The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Questions and responses in business communication in Hong Kong

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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Iris Lin Hin Sze

Thesis title: Questions and responses in business communication in Hong Kong

Abstract:

The thesis is a corpus-informed study of questions and responses in business communication in Hong Kong. It examines the Business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) (prosodic) (hereafter "the Corpus"), amounting to about 260,000 words, which is compiled by a research team of the English Department of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Cheng, Greaves and Warren, 2005). All instances of question-response sequences in the five business sub-genres are studied. The sub-genres are Service Encounters, Interviews, Meetings, Informal Office Talk, and Q&A Sessions.

The Corpus is examined with regard to five aspects: the exchange structure of question-response sequences (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992), the syntactic forms of the questions (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985) and the functions of the questions (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the functions of responses (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the communicative values of discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997) of questions and their corresponding responses, and the influence of the institutional roles of the participants in different sub-genres in business and professional settings on the use of questions.

The findings of the study show that question-response sequences are not necessarily organised in simple and discrete Initiation-Response structures. Instead, many of the sequences stretch over a number of exchanges.

It is found that some question forms are more frequent than the others. Among the six question forms, declarative questions are most common. The second most common form is yes-no questions, followed by wh-questions, tag questions, and alternative questions. The least common question form, insert questions, occurs only very rarely in the Corpus. Different realizations of these question forms are discussed and illustrated with excerpts. In the examination of question functions, there is a very similar percentage for three of the categories, <Q: identify>, <Q: confirm>, and <Q: polar>. And very few questions are found

to perform the <Q: repeat> function. There is more or less even distribution of most of the question functions, while the distribution of question forms is unevenly spread. This study concludes that there is not a direct form-function relation in questions. Instead, the function of a question is largely determined by the here-and-now situation in which the question is produced.

In business and professional discourses, the majority of the questions (95%) are not only responded to but also answered. Only 5% of the responses do not answer the question either explicitly or inexplicitly (with 1% <R: supply>, 3% <R: disclaim> and 1% <R: evade>). And 92% of the responses answer the questions directly (28% <R: identify>, 26% <R: confirm>, 37% <R: polar> and 1% <R: repeat>). The rest (8%) either provides irrelevant information (by <R: supply> with 1%) or gives information indirectly (by <R: imply> with 3%).

In the analysis of discourse intonation, both the communicative values and the local meanings of each question form are discussed and illustrated with excerpts from the Corpus. The findings have shown that all question forms identified are produced with different choices available in the tone system (Brazil, 1997), with the exception of the rise-fall tone which is usually used in “exclamatory” and when no feedback is expected from the hearer (ibid: 97). In other words, there is no fixed intonation for any particular question form. Through analyzing the communicative functions of discourse intonation in the questions and responses, the study shows the ways in which participants in the business discourses exploit the intonation system to project a context of interaction which suits their current communicative purposes. Particularly, participants are found to be exploiting the key and termination systems when both asking questions and formulating the responses. In the case of Service Encounters, for example, service providers are found to frequently use mid termination in declarative questions to seek confirmation from the guests or customers.

In examining the use of questions in different sub-genres, the study finds different patterns of questioning. The determinant of the number of questions produced and their forms and functions in the interactions is not the length of the discourse but the communicative purpose, and nature of the interactions, the institutional role of the participants and the tasks that the participants need to achieve in the discourses. In this study, discourses which are more "transactional" compared to "interactional" (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1-5) are found to be more question-laden.

Finally, the findings of the study are explored in relation to their contribution to the theories and models in discourse analysis, discourse intonation and pragmatics, and pedagogical and research implications of corpus-informed studies for business and professional communication.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The aim of the present study is to examine the linguistic and intonational behaviour of speakers in business and professional contexts when engaged in questioning and responding to questions in English in intercultural communication in the international city of Hong Kong. The present study uses data from the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) which is the largest prosodically transcribed corpus complied to date using Brazil's (1985, 1997) discourse intonation systems. It consists of four different sub-corpora, namely conversations, academic, business and public sub-corpora. The present study examines five sub-genres in the business sub-corpus (hereafter "the Corpus"), and they are Service Encounters, Meetings, Interviews, Informal Office Talk, and Q&A Sessions after announcements or presentations. In these sub-genres, participants assume different institutional identities and roles. This study examines, compares and contrasts the part played by participants' roles. It also investigates how the participants use intonation in their questions and responses in different business and professional contexts in different sub-genres. The form and function of questions and responses are also studied and exemplified with excerpts from the Corpus.

The study examine the Corpus with regard to five aspects: the exchange structure of question-response sequences (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992), the syntactic forms of the questions (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985) and the functions of the questions (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the responses functions (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the communicative values of discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997) in these questions and their corresponding responses, and the impact of the institutional roles of the participants in different sub-genres in business and professional settings on the use of questions.

There are several contributions that the present study makes. The findings of the study will be of value to people working in the contexts in the studied sub-genres. They will have a clearer picture of the relationship between the form and function of questions and how these questions are used to get to a response. Also, how discourse intonation systems work in questioning and responding will be better understood. More importantly, a study based on authentic data helps our understanding of what constitutes a question, how they are used and responded to in real-life spontaneous communication. The findings of the present study are also useful for future research studies. In the field of English for Specific Purposes, practitioners can use the findings to develop courses and materials for training and educating people who intend to work in business and professional domains.

1.1 The context: Business and professional communication

With the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, the government has changed the language policy. The Hong Kong Government now attempts to "develop a civil service which is biliterate in English and Chinese and trilingual in English, Cantonese and Putonghua" (Bolton, 2002: 35). Since 1997, there has been an emphasis on mother-tongue education. English, however, is still preferred by the majority of the people in Hong Kong (Zhang, 2006: 12). And English still has a higher status in the business and professional domains in Hong Kong (Evans and Green, 2003). In the light of the higher status of English, the government has launched a series of campaigns (such as the Workplace English Campaign, WEC) to promote English, especially in the business and professional domains. Massive campaigns have been launched with various training programmes for working people and the government's determination is backed up with multi-million funding. By June 2005, nearly 23,000 working adults have received training grants from the WEC, involving a total disbursement of $38 million of funds (press release, http://www.english.gov.hk/eng/html/wec_publicity_press_20050719.htm).

Although the status of Putonghua has risen due to the closer connections between Hong Kong and Mainland China since 1997, English is still regarded as the working language of commerce and business internationally (Green and Evans, 2003; Zhang, 2006). Apart from the push to improve the English of Hong Kong people in the business and professional sectors (see http://www.english.gov.hk/ for WEC) , increasing attention has been given to research in the area of business and professional communication (see Bilbow 1996, 1997, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 2002a, b; Candlin 2003, 2002; Cheng, 2003, 2004; Cheng and Warren, 2001, 2003, 2005; Evans and

Green 2003; Forey and Nunan 2002; Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Louhiala-Salminen 2002; Pan, Scollon and Scollon 2002; Roberts and Sarangi 2003; Sarangi and Clarke 2002). Given the significant role that English plays in business and professional discourses in Hong Kong, it will be interesting to examine how practitioners use English in real-life contexts. And only through the analysis of talk-in-interaction in different business and professional contexts can we understand the linguistic and communicative behaviour of the practitioners. Although the English language has not been commonly used as a second language in Hong Kong by local people, it has become the lingua franca in the business and professional domains where communication is intercultural.

Studies of intercultural communication examine and compare the discourse of people of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds interacting either in a lingua franca or in one of the participants' native languages (for example, examining and/or comparing the linguistic behaviour of Hong Kong Chinese and British in a business meeting where participants communicate in English) (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Cheng 2003, 2005; Cheng and Warren, 2001, 2003, 2005; Lustig and Koester 1999). Previous studies of intercultural business and professional communication have been given less attention to (Candlin 2002), not to mention only little attention has been paid to this area in Hong Kong until only recently (Bhatia, Langton, and Lung 2004; Bilbow 1997, 1998, 2002; Christopher and Stephen 2000; Evans and Green, 2003; Hill and Martyn 2004; Kong 2001).

1.2 The study of questions and responses

In written communication, writers are allowed to formulate how information can be sought and checked. Simultaneously readers are also allowed plenty of time to formulate how they are to respond to these requests, whether or not to supply the requested information. However, in face-to-face business and professional communication, people are expected to act promptly, precisely, politely and professionally. The concerns are how these questioning and responding are done professionally and effectively, and how these exchanges fulfill the intended communication purposes and goals.

