

ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN ALTERNATIVE INTERROGATIVE STRUCTURES – CONSTITUENTS AND FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE PHRASE

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The article presents the qualitative and quantitative results of a comparative corpus-based study into the constituents of English and Bulgarian alternative interrogative structures (E&BAISs) and their functions within the phrase. The research has shown that E&BAISs serve mostly as constituents of noun phrases (NPs) and prepositional phrases (PPs). Within the NP, English alternative interrogative structures (EAISs) most often function as heads, while Bulgarian alternative interrogative structures (BAISs) serve as post-modifiers, heads, and complements. Within the PP, the most typical function of EAISs and the only function of BAISs is that of complement. Most E&BAISs are examples of binary unmixed coordination. They are usually made up of nouns, NPs or PPs.

Key words: alternative interrogative structure, constituents, function, English, Bulgarian

I. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present the qualitative and quantitative results of a comparative corpus-based study into the constituents of English and Bulgarian alternative interrogative structures (E&BAISs) and their functions within the phrase. The research has been based on authentic examples of alternative interrogative structures (AISs) excerpted from eight corpora of written and spoken English and Bulgarian.

- English Fiction Corpus (EFC, 90 508 word forms) compiled by V. Spasova for the purposes of her PhD thesis.
- English Corpus of Fiction Monologue (ECFM, 50 370 word forms) compiled by V. Spasova for the purposes of her PhD thesis.
- Charlotte Face-to-Face Corpus of Spoken English (CFCSE, 90 630 word forms). It is part of a larger corpus of spoken

- English, the Charlotte Narrative and Conversation Collection (CNCC, 198 295 word forms), included in the Open American National Corpus (OANC).
- Switchboard Telephone Corpus of Spoken English (STCSE, 50 476 word forms). It is part of a larger corpus of spoken English, the LDC Switchboard corpus (3 019 477 word forms), included in the Open American National Corpus (OANC).
 - Bulgarian Fiction Corpus (BFC, 90 326 word forms) compiled by V. Spasova for the purposes of her PhD thesis.
 - Bulgarian Corpus of Fiction Monologue (BCFM, 50 508 word forms) collected by Tzvetomira Venkova (Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”).
 - Corpus of Spoken Bulgarian *Aleksova* (CSB–A, 89 959 word forms) collected by Krasimira Aleksova (Faculty of Slavic Studies at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”).
 - Corpus of Spoken Bulgarian *Nikolova–Venkova* (CSB–NV, 50 000 word forms) collected by Tsvetanka Nikolova and Tzvetomira Venkova.

The investigation into English and Bulgarian corpora has revealed that 59 English alternative interrogative structures (EAISs), i.e. 23 % out of the total of 256 AISs found in the four corpora, perform functions within the phrase. There are 6 in EFC, 1 in ECFM, 35 in CFCSE, and 17 in STCSE.

The Bulgarian alternative interrogative structures (BAISs) are 34, i.e. 14 % out of the total of 242 AISs found in the four corpora. There are 6 in BFC, 4 in BCFM, 13 in CSB–A, and 11 in CSB–NV.

As statistics show, the number of the EAISs is 1.74 times as high as that of the BAISs.

Observations on corpora examples of E&BAISs suggest that

- E&BAISs most often function as constituents of noun phrases (NPs) and prepositional phrases (PPs)
- most E&BAISs are examples of binary unmixed coordination
- the constituents of E&BAISs are usually nouns (Ns), NPs and PPs
- the constituents most often occur within the boundaries of one and the same sentence

In all examples henceforth the constituents of the AIS are enclosed in round brackets, while the AIS itself is put in square brackets and is marked with single underlining. The head unit on which the AIS is dependent is

marked with double underlining. The phrase whose constituent the AIS is is enclosed in curly brackets. The abbreviated name of the corpus from which the example has been excerpted follows the example and is put in round brackets.

II. Functions in the NP

According to corpora data, E&BAISs are mainly constituents of NPs. The EAISs are 31 in total – 4 in EFC, 22 in CFCSE, and 5 in STCSE. They most often serve as heads, but they can also be post-modifiers and modifiers. They hardly ever function as complements and parts of post-modifiers.

