The loud silence of echo

Background. In English, the morphosyntactic sentence forms used in echo utterances largely match the forms used in their non-echo counterparts across sentence types, except in wh-echos, where the wh-phrase can and sometimes has to stay in situ for the echo interpretation:

(1) a. A: I gave you a book. B: {You gave me a book? / You gave me what?}
    b. A: Are you married? B: {Am I married? / Am I what?}
    c. A: Give me the book. B: {Give you the book? / Give you what?}

While there has been, to my knowledge, no systematic investigation of the prosodic properties of echo vs. non-echo utterances across all sentence types in English, Biezma et al. 2021 claim that neither word order nor prosody reliably distinguish echo vs. non-echo interpretations of wh-interrogatives in English—which led them to reduce the difference between echo and non-echo utterances to "their position in the discourse", where echos are "questions about what exactly the proposal to be evaluated is". In other languages, people have observed form differences between echo and non-echo utterances that ostensibly necessitate distinct compositional representations: e.g., Japanese echo vs. non-echo questions use different particles (Sudo 2007).

This paper. I extend the discussion by systematically looking at morphosyntactic and prosodic properties of echo vs. non-echo utterances across sentence types in Russian and exploring the implications of these data for how various discourse-related meaning components can be operationalized architecturally across languages. The upshot is that while there doesn't seem to be a systematic overt way to realize the ECHO operator in Russian (segmental or suprasegmental), it still must be compositionally represented, as we have indirect evidence of its presence: it is necessary to compositionally obtain the correct meaning–form mapping in polar echos to polar questions (PolQs) and to explain why echos to imperatives can't use imperative forms.

Note that taxonomically, echo utterances vary across at least two broad dimensions: (i) Nature of the antecedent utterance, classified by speech act type (assertion, question, directive, etc.), or sentence form type (declarative, interrogative, imperative, etc.), or a combination of the two. (ii) Nature of the echo utterance: wh-echos (≈'What was the move you just made?') vs. polar echos (≈'Is this the move you just made?'). Due to space limitations, in this abstract, I do not provide the full relevant paradigm for Russian, but only focus on some of the key contrasts that lead to the main analytical insight.

Polar echos to PolQs. <u>Data.</u> Russian famously has two matrix PolQ forms. One is the more neutral *declarative string PolQs* (DSQs), which are comprised of the same segmental string as declarative assertions, but carry a special prosodic peak, which I will call the Q-Peak, following Esipova 2024, that goes on the locus of prosodic focus marking. The other—more marked—form is *li* PolQs (*li*Qs), in which the focused constituent is fronted, and the *li* particle is attached to it. Non-echo *li*Qs carry assertion-like focus marking ((L+)H*) on the fronted constituent and cannot have the Q-Peak. One well-known distributional difference between the two forms is that DSQs only have matrix uses—embedded PolQs have to be *li*Qs. I observe that polar echos to PolQs combine the two forms: the segmental string must be that of a *li*Q, even if the antecedent is a DSQ, but the focused constituent now must carry the Q-Peak rather than an (L+)H*. Thus, the DSQ in (2B-ii) and the *li*Q without the Q-Peak in (2B-iii) sound like non-echo questions (i.e., 'Is it the case that I am married?', not 'Did you just ask me if I am married?'). Note that the focus and, thus, the host of the Q-Peak in polar echos can match the focus of the antecedent, as in (2B-i), or not, as in (2B′-i)— depending on what the echo expresses uncertainty about. The DSQ in (2B′-ii) with focus on 'I' could be an echo only to an assertion.

(2) A: (i) Vy   žeNA$_Q$ty$_{L-L\%}$? ◄ (ii) ŽeNA$_{(L+)H*}$ty li vy$_{L-L\%}$? ◄
       you.V/PL.NOM married.V/PL   married.V/PL LI you.V/PL.NOM

(i)   (ii)
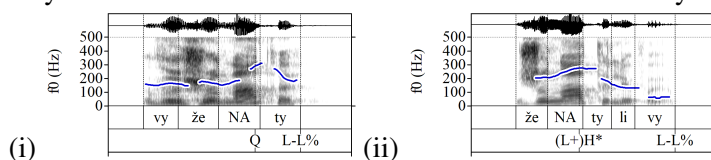
'Are you married?' (both (i) and (ii) OK as unbiased info-seeking non-echo PolQs)