In the present study, a comprehensive literature review of different approaches to the study of questions and responses is given. It points out that identification and definition of questions has been problematic. "Question" has been termed and defined at different levels, semantically and pragmatically. Although there is not a unanimous framework for classification, questions are classified according to the function that they perform in relation to their syntactic form. And thus resulting in five major categories in general: yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, alternative questions and wh-questions in terms of syntactic forms (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan, 1999; Biber, Conrad and Leech, 2002 Givon, 1993; Hasan, 1996; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik, 1972, 1985).

The present study focuses on five different aspects when examining the question-response sequences. They are the intonational aspect, the interactive aspect (in terms of exchange structure), the form and the pragmatic function of questions, the response to questions, and situational context (in terms of institutional identities and roles of participants). Previous studies on questions and responses emphasize the interactive perspective in terms of their functions in a discourse (see Searle, 1969; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975 and Schegloff, 1978) because questions and responses are social activities and these exchanges allow the participants to relate to the world outside the discourse (Widdowson, 1979: 38). In other words, not only the questions and responses that the interactants produce, but also the institutional role of the participants and the situational contexts of the interaction have to be studied. In studies of discourse analysis, the interactive aspect is brought about by "interactive cues" which are inherent in a specific structure or utterance types, or realized by strategically using lexical and/or prosodic markers. Utterances, such as a question, may have the inherent property of eliciting or inviting a response, which makes them "automatic turn-yielders" (Stenström, 1984: 17). Stenström (1984) also suggests that a question "is an interactive element which can only be interpreted by what it does 'here and now' in a particular conversation" (ibid: 38). Thus a response is bound to its position in the discourse and must be coherently linked with the preceding question in order to be appropriate. To reinforce the interactive property of the exchanges of questions and responses, she further offers a definition of a question as "an utterance that may elicit an R[esponse] which implies that not all Q[uestions] are followed by an R[esponse]" (ibid: 24). In addition, she offers two criteria for a response: the placement of the utterance in the interaction and the pragmatic appropriateness of the utterance in the context of situation. In her study, the combination of interactive and pragmatic criteria forms the basis of the definitions of the acts performing utterances. She distinguishes acts into two categories (ibid: 73):

> "1) acts which are primarily interactive and whose function is mainly determined by their place in the ongoing discourse, whatever their pragmatic meaning, and 2) acts in which the pragmatic meaning predominates and in which the interactive function follows from the move they are constituents of"

In interaction, people are concerned with how to do things with words, which can be referred to as "speech acts" (Austin 1962). In the light of Austin's (1962) study, Searle (1969) suggests that it is the constitutive rules that govern the production of speech acts. In speech act theory, all utterances are classified into different illocutionary acts. "Illocutionary act" refers to the force or intention behind the words that are uttered (Searle, 1969). One of the goals of the present study is to identify the pragmatic functions of the utterances and those which do questioning in particular. Through the analysis of the illocutionary acts of the utterances, exchanges containing the act of questioning are identified. It is also important to examine the speech acts of those utterances which follow the questions but which are not necessarily an answer to the question. This method of analysis helps to explain why the pair is called question-response sequence instead of question-answer sequence. These response utterances could be an answer, but they could perform other kinds of speech act (see Section 2.3).

Previous studies on questions and responses are examined in different settings in the business and professional domain. It is found that studies of questions focus mainly on the initiation of the exchange and often neglect the importance of the response. Cheng and Warren (2001) study the tag questions produced by HKC; and Nasslin (1984) examines tag questions, but the responses that follow the questions are not examined in both the studies. Schegloff (1978) studies the ambiguities of questions and Weber (1993) examines the different varieties of questions. Similarly, these studies which look at questions produced by native speakers do not involve an analysis of the responses that follow them.

Some of the studies, on the other hand, only focus on the responses. Goffman (1976) focuses on the different types of answers which could be paired with a question, while Manor (1982) and Sbisà (1992) classify responses into different categories. None of these studies discuss how these responses are prospected and less attention has been given to question and response as a pair. Thus there is a need to examine the exchanges in which question and response go hand in hand as a pair rather than them being studied as separate, independent entities. In some of the studies where attention is also given to a question-response as an exchange, a very important element in spoken discourse, intonation, has been left out. Stenström (1984) examines the different acts and functions of questions and responses; Lakoff (1973), Manor (1979) and Pope (1976) also discuss the classification of both questions and responses. However, they do not investigate how the two are related to each other, and more importantly, they do not study the pair in combination with discourse intonation.

In this study, questions and responses are studied in terms of their forms, communicative functions, and the communicative value of the discourse intonation employed. In Brazil's (1997) model of Discourse Intonation, the description recognizes significant intonation choices as being made within four systems: prominence, tone, key and termination. This model views the meaning of intonation in terms of listener/speaker interaction, shared/unshared knowledge, and conversational control. This model differs from many grammar references in that there is no fixed intonation for questions, and each different choice in the four systems contributes to different communicative values. However, in many grammar references, intonation is closely related to the syntactic form of the question and the types of responses that they elicit. Giving consideration to the spontaneity of spoken discourses, Brazil's (1997) discourse intonation systems view intonation as being context dependent. These systems provide the researcher with a tool that can better describe the role and value that intonation plays in utterances which perform the act of questioning.

1.3 A corpus-informed study

Previous studies on questions and responses are usually based on a small data base, and hence results are not always readily generalizable (Sbisà, 1992; Nasslin, 1984; Weber, 1993). This calls for corpus studies or studies with larger data sets. These studies, with reference to their grammatical description, extract examples from the corpus to illustrate their classifications and categories (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik, 1972, 1985; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan, 1999; Biber, Conrad and Leech, 2002). In addition to "the selection of examples to support linguistic argument or to validate (the) theoretical statement" (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84) in the grammar references, the present study also makes use of "additional information" (ibid: 74) available for the Corpus "to refine (pre-existing) categories" (ibid: 66).

The present study, like other corpus-informed studies, holds different views on the pre-existing non-corpus-based theoretical statements and believes that these models can be tested and improved (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 74). It makes use of the evidence from corpora "to uncover new grounds … by accepting the evidence and seeing that the theoretical and descriptive statements reflect the evidence" (ibid: 84). Since corpus-informed studies are able to challenge prescribed language description with the enormous amount of evidence provided by language corpora, the present study, adopting this approach (Sinclair 1991; Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 2002), attempts to offer new insights with regard to discourse intonation of questions and responses in business and professional communication.

1.4 Rationale of the present study

Searle (1969) hypothesizes that a "speech act is the basic unit of communication" (ibid: 21), and among the five categories of speech acts, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, speakers use directives to attempt to get the addressee to do something. Alongside assertions (a form representative), questioning, a type of directive, is one of the most fundamental speech acts in communication. Questioning also has an interesting status which is determined by the status of prospected speech act, responding. This study examines the speech act of questioning and the prospected speech act, responding.

This study focuses on the utterances that do questioning, as Weber (1993: 20) states "functional questions appear quite frequently in everyday conversational discourse". They are termed functional questions as they are identified and classified according to the function and communicative meaning that they perform (Weber, 1993). In other studies on questions and responses, these functional questions can perform information seeking, confirmation check, comprehension check, rapport building, and so on (Brazil 1997; Stenström 1984; Weber 1993; Thomas 1995). This study, in addition to the functional aspects of utterances doing questioning, also examines the syntactic forms of these utterances. In communication, it is common that the form of an utterance does not correspond to its function. There are many instances when an interrogative does not function as a question. For example, it can either function as an invitation or a request for action. Conversely, a lot of utterances which do questioning are non-interrogatives, for example in declaratives.

For example, a speaker may use an interrogative as an indirect request employing a negative politeness strategy so that the hearer's negative face is not threatened (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This mismatch of form and meaning in an utterance may lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding in communication, especially when the interlocutor is not socially or pragmatically competent (Bilbow, 1997, 1998). And this area is indeed often studied and categorized as prototypical in the discussion of the form/function problem (Thompson, 1983, 1987; Du Bois, 1985, 1987, 1992; Hopper, 1987, 1988; Geluykens, 1992). It is assumed that the structure of the linguistic forms reflects the communicative ends of speakers (e.g. Weber, 1993). In other words, the syntactic forms of utterances are motivated by the patterns produced in individuals' actual speech in carrying out particular acts (Du Bois, 1984). This involves an identification of speech acts, both illocutionary and perlocutionary, of interactants' utterances, and the analysis of how these acts are realized syntactically.

To identify all the instances of questioning means an extensive investigation of utterances doing questioning regardless of their syntactic forms. This process, however, does not only draw attention to the utterances that do questioning, but also to the responses as well. Discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997) also plays an important role in helping the researcher identify the pragmatic function of particular utterances. The communicative value and meanings of discourse intonation, which are derived from the situational context, add extra information to the meaning of the utterance, and provide insights into the relationship of syntactic form and question function.