Their Bulgarian counterparts are 23 altogether – 6 in BFC, 3 in BCFM, 8 in CSB–A, and 6 in CSB–NV. They serve as heads, post-modifiers, complements, and determiners. Hardly ever do they function as modifiers.

1. Head of the NP

The most typical function of EAISs is that of head of the NP. 51.6 % of all EAISs with functions in the NP serve as head of the NP. There are 16 EAISs altogether – 2 in EFC, 12 in CFCSE, and 2 in STCSE.

By contrast, BAISs are only 6, i.e. only 26.1 % of all BAISs with functions in the NP. There are 2 in BFC, 1 in BCFM, 1 in CSB–A, and 2 in CSB–NV.

In both languages the head is realized by a coordination of two nouns (Ns) in which case we can speak of “binary coordination” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1276) of nouns. In order to form an NP the head usually takes a determiner (*any* in ex. 1, *един* in ex. 2).

(1) *Do you have any, do you have {any [(sisters) (or brothers)]}?*
(CFCSE)

(2) *Аз непрекъснато съм се обърнала на, на, на {един [(следовател ли) да ти кажа (или милиционер)]}, не мога да ти кажа, и то от колко години.* (CSB–NV)

Az neprekasnato sam se obarnala na, na, na {edin [(sledovatel li) da ti kazha (ili militsioner)]}, ne moga da ti kazha, i to ot kolko godini.
(CSB–NV)

*'I am constantly acting like, like, like an investigator or a militiaman, I can't tell you, and I have been doing it for years.'*¹

2. Head of an N'

EAISS can serve not only as heads of NPs but also as heads of N'. Following Aarts (1997: 99), here I regard N' as an intermediate level between the phrase level NP and the head level N. The English examples are 3 altogether – 1 in EFC and 2 in CFCSE.

BAISSs in the function of head of an N' are not testified in the corpora.

In ex. (3) the AIS *phone number or address* serves as head and takes the post-modifier *written in it* (realized by a non-finite past participial clause) to form the N' *phone number or address written in it* which in its turn takes the determiner *a* to become the NP *a phone number or address written in it*.

(3) *Dope stashed behind it? Fred wondered, and zoomed the scanner lens in. Or {a [(phone number) (or address)] written in it}*? (EFC)

3. Modifier in the NP

There are 4 EAISSs used as modifier to the head noun – 1 in EFC, 1 in CFCSE, and 2 in STCSE. This function is not characteristic of the BAISSs in the corpora as there is just 1 example. It occurs in CSB–A. The modifier is realized by a binary coordination of adjective phrases (APs).

(4) *You mean like {[(imaginary), (or fictional)] stories}*? (CFCSE)

(5) *Знаеш ли, че ... аз защо не съм открит сега като {[(музикален) (или артистичен)] талант}*? (CSB–A)

Znaesh li, che ... az zashto ne sam odkrit sega kato {[(muzikalen) (ili artistichen)] talant}? (CSB–A)

'Do you know that ... why I haven't been spotted yet as a musical or artistic talent?'

4. Post-modifier in the NP

The function of post-modifier to the head noun is the most typical of the BAISSs in the corpora and the second most typical of the EAISSs.

¹ Single inverted commas indicate meaningful translation of the Bulgarian examples into English. Translation is mine.

There are 6 EAISs (19.4 % of all EAISs with functions in the NP). They all occur in CFCSE. The respective BAISs are 7 (30.4 % of all BAISs with functions in the NP) – 1 in BFC, 4 in CSB–A, and 2 in CSB–NV.

EAISs represent a coordination of relative clauses (ex. 6). Their Bulgarian counterparts can be a coordination of NPs (ex. 7) or PPs (ex. 8).

