

The question remains

This sentence is taken from the dissertation of a Korean student of Business Studies. In the previous paragraph the writer had summarised the remarkable growth of Korean GNP over the past 40 years:

Original	Revisions
There is a question of how Korea has achieved the outstanding economic success over the decades with its scarcity of natural resources and advanced technologies.	The question remains of how Korea has achieved this outstanding economic success over the decades with its scarcity of natural resources and advanced technology.
	The question remains: how has Korea achieved this outstanding economic success over the decades with its scarcity of natural resources and advanced technology?

A quick discussion with the student showed that by "There is a question of ..." he wanted to signal that although other questions had been answered, this one had not. I suggested the expression "the question remains ...": a quick concordance showed the sorts of contexts in which the expression occurs:

1. The expression is usually sentence-initial, often after the conjunction 'but'.
2. In a small proportion of cases (e.g. citations 1 & 2), the question is defined by means of a Noun Phrase. In such cases, "the question" is often evaluated: for example as "great" (1), "central" (2), "decisive" etc.
3. In many cases (e.g. citations 3 - 5) the question is defined by means of a direct question. This context seems to be rather more common in newspaper texts than in academic texts.
4. In many other cases (e.g. citations 6 - 10) the question is defined by means of an indirect question, the main conjunctions employed being "whether" (6 & 7, 9) and "why" (8 & 10). In a few cases the conjunction is preceded by "of": "the question of whether" (9) and "the question of of why" (10).

1 es not. The great question remains the single currency. The German public doesn't want it, it
2 . But the central question remains the provision of proper amounts of convenient land for app
3 meetings. But the question remains: are there any political prisoners in Georgia? To answer i
4 1917. But the key question remains: is cheating acceptable in school exams? The answer: only
5 . But the crucial question remains. Can IT improve the basic skills of the children who curre
6 ing systems". The question remains whether these technologies will be of any use. Edward Feat
7 oard, the crucial question remains whether the new watchdog can actually deliver its promised
8 ssing person. The question remains why so many should slip through in the first place. For so
9 om the slump. The question remains, however, of whether recovery would have been faster had t
10 ome hope, but the question remains of why they are not more widespread. Perception is part of

In the light of such data, I suggested two revisions of the original, the first using an indirect question structure with "of", and the second the rather more informal direct question structure. The student chose the former.