In business and professional communication, it has been asked "what academic preparation is needed by business administration students if they are to become successful executive in an information society" (Bennett and Olney, 1986: 13). There has been attention drawn to the identification of the needs in spoken communication (Carstens, 1982; Firth, 1995; Li, Zhu and Li, 2001; Steuten, 1998), however, much of the attention is still paid to written communication (Connor and Gladkov, 2004; Connor and Upton, 2004; Goering, 2004; Bhatia, 2004; Bhatia, Langton and Lung, 2004; Zhu, 2007). This might be due to the larger involvement in written tasks in some business or professional posts (Chew, 2005). And only until recently, different types of spoken business communication are being studied, they are selling negotiations (Firth, 1995; Charles 1996), office talk or workplace talk (Grimshaw, 1989; Koester, 2001), business meetings, (Bargiela-chiappini and Harris, 1997), and to more pedagogical concerns such as the authenticity of spoken business English as portrayed in language teaching materials (Williams, 1988).

As Nickerson (2005) states, Chew's (2005) study is one of the large-scale projects in Hong Kong which intends to identify the English language needs of business students and to provide them with appropriate teaching materials (see also Bhatia and Candlin, 2001; Jackson, 2004). Chew (2005: 432) finds that among her interviewees, who are new entrants in Hong Kong banks, three quarters express an interest in improving English speaking skills as compared to half in written skills. The present study aims to provide the practitioners and management in the business and professional domains with a description of linguistic behaviour in spoken communication, especially related to questions and responses which is the core of "information flow" (Brazil, 1984). It is hoped that by doing so, observations made on the function and use of language for particular purposes, that is questioning and responding in this context, can be used for training and development. This should help new comers to the genre understand and use appropriately its key features and also give experts tools for improving and enriching the language they use (Connor and Upton, 2004: 2).

One characteristic of the present study is to use a specialized corpus to unveil and describe the linguistic behaviour of members of the business and professional domains. The rationale for using a specialized corpus to understand business and professional language is based on two premises: "the unsuitability of general corpora for these express purposes, and the methodological advantages inherent in using specialized corpora to understand language, advantages which do not always pertain to general corpora" (Flowerdew, 2004: 11). The use of a specialized corpus is especially helpful to practitioners in ESP and LSP in the formulation and development of training/teaching courses and materials which can be more specific to a particular discipline. This is also beneficial to researchers, who are interested in conducting research of a similar kind.

In terms of analytical approaches, studies have most often been broadly based within genre analysis, discourse analytical, pragmatic frameworks and the conversation analysis paradigm. Inspired by Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), who are typical of a blending of such approaches in their concern with thematic (topical) development in business meetings, the forms and pragmatic functions of pronominalization, the forms and functions of discourse markers, metaphors, and so on (McCarthy and Handford, 2004), the present study also uses a triangulation of analytical approaches with regard to five aspects: the exchange structure of question-response sequences (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992), the syntactic forms of the questions (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985) and the functions of the questions (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the functions of responses (Tsui, 1987, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994), the communicative values of discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997) of questions and their corresponding responses, and the influence of the institutional roles of the participants in different sub-genres in business and professional settings on the use of questions.

The above rationale calls for a study which examines the linguistic behaviour of interlocutors in questioning and responding using English in business and professional settings. To provide a clearer picture of how the institutional role of the interactants and the communicative purpose and the goal of the interaction influence the use of questions and the question-response sequences, results are compared across sub-genres.

The research questions are:

1. How are question-response sequences structured in business and professional settings? What are the forms and functions of these questions and responses?
2. What are the communicative values of the questions and responses with reference to the Discourse Intonation systems?
3. How do the institutional roles of the participants in business and professional settings influence the use of questions, both in form and function? And to what extent is questioning uniform or diverse across the different sub-genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE?

It is important to obtain answers to the above research questions so that we have a better understanding of the inter-relationship of discourse intonation, discourse analysis, pragmatics and communication in business discourse. The business and professional communities, service providers and professionals can then be made aware of the importance of understanding their institutional roles and how their roles in different settings influence questioning and responding. It is also important that attention is drawn to their lack of awareness of the significance of the communicative value of discourse intonation (see Cheng 2004a) and this will also be of great relevance to language teachers, particularly ESP and LSP practitioners, and learners. The answers to the research questions should also help to demystify the mismatch of the form and function of questions. In addition, members of both the business and professional and language teaching communities can understand the ways in which different intonational choices can change the focus or function of a question. Results of this study should contribute to a better understanding of some of the frameworks in the research fields of discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997), discourse analysis (Coulthard and Brazil, 1992; Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006) and pragmatics, and encourage future research in questions and responses in these fields.

1.5 Organization of the thesis

The thesis first reviews the literature on different approaches to spoken discourse analysis, namely pragmatics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. The definition and classifications of questions and responses are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively. Chapter 5 rounds the literature review section off with theories and previous studies on Discourse Intonation. This is followed by the methodology chapter which outlines the data source, and the procedures and frameworks of data analysis.

In Chapter 7, the results of the frequency counts of questions and responses are detailed. The exchange structure of question-response sequences is discussed in Chapter 8, the forms of questions in Chapter 9; the functions of questions in Chapter 10, and the functions of responses in Chapter 11.   A discussion of discourse intonation and its communicative role in questions and responses is presented in Chapter 12. In Chapter 13, the use of questions and question-response sequences of different sub-genres are discussed with reference to the institutional roles of participants and contexts of situation. Finally, the significance and implications and limitations of the study are outlined in the concluding chapter (Chapter 14).

Chapter 2 Approaches to study of questions and responses

2.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the issues raised in the identification and definition of questions and responses. It underlines the need and significance to study the structure of question-response sequences. This chapter discusses four approaches to spoken discourse analysis in the study of questions and responses, namely pragmatics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Models of these approaches are also discussed.

2.2 The structure of questions and responses in a discourse

In the studies of questions and responses, the initial problem has always been identification- and definition-related (see Stenström, 1984; Nasslin, 1984; Webber, 1993). According to Goffman (1976), there are two main issues in the definition of questions and responses. The first is the fundamental issue of "circularity", and the second is whether the following response has to be an answer.

As Grice (1975) proposes, a speaker's utterance anticipates a response from the other party and also sets up expectations as to what types of response are appropriate. In other words, in the case of questions, a question anticipates a response and sets up an expectation of the types of responses (see Stenström, 1984; Tsui, 1992). As Goffman (1976) points out, if the definition of a response depends on whether the preceding utterance is a question, it follows that a question is determined by reference to the sequence it establishes (Stenström, 1984: 24). As Bolinger (1957: 23) states, most questions elicit answers, so the presence of an answer indicates that a question has preceded it. Bolinger's criterion for question identification is adopted by Churchill (1978) in taking the occurrence of a response as a criterion for a question. Brown et al (1980) only examine those questions which are being responded to. Following these definitions and observations, a response is identified when it is preceded by a question and a question is only identified when it is followed by a response. This criterion means that both a question and a response must be present in their identification.

Studies on initiations and responses emphasize the interactive role in terms of their functions in a discourse (see Searle, 1969; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975 and Schegloff, 1978). As Widdowson (1979) states, it is essential to take into account the interactive aspect since questions and responses are social activities which relate to the world outside the discourse (ibid: 138). Stenström (1984) agrees with this argument and claims that a question "is an interactive element which can only be interpreted by what it does 'here and now' in a particular conversation" (ibid: 38). She suggests that a response to a question is bound to its position in the discourse and must be coherently linked with the preceding question in order to be appropriate. Sinclair (1981, 1992) also argues that an utterance works on both the "autonomous plane" (concerned with the meaning of the discourse) and the "interactive plane" (concerned with the discourse management) (ibid: 87). This agrees with Stenström's view that questions and responses have both a communicative value (on the "autonomous plane") and an interactive value (i.e. on the "interactive plane").

The second issue is whether or not the utterance following the question has to be an answer (Stenström, 1984: 24). Stenström (1984) argues that a question is not necessarily followed by a response. In response to these two issues, Stenström (1984) offers a definition of a question as "AN UTTERANCE THAT MAY ELICIT AN R (response) which implies that not all Q (questions) are followed by an R (response)" (original emphasis, ibid: 24), and emphasizing that a question cannot be merely identified by the presence of a response. Although Stenström (1994) states that "an R (response) is B's (the next speaker's) next obligatory move in the exchange after A's (the first speaker's) [initiate]" (ibid: 109), the terms "response" and "initiate" used here refer to their place in the exchange structure of the interaction. In other words, the labels used earlier (1984: 24) are semantic rather than structural (1994: 109). Adopting the definition of question and response in a semantic sense, Stenström (1984: 25) further offers two criteria for a response: the placement of the utterance in the interaction, that is in terms of exchange structure, and the appropriateness of the utterance in the context of situation. She further stresses the pragmatic function of utterances in the interactions in the identification of questions and responses.