(6) *Do you ever, do you have any stories that, do you remember {any stories [(that daddy used to tell you) (or that daddy tells you)]}?* (CFCSE)

(7) С: *Студио кво беше, „Време“ ли?*

П: *{Студио [(„Време“ ли), („Екран“ ли)]}, не знам. Некакво е такова.* (CSB–A)

S: *Studio kvo беше, “Vreme” li?*

P: *{Studio [(“Vreme” li), (“Ekran” li)]}, не знам. Nekakvo e takova.* (CSB–A)

S: *‘What was the name of that program, was it Time?’*

P: *‘Was it Time or Screen Program, I don’t know. Something like that.’*

In the examples discussed hitherto the constituents of E&BAISs are found within the boundaries of one and the same sentence. Corpora evidence, however, indicates that there are some rare instances of AISs whose constituents occur in two adjacent sentences. In such cases we can talk about inter-sentential coordination and AISs with inter-sentential constituents.

It is important to point out here that “the division into two sentences has an information-packaging function: it presents the whole as a sequence of two messages” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1735).

The BAIS in ex. (8) below is such an instance of inter-sentential coordination – the second constituent (the PP *или на Третия*) is set off as a separate sentence and in this way it is given further importance.

(8) *После стиснах {ръката [(на Втория). (Или на Третия)?]}... (BFC)*

Posle stisnah {rakata [(na Vtoriya). (Ili na Tretiya)?]}... (BFC)

‘Then I shook the hand of the Second. Or of the Third? ...’

5. Complement in the NP

The function of complement to the head noun is certainly not characteristic of the EAISs in the corpora as there is only 1 example. It occurs in STCSE.

BAISs, however, are 5 in total – 1 in BFC, 2 in BCFM, 1 in CSB–A, and 1 in CSB–NV.

The reason to analyze the AISs in ex. (9) and (10) as complements rather than as post-modifiers is that they are licensed by their respective head nouns *колебания* (*hesitations*) and *matter*, the licensing criterion being “the most basic criterion for complement status of post-head dependents” (*ibid.* 2002: 440).

The AISs represent a binary coordination of clauses, with the second clause being reduced to just the negator *не* and *not* respectively. Such a reduction can occur when the two clauses differ only in the positive and negative form of the verb. The whole second clause can be dropped except for the negator which takes the position immediately after the coordinator (Tisheva 2000: 28, 38).

Thus, the BAIS in ex. (9) consists of two closed interrogative subordinate clauses², the second of which is reduced to the negator *не*. It can be regarded as a reduction from *дали да отиде на уречената среща, или да не отиде на уречената среща* (*whether to keep the appointment or not to keep the appointment*).

(9) *Цяла нощ Камела се мяташе в леглото, разкъсана от {колебания [(дали да отиде на уречената среща), (или не)]}*. (BCFM)

Tsyala nosht Kamela se myatashe v legloto, razkasana ot {kolebaniya [(dali da otide na urechenata sreshta), (ili ne)]}. (BCFM)

‘All night Camela turned over in bed devoured by hesitations whether to keep the appointment or not.’

(10) *... the law now is a super fund and anybody who’s contributed toxic waste {no matter [(if you were somebody that eventually, you know, uh, damaged the ground) (or not)]}, uh, everybody has to contribute, ...* (STCSE)

² The English term “closed interrogative clauses” is used here instead of the traditional Bulgarian term „въпросителни изречения с въпросителни частици“ (“interrogative sentences with interrogative particles”).

6. Determiner in the NP

Unlike their English counterparts, BAISs can serve as determiners to their head nouns. These AISs are 4 in total – 2 in BFC, 1 in CSB–A, and 1 in CSB–NV. The determiner function is realized by a coordination of demonstrative pronouns (ex. 11) or cardinal numerals (ex. 12).

(11) *Номерът е, че доста хора, след като попаднат в такава история, често забравят какво точно пишеше за {[(този) (или онзи)] случай} в мъдрите книги. (BFC)*

Nomerat e, che dosta hora, sled kato popadnat v takava istoriya, chesto zabravyat kakvo tochno pisheshe za {[(tozi) (ili onzi)] sluchaj} v madrite knigi. (BFC)

‘The point is that when they find themselves in such a situation, many people often forget what exactly was written about this or that emergency in wise manuals.’

