stephenson 2015)

For Catalan biased polar questions containing *que*, I propose the scoreboard in 5. It contains all the same conversational states as bipolar question: p is placed on the table and p and $\neg p$ are place in the projected common ground. In addition to these, p is also placed in the projected discourse commitments of the addressee. This gives rise to the biased question reading. When asking *que p?*, the speaker expresses their assumption that the addressee is committed to p . This assumption can be based on evidence like the dripping umbrella in (28) (repeated from (17)), but it can also be based on conjecture (see on contextual evidence Büring & Gunlogson 2000 in polar

questions, Sudo 2013 on evidential and epistemic bias and also Kocher 2017b for an experimental study on the effect of contextual evidence and conjecture in Catalan *que* questions).

	current	projected
CG	{}	CG*
DC _{Speaker}	{}	DC* _{Speaker}
DC _{Addressee}	{}	DC* _{Addressee}
Table	< <i>p</i> >	Table*

Table 5. asking *Que p?*

- (28) [Caterina entered and ran to the bathroom with a dripping umbrella.]
 Que plou?
 QUE rains
 ‘Is it raining?’

The discourse contribution of *que* is the same in assertions and questions: it attributes a commitment to a proposition to the addressee. In assertions, *p* is placed directly in the current discourse commitments of the addressee, reflecting the fact that at the moment of utterance, the speaker assumes that the addressee is or should be committed to *p*. In polar questions, *p* is placed in the projected discourse commitments of the addressee. The speaker expects that the addressee will take up this commitment to *p*, and will, therefore, answer the question affirmatively. The fact that *p* is placed in the projected rather than the current discourse commitments of the addressee is because we are dealing with different types of speech acts. If the speaker was convinced that an addressee commitment to *p* is the only alternative, they would not ask a question in the first place. So in the case of polar questions, there is still uncertainty involved with regard to what the addressee is committed to. Although the speaker expects that the addressee will commit to *p*, a commitment to $\neg p$ is still an option they leave open.

4.2. Towards a Formal Analysis of *que*

As stated at the top of section 4.1, conversational scoreboards are useful to make the changes in the dynamics of a conversation transparent. In this section I will now present a tentative formal analysis of the meaning of *que* as an expressive type of meaning, building on Gutzmann (2015) and Krifka (2023a).

I believe that two things happen when asserting *que(p)*: first, a speaker publicly commits to *p* and second, at the same time, they express that the addressee is also committed to *p*. This second part is the meaning contributed by *que*. I will treat this second meaning as expressive. Potts (2007: 166-167), building on previous research, summarizes six central characteristics of expressive meaning: The first one is *independence*, which means that the expressive content is separated from the descriptive, truth conditional content of an utterance. The second characteristic is *nondisplaceability*, meaning that the expressive meaning is strongly linked to the situation and context of the utterance and (except for direct quotation) cannot be used to report past events. The third one is *perspective dependence*, which means that expressives are evaluated from a concrete perspective, usually the speaker’s. The

fourth characteristic is *descriptive ineffability*: expressive content is notoriously difficult to paraphrase with descriptive content. *Immediacy* is the fifth characteristic, meaning that the intended act is achieved by uttering the expressive, like in the case of performatives. The last characteristic is *repeatability*, which means that repetition of the expressive leads to a strengthening of the emotive content.

With *que*, the most telling characteristic is the independence of its meaning from the descriptive content. This is illustrated most clearly in the examples containing judgment modifiers like (23) and (24). If *que* was integrated into the meaning of the whole utterance, the expectation would be that the modifier would scope above *que*. This would predict the meaning of *evidentemente/esclar que p* to be that the speaker considers it evident or clear that the addressee is committed to *p*. However, this is not the interpretation of these utterances. As a matter of fact, the meaning of *que* is not in the scope of the judgment modifier but seems detached from it. The expressive content of *que* clearly appears independent. The speaker commits to the descriptive content *esclar/evident(p)*, namely a subjective judgment over *p*. The additional expressive content contributed by *que* is that according to the speaker, the addressee is committed to *p*.

Que also meets the other characteristics of expressivity: its meaning is nondisplaceable. This is supported by the fact that its capability to be embedded is highly restricted and that it is mostly embedded under verbs of saying (Kocher 2022). It is clearly anchored to the speaker’s perspective (see also below). Its meaning cannot simply be paraphrased, and repetition like *Que no, que no.* leads to strengthening of the expressive meaning.

Gutzmann (2015), building on Kaplan (1999), Potts (2007) and McCready (2010), distinguishes between the two dimensions of meaning: *truth conditional* and *use conditional* meaning. Expressive content is use-conditional. Other than truth conditional content, its evaluation is not based on possible worlds, but on contexts in which it can be used felicitously (Gutzmann 2015, p. 18). The two-dimensions are represented in the fraction notation in (29a) taken from Gutzmann (2015). In (29b) the use- and truth-conditional portions of meaning of the hybrid expression *Ouch, I hit my thumb*, is illustrated.

- (29) a. *use-conditional content*
truth-conditional

b. Ouch, I hit my thumb = ouch
I hit my thumb
(Gutzmann 2015, 29: ex 2.30)

I will adopt the notation to distinguish the expressive, use conditional from the descriptive meaning of *que*-assertions and *que*-polar questions. I furthermore adopt Krifka (2023a) for the semantic analysis of assertions, questions and commitments. Note that I will not be treating the commitment and speech-act portion of the meaning as use-conditional here (see also Gutzmann 2015: 166-214 on a two-dimensional analysis of sentence moods) as Krifka (2023a, pp. 154-155) himself argues against a two-dimensional analysis of the meaning of assertions. For the present illustration, I will represent the full speech-act meaning in the lower level of the fraction, and the

expressive meaning in the upper level of the fraction and leave it to future research to determine the details.