These issues will be discussed in the following in relation to different approaches to language study, namely pragmatics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis.

2.3 Pragmatics

In pragmatics, the identification of question is not merely based on its function. Another important aspect which this approach emphasizes is the illocutionary force of each utterance. The identification of a question and its illocutionary force is worked out by the study of both the response and the sequential phenomenon of the speech acts.

In pragmatics, people have reasons for choosing one syntactic form, a lexical item or employing indirectness or politeness over another when creating meaning in interaction which is negotiated (Thomas, 1993). In speech act theory, language users are studied in their social context and so the study of the use of language cannot be limited to grammatical aspects (Mey, 2001). In interaction, people are concerned with how to do things with words, i.e. “speech acts” (Austin, 1962). Speech acts are actions done by utterances; these utterances bring about changes in the existing state in affairs of the real world. Austin (1962) names these speech acts “illocutionary acts”. The actual words which are uttered are known as the locution, the illocutionary act is the force or intention behind the words. Related to this notion is the perlocutionary act, the notion of the consequences or effects such acts have on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs of hearers (Searle, 1969).

Example 2.1 It’s cold in here.

The locutionary act of Example 2.1 is the activity that the speaker engages in saying something; in other words, the action of uttering the words spoken. By uttering the above words, the speaker is making an assertion, and this particular speech act is called the illocutionary force. The illocutionary force of the speech act is to tell the hearer that the speaker feels cold. By working out the implicature, the speaker is indeed asking the hearer to close the window or to adjust the air-conditioning. This perlocutionary effect of the speech act is to get someone to do something, for example, in this case, close the windows or turn off the air-conditioning (Mey, 2001: 96).

In the light of Austin's (1962) study, Searle (1969) states that it is the constitutive rules that govern the production of speech acts. In his theory, all utterances are classified into different illocutionary acts following four rules: propositional content rule, preparatory rule, sincerity rule and essential rule. He states that an utterance which will only be regarded as a question when it meets the following conditions according to the four rules.

1. Propositional content rule: any proposition or propositional function
2. Preparatory rule: (i) the speaker does not know "the answer", i.e., does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly. (ii) It is not obvious to both the speaker and the hearer that the hearer will provide the information at the time without being asked.
3. Sincerity rule: the speaker wants this information.
4. Essential rule: Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from the hearer.

   (Searle, 1969: 66)

In Searle's model, questions identified meeting the four conditions are further classified into two groups: real questions and exam questions. In real questions, the speaker wants to know or find out the answer; whereas in exam questions, the speaker wants to know if the hearer knows what is being asked (Searle, 1969: 66). That means, in asking a question, which is a "special case of requesting" (ibid: 69), the speaker is either requesting information (a real question) or requesting that the hearer display knowledge (exam question). Searle gives an example of an utterance which causes difficulty in the identification of questions.

Example 2.2 Could you do this for me? (Searle, 1969: 68)

Despite the meaning of the lexical items and the interrogative form (i.e. the illocutionary act), the illocutionary force does not ask about the hearer's abilities. Rather it is uttered as a request for an action, or a "conventional indirect speech act" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 132). The illocutionary force of an interrogative form could also be an offer or advice. In short, the illocutionary force of an utterance is dependent on the context, and a particular utterance may have different illocutionary forces in different contexts. Thus it is important to take the context of situation into account in analyses of speech acts.

In terms of the sequence of questions and responses, Sbisà (1992) states that responses play an important role in the analysis of questions, especially when assigning a definite illocutionary force to a certain question. The knowledge of both the context in which a speech act has been spoken and the response it has received are of equal importance. Thus, the sequential phenomenon of the speech acts, that is how they are structured in the discourse, is an indispensable part of any analysis. Sbisà (1992) suggests that if a response can confirm or disconfirm the supposed illocutionary force of the utterance to which it reacts, the response can then be used for disambiguating the illocutionary force of that utterance if the speech act displays ambiguity in its illocutionary force. For example, when a hearer is asked whether he or she can open the window, an action to open a window disambiguates the illocutionary force of such an utterance from the one which asks for the hearer's ability to perform such an action. In other words, "the deviant response may have the effect of re-defining the situation and thus the illocutionary force of the previous speech act" (ibid: 102).

In terms of sequential phenomena, a response is regarded as a perlocutionary effect of the speech act, and the act brought about by the speaker (of the response) as a perlocutionary act of the speaker. It should, however, be noted that a response does not have to be a response of compliance with respect to the perlocutionary goals of the speaker. An example would be refusing to give the information that is asked for while recognizing the illocutionary act of asking for information. Its function is to react to the previous utterance. In the case of a request, the appropriate response would not necessarily be an answer or a verbal response, but can also be a non-verbal reaction coherently linked to the preceding utterance (Sbisà, 1992).

2.4 Conversation analysis

Schegloff (1984) argues that it is misleading to make the relationship between language and social action as is done in speech act theory. When he examines sentences in interrogative forms and other linguistic forms which do questioning, he points out some of the drawbacks of the speech act theory. He refers to question as a type of action, an action which requests information. He observes that question and answer pairs are interactional categories instead of technical categories. Thus it is misleading to view categories of actions (questions) in terms of linguistic form (Schegloff, 1984). In other words, the beliefs that questions can be described solely in linguistic terms, and that the relationship between language and social behaviour can be linked are misguiding. Schegloff (1984) argues that the use of an utterance cannot be determined if its sequential position in the discourse has been omitted in the analysis. This argument opposes speech act theory in that it is not linguistic form which enables participants or analysts to make a judgment regarding the function of an utterance, rather it is the sequential organization of conversation in terms of adjacency-pair structure (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

Schegloff (1984) defines adjacency pairs as sequences which are related in terms of a typology:

> "the typology operates in two ways: it partitions utterance types into "first pair parts" (i.e., first parts of pairs) and second pair parts; and it affiliates a first pair part and a second pair part to form a "pair type". "question-answer", "greeting-greeting", "offer-acceptance/refusal", are instances of pair types. A given sequence will thus be composed of an utterance that is a first pair produced by one speaker directly followed by the production by a different speaker of an utterance which is a) a second pair part, and b) is from the same pair type as the first utterance in the sequence is a member of" (Schegloff, 1984: 33).

Adjacency pair sequences not only exhibit the ordering of parts but also discriminative relations between their parts. In the study of questions and answers, the two pair parts belong to the same sequence. The feature of adjacency-pair organization makes an answer, but not an offer or greeting, relevant to a question. In other words, the production of a first pair part by a speaker makes the production of a second pair part by a recipient relevant. The operation of adjacency pairs requires "the recognizability of first pair part status for some utterances" for the participants (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 296). That means the recipients must recognize the first pair part status of an utterance to produce a relevant second pair part from "the pair type of which the first is recognizably a member" (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 299). Schegloff and Sacks further suggest that the problem of recognizability for questions needs to be handled "constructionally, as when the syntax of an utterance can be used to recognize that a question is being produced" (ibid: 296).

In the light of Schegloff's (1984) adjacency-pair organization, Weber (1993) states that if the interpretation of function is dependent on or related to linguist form, the problem of mismatch of form and function exists. Her findings confirm that communicative function is rather interpreted on the basis of an utterance's sequential position in the interaction. And Weber observes, in an interaction, participants construct their utterances in a way that demonstrates his or her understanding of the sequence of utterances.

In terms of question and answer pair, Schegloff (1984) also emphasizes that the function of a question cannot be interpreted merely by its linguistic form. He states that even in cases where an utterance doing questioning is realized in an interrogative form, it cannot account for the function since it can also realize other functions such as invitations, commands, requests and so on. Instead he sees linguistic form as the "last resort" to resolve ambiguity in interpretive procedures (Weber, 1993: 14).

Schegloff and Sacks (1973) also state that participants interpret an answer to be an answer only by reference to its sequential placement. In other words, participants interpret an utterance as an answer only when it is after a question. Without a preceding question, the utterance cannot be interpreted as an answer since there is no reference for its sequential position. However, Goffman (1981) points out a problem that when interpreting a question in the same manner, this concept does not allow that what follows a question is not an answer to it. In fact, it is not always the case that a question has to be followed by an answer in conversation. A question can be produced immediately after another question, for example, in an insert sequence (Schegloff, 1972). Questions in these insert sequences are not misinterpreted by their recipients as answers to the prior question. The placement of such utterances does not mean that the utterance must be interpreted as an answer, nor does it exclude the utterance as being interpretable as a question. Sacks (1972b) offers an example of questions having another question as their preferred answer:

Example 2.3

A: You know what?