(12) *Вика: „За войника ти. Искам за Краси да му занесеш буркани.“ {[(Осем ли) (десет)] буркана} наслага. (CSB–NV)*

Vika: “Za voynika ti. Iskam za Krasi da mu zanesesh burkani.” {[(Osem li) (deset)] burkana} naslaga. (CSB–NV)

‘She said, “For your soldier. I want you to take some jars to Krasi.” She put, were they eight or ten jars.’

7. Part of the post-modifier in the NP

There is one EAIS that makes part of the post-modifier in the NP. It is found in CFCSE.

(13) *All right, Megan, when you were growing up, do you remember {any stories [(that you read) (or were read to you)] that uh, stick in your mind}? (CFCSE)*

Ex. (13) illustrates the so-called “layered coordination” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1278–9). We talk about layered coordination when “a coordination can function as a coordinate within a larger one” (*ibid.* 2002: 1278).

In our example, there are three relative clauses, namely *that you read*, *were read to you* (*that* has been omitted from this clause) and *that stick in your mind*. First, the clauses *that you read* and *were read to you* are *or*-coordinated to form the so-called “lower coordination” (*ibid.* 2002: 1278) *that you read or were read to you*. This coordination, which is the AIS under investigation, is then coordinated *asyndetically* with the third

relative clause *that stick in your mind* to form the upper coordination *that you read or were read to you that stick in your mind*. If the third clause were joined syndetically, this would be by means of the coordinator *and* so that the upper coordination would take the form of *that you read or were read to you and that stick in your mind*.

The lower coordination, i.e. the AIS, functions as a first coordinate in the upper coordination, the second coordinate being the clause *that stick in your mind*.

It is the upper coordination that serves as post-modifier to the head noun *stories* in ex. (13). Hence, the AIS is only part of the post-modifier, it is not a post-modifier in its own right.

III. Functions in the PP

Corpora evidence indicates that E&BAISs which function as constituents of PPs come second in frequency.

The EAISs are 24 altogether – 2 in EFC, 1 in ECFM, 9 in CFCSE, and 12 in STCSE. They most often serve as complements to the head prepositions and seldom as heads and parts of complements.

The BAISs are 10 – 1 in BCFM, 5 in CSB–A, and 4 in CSB–NV. They all function as complements to the head prepositions.

1. Head of the PP

EAISs in the function of head of the PP are very rare. There are only 2 examples – 1 in ECFM and 1 in STCSE. In both cases the head is realized by a binary coordination of PPs.

(14) *So, according to Gavin, they had to believe they were heroes even though they couldn't remember now {exactly [(at what point) (or by what action)]} they had reached, entered for a moment or a second, that heroic state.* (ECFM)

2. Complement in the PP

The complement function is the only function of BAISs in the PP (see above) and the most typical function of EAISs. 75% of all EAISs with functions within the PP are complements. There are 18 examples in total – 2 in EFC, 8 in CFCSE, and 8 in STCSE.

In both English and Bulgarian corpora, the complement is most often realized by a coordination of NPs.

(15) ‘*You didn’t make a speech of any sort before getting down to brass tacks? No mention {of [(Burke) (or Shakespeare) (or the poet Burns)]}*?’ (EFC)

(16) Г: *Ще се жабуриши с такава, с живовляк.*

В: *Със смрадлика.*

Г: *{Със [(смрадлика ли), (кво)]}* беше. (CSB–A)

Г: *Shte se zhaburish s takova, s zhivovlyak.*

В: *Sas smradlika.*

Г: *{Sas [(smradlika li), (kvo)]}* beshe. (CSB–A)

Г: ‘*You should gargle with, what was it, plantain.*’

В: ‘*With sumac.*’

Г: ‘*With sumac or what was it.*’

The AIS in ex. (15) has three constituents and can be regarded as an instance of “multiple coordination” (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 953; Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1276). However, it turns out that examples of multiple coordination are much less common in both English and Bulgarian corpora than those of binary coordination. Moreover, multiple coordination is limited to three-term AISs.