The analysis of *Que té nou anys*. ‘He’s only nine.’ (22) is given in (30). The general content is the speaker’s assertion of the proposition *Té nou anys*. Recall that, in the semantic model by Krifka (2023a) (see section 2.4), assertions express their speakers’ public commitment to the proposition, represented by the commitment operator \vdash , and propose a performative common ground update, represented by the assertion operator \bullet . This is illustrated in the lower part of the fraction. The expressive part is the commitment of the addressee to the proposition, illustrated in the upper part of the fraction.

$$(30) \quad \llbracket (22) \rrbracket = \frac{\llbracket \text{que} \rrbracket}{\llbracket \text{Té nou anys.} \rrbracket} = \frac{a \vdash_{i,e} p}{\bullet \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} p]}$$

(with s: speaker, a: addressee, i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

A commitment is attributed to the addressees by the speaker. But this does not mean that the addressee must in fact be committed to the proposition. This is consistent with the expressive nature of *que*. The speaker is the holder of the expressive attitude and the meaning of the expression depends on their perspective. The speaker merely expresses what they consider is or should be the case, while the addressee can either be committed, be ignorant or be not committed to *p* at all. This is illustrated clearly in (16) where the addressee actually expresses a commitment to $\neg p$.

In (31), the analysis of example (23) containing a judgment modifier is given. It shares the same expressive content denoted by *que*, but it differs in what is asserted. While in (30) it is the bare proposition, which means that the speaker commits to the same proposition to which they attribute a commitment to the addressee. In (31), the speaker asserts a modified proposition that is a subjective judgment on the proposition.⁷ As stated above, this can be exploited by the speaker to distance themselves from the proposition. Especially if the judgment modifier is compatible with a mitigated commitment.

$$(31) \quad \llbracket (23) \rrbracket = \frac{\llbracket \text{que} \rrbracket}{\llbracket \text{Esclar m'has de creure.} \rrbracket} = \frac{a \vdash_{i,e} p}{\bullet \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} \text{esclar}(p)]}$$

(with s: speaker, a: addressee, i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

Finally, in (32), I illustrate an analysis of the descriptive and expressive meaning of the *que*-polar question from example (28).

⁷ The semantics of the assertion containing judgment modification is abbreviated here for illustrative purposes. $\bullet \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} \text{esclar}(p)]$ is short for $\bullet \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} \lambda i [s \text{ considers it clear at } i \text{ that } p \text{ is true at } i]]$ (see also Krifka 2024, 55: ex 17).

$$(32) \quad \llbracket (28) \rrbracket = \frac{\llbracket \text{que} \rrbracket}{\llbracket \text{Plou?} \rrbracket} = \frac{a \vdash_{i,e} p}{? \lambda i \exists e [a \vdash_{i,e} p] \text{ or } [a \dashv_{i,e} p]}$$

(with s: speaker, a: addressee, i: world-time index,
e: commitment event)

As stated above, polar questions suggest alternative continuations for a conversation, namely that the addressee either commits to *p* or does not commit to *p*. *Que*-polar questions are biased towards a congruent answer, therefore, the speaker expresses the expectation that the addressee will commit to *p*. My proposal is that the expressive meaning contributed by *que* is again the same as in the assertions in (30) and (31), an attributed commitment of the addressee to *p*. The general meaning represented in the lower part of the fraction is the meaning of a bipolar question as proposed in Krifka (2023; 2024). The question operator $?$ restricts the possible continuations in such a way that the addressee is required to make a public commitment to either one of the alternatives, where the commitment operator \vdash means a commitment to *p*, and the reverse \dashv means no commitment to *p*. The descriptive content does not indicate any bias. In turn, it is contributed by the expressive content of *que*.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I focused on the meaning of the complementizer *que* in Catalan assertions and polar questions. In the relevant contexts, the particle does not function as a sentential subordinator, but has an impact on the interpretation of the utterances. In the course of the sections, I argued that with *que* a speaker attributes a commitment to a proposition to the addressee. The attributed commitment can be acknowledged by the addressee in contexts where they previously asserted the proposition, but it can also be consequential, that is, merely assumed by the speaker. I showed how the meaning of *que* is essentially the same in assertions and polar questions. The different pragmatic effects in assertions (strengthening, insistence, distancing) and polar questions (bias), were explained to result from general characteristics of these speech acts. I furthermore discussed the interplay of the meaning of *que* and judgment modifiers in assertions. I first analyzed the impact of *que* on the conversational states in the framework by Malamud & Stephenson (2015). The attribution of the addressee commitment was modelled in assertions by the placement of *p* in the set of current discourse commitments of the addressee, and in polar questions by the placement of *p* in the set of projected discourse commitments of the addressee. Finally, I also proposed a first formal analysis of Catalan *que*, treating the meaning it contributes as expressive. I adopted the distinction between use- and truth-conditional meaning by Gutzmann (2015) and I proposed that *que* contributes use-conditional, expressive meaning in both types of speech acts. The precise meaning, i.e. the commitment of an addressee to *p*, was analyzed applying the semantic model proposed by Krifka (2023a).

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