B: What? (ibid: 230)

2.5 Discourse analysis

Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) propose a hierarchy for the organization of discourse structure (ibid: 5) for analysing classroom discourses which is later adopted for analyzing data in general conversation. The five ranks are: interaction, transaction, exchange, move, and act. According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), a transaction consists minimally of one exchange and maximally of a coherently related series of exchanges: 1) in which the initiating Q is not adequately answered until the last exchange or 2) in which a certain topic/aspect of a topic is introduced, negotiated and brought to a close. The first exchange is always an eliciting exchange, which may be followed by an indefinite number of re-eliciting exchanges.

As Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) state, move is the smallest free unit although it has a structure in terms of acts. A move consists of one or more acts and is an interactive unit indicating what an utterance does in the discourse. Acts are regarded as corresponding most closely to the grammatical unit clause; however, it should be remembered that "grammar is concerned with the formal properties of an item, discourse with the functional properties, with what the speaker is using the item for" (ibid: 8). They define an act as the lowest unit on the rank scale, a pragmatic-interactive unit indicating what the speaker means at a certain point in the discourse. As Sinclair and Coulthard (1992: 15) exemplify, there are three types of opening: informative, directive and elicitation. In the present study, the focus is on the elicitation , and the response to an elicitation which is a reply, and the utterances that are involved in the follow up moves. Below is an illustration of a typical I-R-F exchange:

Example 2.4

MOVE	ACT	
[Opening]	elicitation	→ B: Do you know what we mean by accent
[Answering]	reply	A: It's the way you talk.
[Follow-up]	accept	B: The way we talk.
	evaluate	This is a very broad comment.

(Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992: 25)

The function of an opening move is to cause others to participate in an exchange. As Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) state, interlocutors can pass on information or direct an action or elicit a fact by an opening move. As opening and answering are complementary moves, the types of answering move are predicted (i.e. prospected) as the function of an answering move is to be an appropriate response in the terms laid down by the opening move (1992: 22). It is also useful to look at the function of the follow-up move. In exchanges in the classroom, for example, the function of follow-up move is to let the pupil know how he or she has performed. This move indicates the value of the contribution provided by the pupil, usually in terms of relevance to the discourse. Although Stenström (1984, 1994) uses different terminology from Sinclair and Coulthard (1992), the following question-response sequence is analyzed using the framework of the IRF exchange.

Example 2.5

[Elicit]	→ B: you mean the survey \TEXTS
[Response]	A: \YES \YES
	the spoken text
[Follow-up]	B: \YES \QUITE

(Stenström, 1984: 72)

In the above analysis, the arrowed utterance produced by B which is in the form of a declarative is categorized as an [Elicit] move. Interestingly, this utterance would not be considered as a declarative question eliciting information in some grammar references (see Chapter 3 for details). In these grammar references, utterances in the form of a declarative are classified as questions only when produced with rising intonation. However, taking the context of situation of the interaction into account, a declarative with falling intonation can also function as a question, as in Example 2.4 (Brazil, 1997). These declarative questions are used by interlocutors to seek confirmation from the addressee.

In Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) studies of the effects of utterances on the continuation of the interaction, they stress the role of the context of situation which is a determinant of the type of move that is predicted. This is supported by Schegloff (1978) who argues that the function of an utterance depends on where it is in the organization of the conversation. In other words, a question in interaction constrains the types of utterance that can fit into the next slot.

In discourse analysis, it follows that a response is a reaction to the initiation in the exchange structure, I-R-F. However, in conversation analysis, there is a different structure in conversation. As discussed in the previous section, Sacks (n.d.) suggests that the first pair part is followed by the second pair part in the adjacency pair, and he points out that "given a question, regularly enough an answer will follow" (cited in Coulthard and Brazil, 1992: 52). But Sacks also suggests that it is common to discover a question not followed by an answer which raises questions regarding the status of the adjacency pair. He explains that it could be the case when the addressee does not understand or does not want to commit himself until he knows more or because he is stalling, a next speaker may produce not a second pair part but another first pair part as in the example below:

Example 2.6

A: I don't know where the – wh – this address is

B: Well where do – which part of town do (you) live

A: I live four ten East Lowden

B: Well you don't live very far from me (Coulthard and Brazil, 1992: 52)

In the above exchange, it can be seen that the question that A asks is not immediately followed by an answer, instead it is followed by another initiation by B. The embedded (bold) utterances are labeled insertion sequence (Schegloff, 1972). Coulthard and Brazil (1992) explain that in an inserted sequence the original question retains its transition relevance, and if the second speaker does not produce an answer, the questioner can also complain about the lack of an answer. This other sequence is inserted between the first pair part that has occurred and the second pair part which is anticipated (ibid: 52).

An insertion sequence (Schegloff, 1972) is also labeled a "side sequence" (Jefferson, 1972). A side sequence occurs when the general drift of conversation is halted at an unpredictable point by a request for clarification and then the conversation picks up again where it left off. A side sequence can begin with a questioning repeat which indicates that there is a problem in what has just been said. The function of a questioning repeat is to "generate further talk directed to remedying the problem" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992: 53). It occurs after the problematic utterance has been completed and that the addressee is sure that the speaker is not going to correct himself or explain the unclear item.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1992: 53) point out two major differences between Jefferson's and Schegloff's models. First, the insertion sequence is embedded in an adjacency pair. There is no expectation of who should speak when the sequence ends or of what type of utterance should follow in Jefferson's (1972) model. This has created the problem of how and when to return to the on-going sequence. Second, there is an extra element in the sequence which is compulsory in Jefferson's side sequence. This third element functions to indicate that the misapprehender (the speaker who initiates the side sequence) now understands and that the side sequence is now terminated.

Example 2.7	Side sequence (Jefferson 1972)	Insertion sequence (Schegloff, 1972)
A: I don't know where the – wh – this address is	Question	Q
B: Well where do – which part of town do (you) live	Misapprehension	Qi
A: I live four ten East Lowden	Clarification	Ai
B: (Oh yeah, yeah)*	Termination	
B: Well you don't live very far from me	Answer	A

Despite the two differences discussed above, Coulthard and Brazil (1992: 55) conclude that these two sequences need different labels because they have been labeled from different perspectives – insertion sequence (Schegloff, 1972) is a structural label while side sequence (Jefferson, 1972) is a semantic label.

In Sinclair's (1981) model, each move has a function on both the interactive plane and autonomous plane of discourse. On the interactive plane, an initiation prospects, a response fits the presuppositions of the initiation, and a follow-up encapsulates. On the autonomous plane, the meaning of discourse is managed. In addition to Sinclair's (1992) interpretation of two planes of discourse, Hazadiah (1991) also suggests that the autonomous plane shows the product of discourse, the shared meaning; while the interactive plane shows the process.

Sinclair (1992) stresses that every utterance contributes a value to both planes. He argues that each initiation presupposes that a response will follow. If the putative response is not compatible with the prospections, it is interpreted as a challenge. "A challenge (is a move which) breaks the presuppositions and precipitates a new exchange. It therefore cancels the interactive value of the previous move, leaving only its contribution to the autonomous plane" (ibid: 87). Sinclair (1992) uses an example from Francis and Hunston (1987) to illustrate an exchange whose initiation is a challenge:

Example 2.8

I was supposed to get up at about seven o'clock

→ What do you mean you were supposed to

(Sinclair 1992: 87)

In this example, it is clear that the main clause "what do you mean" queries the language, and not directly about getting up (Sinclair, 1992: 87). With the breaking of presupposition of a response, this challenge move marks a new exchange and the subject matter becomes the discourse itself. Sinclair's "challenge move" supports his theory of grammar linearity. When an utterance breaks the presupposition of the previous one, it marks a new exchange, in other words, nothing is then "inserted" in the discourse. Thus these utterances are marked as challenge moves starting new exchanges instead of constituting insertion sequences.