Like the AIS in ex. (16), that in ex. (17) is a binary coordination of NPs. At first sight, however, its constituents do not seem to be NPs because they do not seem to have heads realized by nouns. Yet, there exist the so-called “fused-head NPs” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 410). These are “NPs where the head is fused with a dependent” (*ibid.* 2002: 56), i.e. one and the same word “functions simultaneously as head and dependent”. Usually, it is the determiner or the modifier that is combined with the head (*ibid.* 2002: 410). This in mind, we can analyze the constituents of the AIS in ex. (17) as fused-head NPs. The cardinal numeral *петнайсе* (*fifteen*) and the interrogative pronoun *колко* (*how much*) function simultaneously as determiners and heads. Were the noun head expressed, it would be realized by the common noun *лева* (*levs*) so that the ordinary NPs would be *петнайсе лева ли* and *колко лева*.

(17) *Че една вечер в нощния бар с Иван пихме по кафе и той едно коняче и платихме {по [(петнайсе ли), (колко)]}*. (CSB–A)

Che edna vecher v noshtniya bar s Ivan pihme po kafe i toj edno konyache i platihme {po [(petnayse li), (kolko)]} (CSB–A)

‘*So one evening Ivan and I had coffee in the night bar and he drank a small cognac and we paid was it fifteen levs each or how much was it.*’

AISs whose constituents are fused-head NPs are found in English, as well. However, there are no examples in the corpora in the function of complement in the PP.

The complement function in both English and Bulgarian is sometimes realized by a coordination of closed interrogative subordinate clauses. In the English examples, the second clause is always reduced to the negator *not*.

(18) ... аз съм виждала плочи на него и свирят, откакто го изгониха {преди [(полвин месец ли беше), (един месец ли беше)]}, толкова, около един месец. (CSB–NV)

... az sam vizhdala plochi na nego i sviryat, otkakto go izgoniha {predi [(polvin mesets li beshe), (edin mesets li beshe)]}, tolkova, okolo edin mesets. (CSB–NV)

‘... I have seen records being played. He was given the sack, was it half a month ago or was it a month ago, yes, about a month ago.’

(19) I, I, you know, I, I debate {about [(whether it’s really good) (or not)]}, you know. (STCSE)

The AISs discussed hitherto are examples of “unmixed coordination” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1333), i.e. their constituent units (phrases or clauses) “belong to the same syntactic category” (*ibid.* 2002: 1326). Rare in the corpora are the examples of “mixed coordination” (*ibid.* 2002: 1328, 1332) in which the constituent units of the AIS belong to different syntactic categories. Such a rare instance of mixed coordination is the AIS in ex. (20) below. It consists of a non-finite gerund clause and an NP.

(20) Do you think your parents told you stories more out of humor or more out of, as a warning? Like about, stories {about [(growing up with them) (or their past)]}. (CFCSE)

Last but not least, the function of complement in English can be realized by AISs with unexpressed final (second or third) constituent as in ex. (21) and (22). In both examples the expressed constituents are NPs.

(21) Do you remember hearing stories that your parents would tell you as a child, maybe {about [(their past) (or --)]}? (CFCSE)

(22) Is that {with regard to [(workplace engineering) (or just, you know, environment, the workplace environment), (or ...)]}? (STCSE)

3. Part of the complement in the PP

Unlike their Bulgarian counterparts, EAISS testified in the corpora can be part of the complement in the PP although this happens rarely. There are 4 examples – 1 in CFCSE and 3 in STCSE.

(23) *Did you look forward {to [(reading) (or hearing her read)] James and the Giant Peach}*? (CFCSE)

Ex. (23) illustrates the so-called “delayed right constituent coordination” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1343). This is a construction in which “the constituent which in basic coordination would appear as the rightmost element of the first coordinate is held back until after the final coordinate” (*ibid.* 2002: 1343). That constituent is the delayed right constituent. The “effect” of delayed right constituent coordination “is to heighten the contrast between the coordinates by removing from them material that would be the same in each” (*ibid.* 2002: 1343).