B: (i) ŽeNAT$_Q$ li ja$_{L-L\%}$? 🔊 (ii) #Ja   žeNAT$_{Q\ L-L\%}$? 🔊 (iii) #ŽeNAT$_{(L+)H*}$ li ja$_{L-L\%}$? 🔊
married.SG.M LI I.NOM   #I.NOM married.SG.M   #married.SG.M LI I.NOM
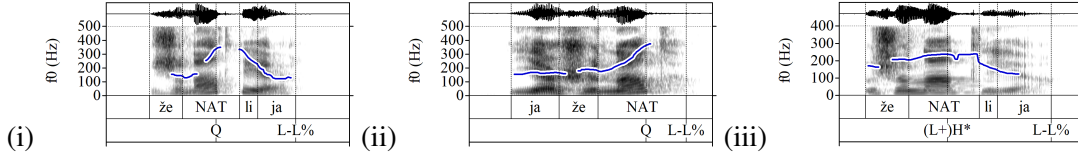
(i) 　　　　(ii) 　　　　(iii)

'Am I married?' ((i): only echo, OK in response to (2A-i) or (2A-ii); (ii/iii): only non-echo)

B′: (i) ŽeNAT$_{?L*}$ li JA$_{Q\ L-L\%}$? 🔊 (ii) #JA$_Q$ ženat$_{L-L\%}$? 🔊
married.SG.M LI I.NOM   #I.NOM married.SG.M

'Am [I]$_F$ married?' ((i): only echo, OK in response to (2A-i) or (2A-ii); (ii): can't be echo to PolQ)

<u>Proposal.</u> Esipova 2024; Esipova & Korotkova 2023 claim that the Russian Q-Peak realizes a REACT operator that asks the addressee to react to the move made by its sister (which can be raising an issue or making a request). This operator is absent from the compositional structure of Russian *li*Qs and wh-questions (as well as English questions—PolQs and wh-questions alike). This explains, among other things, why DSQs are not embeddable and cannot be conjectural questions, why *li*Qs often come off as more polite or formal, etc.

To derive the correct interpretation of polar echos to PolQs compositionally then, we need to posit that they involve embedding a *li*Q under an ECHO operator, with a REACT operator slapped on top. E.g., the echo in (2B-i) has the structure in (3), where (i) the ? operator raises the issue p? with its sister as the prejacent (in this case, {'I am married', 'I am not married'}) and is realized by *li*; (ii) the ECHO operator raises the issue of whether the antecedent move was the one denoted by ECHO's sister—it does not have an overt realization; (iii) the REACT operator asks the addressee to react to the move made by its sister and is realized by the Q-Peak.

(3) [REACT [ECHO [? ['I am married']]]]

≈'Please react to the issue of whether the move you just made raises the issue of whether I am married.'

Further evidence: echos to imperatives. Echo responses to imperatives in Russian cannot use imperative forms, but instead have to use infinitives (I am only showing polar echos here, but it's the same for wh-echos):

(4) A: DAJ$_{(L+)H*}$ mne   KNI$_{H*}$gu$_{L-L\%}$. 🔊
        give.IMP.T/SG me.DAT book.SG.ACC
        'Give me a/the book.'

    B: {(i) Dat'   🔊 / (ii) *Daj}   tebe   KNI$_Q$gu$_{L-L\%}$?
        {(i) give.INF   / (ii) *give.IMP.T/SG} you.T/SG.DAT book.SG.ACC
        'Give you a/the book?'

Note that similarly to DSQs, imperative forms cannot be embedded in Russian, and to obtain an embedded directive interpretation, one must use infinitives instead:

(5) Dima   skazal   {(i) dat'   / (ii) *daj(te)}   emu   kniǧu.
     Dima.NOM say.PST.SG.M {(i) give.INF / (ii) *give.IMP(PL)} him.DAT book.SG.ACC
     'Dima said give him the book.'

One could try to attribute the unacceptability of imperative forms in (4B-ii) and (5-ii) to phi-feature mismatch. But Russian imperative forms can also be used in other contexts, e.g., in counterfactuals like (6), where the purported feature mismatch doesn't create any issues. Thus, even if the problem in (5-ii) is due to feature mismatch, it emerges specifically in the context of a speech report. Thus, I conclude that echos to imperatives in Russian also involve embedding under the ECHO operator, which is akin to speech report predicates.

(6) Pridi   {ja   / on}   poran'še, my   by   vsë uspeli.
     come.IMP.T/SG {I.NOM / he.NOM} earlier   we.NOM SUBJ all have-time-to-do.PST.PL
     'Had I/he come earlier, we would have had time to do everything.'

The bottom line is that while the ECHO operator is ostensibly silent in Russian (more data on this in the full paradigm of echo utterances), its presence is nonetheless felt in at least some types of echo utterances.

References. <u>Biezma, Braun & James.</u> 2021. *Proceedings of SALT 31*. <u>Sudo.</u> 2007. *Proceedings of Amsterdam Colloquium*. <u>Esipova.</u> 2024. *Proceedings of SALT 34*. <u>Esipova & Korotkova.</u> 2023. *FDSL 16*.