In Sinclair's (1992) conclusion, he proposes a new model which is intended to cover dialogic spoken discourses. And the model is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Exchange structure (Sinclair, 1992: 88)

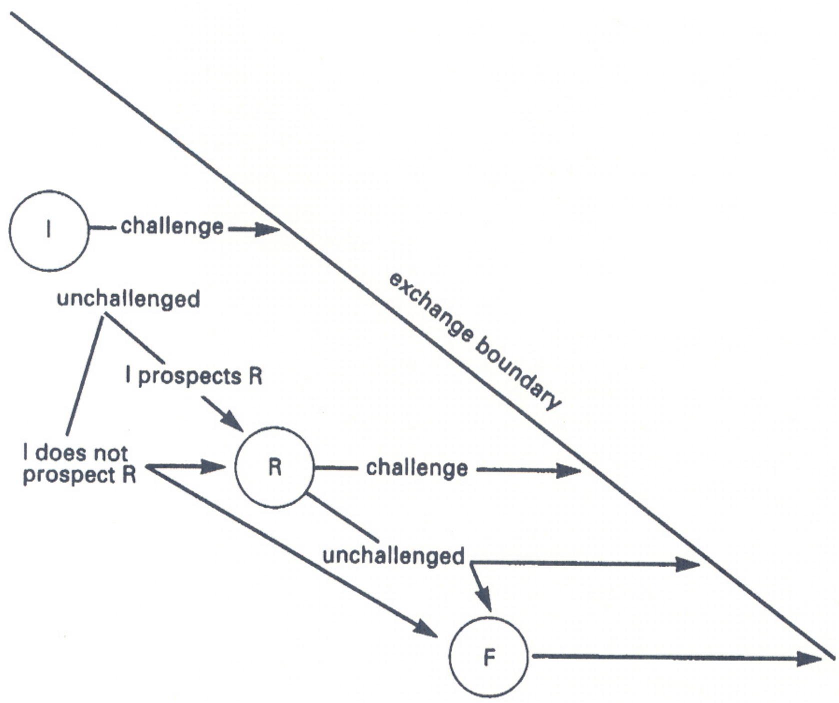


Figure 2.1 shows that a new element is introduced in the new model, challenge. According to Sinclair (1992), it is emphasized that there is not a need for double codings. In the model, if an initiation is a simple informing move and the next utterance encapsulates it, then IF is a valid structure. R is only necessary when prospected. It is also not obligatory for an exchange to contain an F move, but it is an available option in every exchange. When R is specifically prospective then F is obligatory. However, an F move can be silent. Table 2.1 summarizes the possible structures of an exchange (Sinclair, 1992).

Table 2.1 Possible structures of an exchange (Sinclair, 1992: 87)

I R (F)
I* (F)
I C=I …
I* C=I …
I R C=I …

Basic Structures:
I-prospects-R = I
Challenge = C
I-without-R = R

Sinclair outlines the possible structures of an exchange (see Table 2.1) with an explanation:

> "Each Initiation move in spoken discourse prospects a Response, unless it is a simple articulation of a proposition. The Response, being prospected, concludes an adjacency pair and opens the possibility of encapsulation by an F move. Another participant may make a Challenge move after I or R, and thus begin a new exchange.
>
> An Initiation which does not prospect a response may still get one; otherwise an F move may directly follow the Initiation. Additional F moves are optional.
>
> The F move is only obligatory in certain specialized varieties of discourse: its likelihood depends on a number of variables. But it is a permanent option in the structure of the exchange, following an I-without-R or an IR pair. The prospection of F is not the same as the prospection of R by I. Whereas to prospect R, an I must set up specific presuppositions, to prospect F, an I or an IR pair must imply occur". (Sinclair, 1992: 86-7)

Sinclair's (1992) new model emphasizes that discourses unfold linearly. And unlike Coulthard and Brazil's (1992) model, there is only one initiation in an exchange in Sinclair's model. His action of linearity is supported by Brazil's (1995) *A Grammar of Speech* which sets out to be "a linear, real-time description of syntax" (ibid: 14). As Brazil (1995: 4) emphasizes, "speech is an activity that takes place in time" and "proceeds linearly". As "speech happens" (Halliday, 1985: xxiii), a speaker necessarily says one word, follows it with another and then with another and so on (Brazil, 1995: 4). This characteristic of real-time utterances as assembled step-by-step reinforces that they make meaning only as they unfold (ibid: 17).

In the light of Brazil's (1995) linear description of syntax, Sinclair and Mauranen (2006: xix) develop a descriptive model of expressing grammar in a linear succession of units, Linear Unit Grammar (LUG). They explain linearity as a property of the physical manifestations of language (as language comes in the form of linear sound waves) and is part of the description of what is present in a text (ibid: 5). Sinclair and Mauranen (ibid: 28) adopt Brazil's term "increment" as a major category of structure, and assume that language users make use of it to communicate. They discuss the communicative values of increments in terms of the relationship among them which occur in temporal sequence. Thus the use of "bracketing" conventions which signal embeddedness is not available (ibid: 224).

In the analysis of the structure of spoken discourse, Sinclair and Mauranen (2006: 129) observe that conversation is seen as a structure where participants collaborate and compete simultaneously by taking turns and maintaining the topic. As the participants compete, the discourse may contain short sequences when more than one person speaks at a time. However, Sinclair and Mauranen state that it is not long until one person merges as "holding the floor" and continue to speak (ibid: 132). Recognizing speech as linear, and hence without embeddings, they see "inserted sequences" in conversation analysis a problem in terms of his exchange structure model. This is because it is unlikely that language users are operating two distinct organizational systems at the same time (Brazil, 1995: 5). Thus the prospection of who should speak after and what type of utterance should follow the inserted sequence becomes uncertain. In Sinclair's (1992) new model, the new element, challenge move, which starts a new exchange is added to resolve such uncertainties from this perspective, utterances categorized as inserted sequences in conversation analysis are indeed unfolding incrementally in a linear manner. As Brazil (1995: 87) states, the establishment of the event time of each verbal element after the first depends upon the establishment of an earlier one in the chain. This means it depends upon the effect of the earlier verbal element has had upon the progressively changing state. In other words, the utterances in those "inserted sequences" do not cancel out the communicative value of the increments established in the preceding utterances, they function to build upon the meaning making as the conversation unfolds.

The second issue discussed earlier is whether the utterance following a question has to be an answer (see beginning of the chapter). In conversation analysis, the feature of adjacency-pair organization marks question and answer as the same type. So in an adjacency pair, a question is followed by an answer but not an offer or greeting. In discourse analysis, in sequences of question-response, responses can range from supplying the appropriate information with the minimum of linguistic elaboration, to lengthy utterances which go into detail, give reasons, and so on (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 42). Sinclair and Brazil suggest that whatever follows a question could be classified into three types: (1) an answer, (2) a diversion, and (3) anything else.

Example 2.9 What is the capital of England? (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 42)

The initiation in Example 2.9 is a selection from an open set. In this model, an indefinite number of questions can be constructed, and it anticipates a verbal response from the addressee (ibid: 36). The anticipated response could be one of the three types listed above, and it could be realized as:

Example 2.10 London
Example 2.11 Pardon, Miss?
Example 2.12 What's a capital?
Example 2.13 I don't know. (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 42)

The response in Example 2.10 which supplies information that is required in Example 2.9 is classified as (1) an answer. Sinclair and Brazil (1982) also include wrong answers, such as, Southampton, or tentative answer such as, "I think it's Bristol" under the same group. Example 2.11, Example 2.12, and Example 2.13 are classified as (2) diversion. Diversions, although do not answer the question, are closely related to the initiation. Example 2.11 indicates that the initiation was not heard, or at least the addressee claims that he or she did not hear it properly. Example 2.12 is called a plane change which is a frequent form of diversion. A plane change is where a single word of the initiation is queried. Example 2.13 tells the speaker that he or she is wrong in supposing that the addressee knows the answer. Other possibilities that follow the question which cannot be related to the original initiation are classified as (3) anything else (ibid: 37).

Responses may be syntactically and semantically dependent on the questions, but sometimes this may not be the case. Thus it is possible to find different responses appropriate to the same kind of initiation (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982).

Example 2.14

A: Is it correct to use "some" in this sentence?

B: NO, it isn't. (upper case in original)

Example 2.15

A: Is it ever correct to use some in a question?

B: Yes, you can, for example "Do you want some more" – if it's an invitation, it's quite common. (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 40-1)

Although both of the questions in Examples 2.14 and 2.15 share similarities in syntactic structure, the responses elicited by these two questions are both regarded as appropriate responses. In terms of syntactic cohesion, Example 2.14 is a clause with a subject and verb, and the subject is a pronoun which refers back to the initiation and the verb is the auxiliary of the initiation. Semantically, the response which fits in with the question is classified as an answer. This answer is identified as a minimal response as it gives no more information than the "no".   Other examples of such a response are "No, I'm afraid not", "Yes, it is sometimes", "No, of course not" (ibid: 40-1). By comparing the above two sequences, it can be seen that a responder can choose between a minimal response, as in Example 2.14, or a wide range of constructions as in Example 2.15.

As Sinclair and Brazil (1982) observe, it is very rare that the response in reaction to the question is extremely dislocated. An exception is illustrated in Example 2.16.

Example 2.16

Guest: What’s that smell?

Host: Come outside on the patio a minute.