The AIS in ex. (23) is made up of parts of two non-finite gerund clauses. As a matter of fact, the second constituent has a more complex structure as the gerund form *hearing* of the verb *hear* takes the bare infinitival clause *her read* as complement (in the latter clause, the accusative NP *her* functions as subject, the V *read* as predicator.) The AIS is followed by the delayed right constituent *James and the Giant Peach* which has the form of a coordinate NP and in basic coordination would function as complement (direct object) to the verb (predicator) *reading* in the first coordinate and to the verb (predicator) *read* in the second coordinate as shown in ex. (24) below.

(24) *Did you look forward {to [(reading James and the Giant Peach) (or hearing her read James and the Giant Peach)]}*?

It is *reading or hearing her read James and the Giant Peach* that functions as complement to the head preposition *to*. Therefore, the AIS *reading or hearing her read* is only part of the complement, it is not a complement in its own right.

IV. Functions in the AP

Only AISs found in the English corpora serve as constituents of APs and this happens rarely. The total number of these AISs is 4. They all occur in CFCSE. Three AISs function as heads and one as complement.

1. Head of the AP

In all the three examples the head is realized by a coordination of APs. In ex. (25) the head *hot or cool* takes the adverb phrase (AdvP) *really* as modifier.

(25) *Is the temperature {really [(hot) (or cool)]}? (CFCSE)*

2. Complement in the AP

Only one EAIS functions as complement to the head adjective. It consists of two open interrogative subordinate clauses.

(26) *I'm not {sure [(how that worked) (or how the route worked)]}, I just remember doing it. (CFCSE)*

V. Functions in the AdvP

Neither EAISs nor BAISs testified in the corpora function as constituents of AdvPs. To be precise, only 1 BAIS makes part of the structure of an AdvP. It occurs in CSB–NV and serves as complement to the head adverb. It represents a coordination of two PPs.

(27) *Той казва: „Да, знам го. {Сега [(в дванайсе ли), (в колко там)]}, ще се снемат маските и ще се види кой е, и всички ще се видим.“ (CSB–NV)*

Toj kazva: “Da, znam go. {Sega [(v dvanayse li), (v kolko tam)]}, shte se snemat maskite i shte se vidi koj e, i vsichki shte se vidim.” (CSB–NV)

‘He says, “Yes, I know him. Now will it be at twelve o’clock or what time will it be, the masks will be taken off and we’ll see who he is and we’ll see who everybody is.”’

VI. Conclusions

The comparative qualitative and quantitative corpus-based research into the constituents and the functions of E&BAISs within the phrase has resulted in the following conclusions:

1. 59 EAISs, i.e. 23 % of all AISs found in the English corpora, and 34 BAISs, i.e. 14 % of all AISs found in the Bulgarian corpora, perform functions within the phrase. The number of the EAISs is 1.74 times as high as that of the BAISs.

2. E&BAISs most often serve as constituents of NPs and PPs. Hardly ever are AISs testified in the corpora as constituents of other types of phrase.

3. The most typical function of EAISs within the NP is that of head (usually of the NP and rarely of the N'). EAISs can also be post-modifiers and modifiers. EAISs in the functions of complement and part of the post-modifier are sporadic.

Within the NP, BAISs serve as heads, post-modifiers, complements, and determiners. BAISs in the function of modifier are sporadic.

4. Within the PP, the most typical function of EAISs and the only function of BAISs in the corpora is that of complement to the head preposition. Rarely do EAISs make part of the complement or function as heads.

5. Corpora evidence has also indicated that most E&BAISs with functions within the phrase are examples of binary unmixed coordination, i.e. they are made up of two constituents that belong to the same syntactic category.

6. Usually, the constituents are nouns, NPs (including fused-head NPs) and PPs, but they can also be APs, closed interrogative subordinate clauses, relative clauses (in English).

7. Examples of binary coordination are much more frequent in English and Bulgarian corpora than those of multiple coordination. Furthermore, multiple coordination is limited to three-term AISs.

8. The constituents of E&BAISs most often occur within the boundaries of one and the same sentence.

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