The mislocation of the response in conversations as in Example 2.16 may result from a misheard question, or a question which the responder simply ignores because he is not willing to answer it, finds it offensive or trivial, or is determined to change the course of the conversation. Mislocation of responses may also occur in situations as in Example 2.17.

Example 2.17

A: What’s a quark?

B: I read history at college. (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 37)

Although the response provided by B seems that it is not related to the initiation, it could be interpreted as the equivalence of “I don’t know” or “don’t ask me”. In other words, it is considered to be a diversion which offers some kind of excuse or apology for not answering the question. Sinclair and Brazil (1982) emphasize that only responses that seem to ignore the initiation completely fall into the third category, that is “anything else” (ibid: 37).

2.6 Critical discourse analysis

Fairclough (1995: 2) sees CDA as a “three-dimensional” framework which maps (1) the analysis of language texts, either spoken or written, (2) the analysis of discourse practice and (3) the analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice onto one another. The analysis of language texts should mean analysis of the “texture” of texts, their form and organization, together with commentaries on the “content” of texts (ibid: 4). Fairclough believes it is important to study how one text is linked to another text in the analysis of texts, it is only satisfactory to bring the relationship between form and content together, which he terms the “content of the texture” (ibid: 5).

Fairclough (1995) differentiates descriptive discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis and states that “discourse analysis is analysis of text structure above the sentence” (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), while critical discourse analysis as “analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice”. Fairclough (1995) further states that discourse analysis (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) merely relies upon “an appropriateness theory of language variability” (ibid: 242); ignoring the variability of practice within particular social situations (ibid: 12). Thus in his three-dimensional framework, he emphasizes that analysis of texts should not be isolated from analysis of institutional and discoursal practices within which texts are embedded (see, van Dijk, 1988) since the choice of language is related to the social surrounding in terms of social domains and institutional framework (Aijmer and Stenström, 2005). Put simply, discourse analysis should be viewed as a multidisciplinary activity (Aijmer and Stenström, 2005) and it is important to analyze how text producers draw upon and restructure orders of discourse, producing new configurations of genres and discourses; and how text producers and interpreters draw upon the socially available resources that constitute the order of discourse (Fairclough, 1995).

In this discipline, discourse that is “language use” (Fairclough, 1992: 62), is regarded as a form of social practice (Aijmer and Stenström, 2005), a social act with the establishment of a social identity and power authority (Ochs, 1996). Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure, and it also contributes to the dimensions of social structure which shape and constrain it. In other words, discourse influences and is influenced by various types of social relations, norms and conventions (Aijmer and Stenström, 2005: 1746; Wodak, 1997: 6).

With the emphasis on social structure, CDA differs from other forms of discourse analysis in that it provides the spontaneous link between the influence of discourse on social structures and the influence of social structures on discourse which accounts for social continuity and social change. This can be done by placing the analysis of the discourse within its larger social context. Studies in this discipline seek to analyze the influence of relations of discourses and discourse structures by examining ideologies and hegemonic discourses (see Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Lin, 2001, 1999, 1996a, b; and O'Halloran, 2007).

Recently, there is a development of critical approaches to the use of language in interdisciplinary and international projects in CDA and in the wider field of discourse analysis (Anthonissen, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Weiss and Wodak, 2003; Wodak, 2004; Wodak and Chilton, 2005). These approaches, such as Centralist model, Pluralist model and Integrationist model, involve integrating discourse analysis with other disciplines, such as social theory (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 10). In a research programme at Cardiff University, a range of issues in the area of language and global communication are studied in relation to the theories of globalization (Van Leeuwen, 2005). In Van Leeuwen's research programme, the policies and practices of global agencies that affect contemporary language and communication, for example, global media and tourism are studied.

Another example of integrating discourse analysis and social theory is Lin, Wang, Akamatsu and Riazi's (2002) study. They critically analyze their own autobiographical narratives and use collective story as a format to tell their stories of learning and teaching English in different sociocultural contexts. They discuss how this local, socioculturally situated knowledge can contribute to the knowledge of the discipline and a re-visioning of the field. Lin et al (2002) propose a fundamental change in conceptualizing the global and local divide in the discipline knowledge production and dissemination practices – Teaching English for Glocalized Communication (TEGCOM). As Lin et al suggest, this change "(sees) English as a resource for glocalized communication where the global and local divide dissolves in the situated appropriation of a global means by local social actors for local purposes, a parallel decentering of the production of pedagogical knowledge in the discipline" (ibid: 312).

In addition to integrating discourse analysis and other disciplines, Van Leeuwen (2005) also emphasizes the need to use a variety of empirical methodologies, such as sociolinguistic analysis, quantitative surveys, multimodal discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics (ibid: 11). In Lin et al's (2002) study, she uses a combination of CA, DA and genre analysis in the analysis of beauty-contest discourse practices in Hong Kong. She studies the content of the discourses, the genre of the discourses, the initiation-response-feedback format, turn taking and topic control (see also Lin, 2001, 1999, 1996a, b). Discourse analysis alone cannot explain social practices in terms of information about agents and patients of the actions, or about their place and time by means of discourse analytical methods. In order to do so, Van Leeuwen (2005: 13) suggests that research examine the production and reception of the texts ethnographically. Neither one of the two can work independently. From the point of view of a critical discourse analyst, they need to work together, and in the right order. “Discourse analysis first, ethnographic analysis second”; that is using discourse analysis to identify the issues, and then ethnography to explain them and show how they are taken up in society (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 14).

The present study uses a combination of frameworks to the analysis of spoken discourses (Brazil, 1995, 1997; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992; Stenström, 1984, 1994; Tsui, 1992) in examining the question-response sequences in a large corpus. It also aims to describe, interpret and explain in a critical manner the social practices identified in the institution of business and professional world and examine the relationship between the discursive practices and institutional role of the participants.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has identified two main controversial issues in the study of questions and responses. The first is the “circularity” issue, which is the problem that arises from the identification of questions and responses in relation to their placement in a discourse. The second issue is whether a response has to be an answer to the question. In response to this issue, Stenström’s (1984) semantic definition of a question suggests that the response to a question is not necessarily an answer (see details of classification and study of responses in Chapter 4). In addressing the two issues discussed, this chapter has summarized four approaches to spoken discourse analysis: pragmatics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis; specifically in the structure of question and response sequences. The different theories of delineating question and response sequences might have highlighted the source of the identification ambiguity, that is whether a question defines the next utterance as a response or vice versa. The relevance of these approaches in the analysis of question-response sequences brings out the importance of the examination of the placement, interactive perspective, context of situation, and pragmatic functions of the questions and responses. Specifically, the analysis and explanation of question-response sequences in various contexts of business situation highlights the importance of power, management, interaction and communication. However, one drawback of these approaches is that the aspect of discourse intonation is not studied. The function of discourse intonation, which is a significant feature of spoken discourse, should not be ignored (discourse intonation is elaborated in Chapter 6).

Chapter 3 Questions

3.1 Introduction

In the present study, a question is defined as an utterance or a syntactic structure that asks for information or confirmation which the speaker does not know and believes that the addressee knows. It also expects a linguistic response or its non-verbal surrogate (Tsui, 1992: 101) from the addressee within the set of logically possible answers that it prospects. In the study of language, the term "question" has been used without a unanimous understanding of how it is defined (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Stenström, 1984; Tsui, 1992). The same problem exists when questions are being classified. There is an inconsistency in how and into what categories they should be classified. In many analytical frameworks, questions are classified according to the function that they perform in relation to the syntactic form that they realize. In general, questions are classified into five categories, yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, alternative questions and wh-questions. These categories are named according to the syntactic form of the questions. In terms of functions of questions, they are mainly analyzed on the basis of their "elicitative force" (Stenström, 1984: 195). This chapter discusses firstly how "question" is defined in different frameworks. It then discusses the classification of questions according to their function in relation to their syntactic form. It is followed by a discussion of classification of function of questions with reference to their "elicitative force". Finally, this chapter ends with a review of previous studies on questions.

3.2 Definition of question

"Question" has been defined as a syntactic category (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop, 2000; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007), as a semantic category (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan, 1999; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik, 1972, 1985), as an illocutionary act (Lyons 1977, 1981;Gordon and Lakoff, 1975; Labov and Fanshel, 1977; Katz, 1977; Katz and Postal, 1964; Weber, 1993) and as both a semantic and pragmatic category (Huddleston, 1984; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). Put simply, "question" has been defined from different perspectives, which is sometimes recognized as a syntactic category and sometimes a discourse category (Tsui, 1992).

In O'Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), questions are studied as a clause type. "Questions are defined as utterances which require a verbal response from the addressee" (O'Keeffe et al, 2007: 237; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 424). They observe that there are a number of question types and are constructed using a variety of "structural patterns" (ibid: 424). In the identification of questions, Carter and McCarthy (2006) list five structural and functional aspects of questions:

1. whether the question is a complete clause or not
2. whether it has an interrogative structure
3. whether it elicits a verbal reply
4. whether it elicits information or not
5. whether it elicits new information, not known to the questioner (ibid: 424).

Similarly, Butt et al (2000) define question structurally. They point out a fundamental distinction between statements and questions that is achieved by patterned wording (ibid: 23). They observe that "the question pattern is simply a reversal of the corresponding statement" (ibid: 23). And these structures are used for "demanding information" (ibid: 140).

In other frameworks, the definition of question is function-oriented. Although questions are classified into categories of different syntactic forms in their framework, Quirk et al (1972, 1985) define "questions (as) primarily used to seek information on a specific point" (1985: 804). Likewise, Biber et al (1999) state that "question asks for information" (ibid: 202) and it "expects a linguistic response" (ibid: 202; see also Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 424; Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992: 19; Stenström, 1984: 1). Stenström (1984) further adds that by producing a question, "(a speaker) asks for information that he or she does not already possess but believes that the addressee possesses and is willing to impart" (ibid: 1).

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) define question at both the semantic and pragmatic levels. "As a semantic category, a question is distinguished by the fact that it defines a set of logically possible answers" (ibid: 865). And "(T)he pragmatic concept of question is an illocutionary category", and it "is an inquiry" (ibid: 866). And to make an inquiry "is to ask a question to which one does not know the answer with the aim of obtaining the answer from the addressee" (ibid: 866). As seen from the definitions of different frameworks, a question is an utterance or a syntactic structure that asks for information or confirmation which the speaker does not know and believes that addressee knows. It also expects a linguistic response or its surrogate from the addressees within the set of logically possible answers that it prospects. Table 3.1 summarizes the different categories of questions in major frameworks reviewed in this chapter.

Table 3.1 Summary of different categories of questions reviewed

Frameworks	Definition	Categories
Biber et al (1999); Quirk et al (1985)	"Questions are used to seek information" (Quirk et al, 1985: 804) and "expects linguistic response" (Biber et al, 1999: 202)	Yes-no questions (including tag questions, declarative questions), alternative questions and wh-questions
Carter and McCarthy (2006); O'Keeffe et al (2007)	"Questions are defined as utterances which require a verbal response from the addressee" (O'Keeffe et al, 2007: 237; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 424).	Yes-no questions, wh-questions, alternative questions, declarative questions, tag questions, and echo and checking questions
Huddleston and Pullum (2002)	"A question is distinguished by the fact that it defines a set of logically possible answer" and "is an inquiry" (ibid: 865-66).	Polar questions (yes-no questions), alternative questions, polar-alternative questions, variable questions (wh-questions)
Butt et al (2000: 23, 140)	"Question pattern is simply a reversal of the corresponding statement" and they are used for "demanding information".	Polar interrogatives and wh-interrogatives
Stenström (1984, 1994)	"A question is any utterance that may elicit a response" which is used as "requests for information" (1984: 1).	Wh-questions, alternative questions, yes-no questions, tag questions, and declarative questions
Tsui (1992)	Questions are categorized as "elicitations" which "functions to elicit an obligatory verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate" (ibid: 101).	Inform, confirm, agree, commit, repeat, and clarify

3.3 Classification of questions into form categories (in relation to their functions)

By and large, questions are classified into different categories of syntactic forms according to the functions that they perform. The categories are often named with reference to the response that the questions prospect (Biber et al, 1999; Bolinger, 1957; Butt et al, 2000; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Quirk et al, 1972, 1985; Robinson and Rackstraw, 1978).

Bolinger (1957: 7) classifies questions into two major classes, “multiple choice questions” which include yes-no questions and alternative questions; and the second one, “explanatory questions” which are wh-questions. Later, Robinson and Rackstraw (1978: 4) name their two types of questions as “open”, referring to the unlimited set of possible responses and “closed” referring to confirmation, denial and disjunctive questions. In the same year, Churchill (1978: 45) distinguishes between general questions which do not propose a particular element from the response set and response, and specific questions, which propose an element of the related general question’s response set as the correct response.

Coulthard, Montgomery and Brazil (1981) classify questions into two major types of move, inquiring and proposing. An inquiring move asks for information and has three subtypes: yes-no questions, wh-questions and alternative questions. While a proposing move asks for a polarity decision which can either be neutral or marked. In the analysis of yes-no questions, neutral indicates that there is nothing in the lexico-grammatical form of the question to indicate what response is expected (c.f. positive yes-no questions); whereas marked involves negation, indicating the expected polarity of response (c.f. negative yes-no questions).

Quirk et al (1972, 1985) classify questions according to the types of response that the questions attract, namely yes-no questions, wh-questions, and alternative questions. Biber et al (1999), following Quirk et al’s framework, classify questions into the same three categories, but point out that there is a special type which differs in form and use – question tags.

In Givon’s (1993) system, there are two main types of questions, yes-no questions – concerning truth and epistemic bias, and wh-questions – concerning focus and presupposition. Similarly, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) identify a question as the speaker's "indication that he wants to be told something" (ibid: 75). They classify questions into two main types, yes-no interrogatives – when what the speaker wants to know is polarity; and wh-interrogatives – when what the speaker wants to know is the identity of some element in the context.

One shortcoming of some of the frameworks is the general association of question types with specific uses of intonation. Brazil (1995) classifies questions into two main types, information type and polar type. His classification is based on the "matter of speaker-listener understanding" rather than on the syntax of the utterances (ibid: 195). Although Brazil states that an information question is easily distinguished from a polar question by the syntactic elements in the utterance, he emphasizes that both types could be used with either a proclaiming (i.e. fall tone) or referring tone (i.e. rise tone). Brazil (1995) suggests that when they are proclaimed, they seek to find out where; with referring tones, they both serve to check on the truth of a construction that the speaker places upon what has just been said. In other words, both question types can function either to "find out" or "make sure" based on the shared/unshared knowledge of the speakers (ibid: 194). Brazil paraphrases a "finding out" question as saying "this is what I don't know, please tell me"; "making sure" as "this is what I have reason to believe we are agreed about, please tell me whether I am right" (ibid: 194).

In the light of Brazil's classification of questions, Hewings also classifies questions into two main groups. He states that when a question is asked, the speaker either wants to "find out" information or "make sure" that the information is correct (2004: 155). He states that "finding out" questions are usually produced with a falling tone while "making sure" question with "end-rising" tone (ibid: 155). With regard to syntactic form of questions, Hewings (2004, 2005) observes that wh-questions are often used to "find out", and often have fall tones. And yes-no questions are often to "make sure" and often have falling-rising or rising tone. However, he emphasizes that both question types can also be used for either function and hence be produced with the other tones.

Although the number of categories differs in classification of questions, and there are controversies on how these categories should be organized, the categories are labeled similarly in most frameworks. They are often classified and named in accordance with the function they perform and the form they realize, despite their different definitions. The commonly agreed question types are: yes-no question, tag question, alternative question, declarative question and wh-question. This section discusses the five question types and another category named insert questions in this study with examples.

3.3.1 Yes-no questions

Yes-no questions expect affirmation or negation of the proposition in the questions asked. They are formed by placing the operator before the subject; if there is an absence of an operator in the declarative form of the question, the verb "do" is then introduced as an operator (Biber et al, 1999; Butt et al, 2000; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Quirk et al, 1972, 1985). Examples of positive yes-no questions, both with a non-assertive and assertive form, and negative yes-no questions are discussed, utterances structured in the form of a yes-no question which does not function as questioning are also discussed.

Positive and negative yes-no questions can be either conducive or non-conducive. A conducive question is one to which the speaker has a preferred response, as opposed to one where no such preference is manifested (Stenström, 1984). Positive yes-no questions denote neutral polarity that leaves open whether the answer is "yes" or "no" and they are neutral in terms of prospection. When they are formed with non-assertive forms, they are non-conducive. However, when they contain an assertive form, they become conducive.

Example 3.1 Did anyone call last night? (Quirk et al, 1972: 388-9)
Example 3.2 Did someone call last night? (Quirk et al, 1972: 388-9)

A positive yes-no question containing a non-assertive such as "any" and "ever", as in Example 3.1, has no bias in expectation towards a positive or negative response. But it contains an assertive form such as "some", it then has a bias towards a positive answer, in other words, it has a positive orientation. When a positive yes-no question is formed with an adverbial such as "really" or "actually", it is then bias towards a negative answer.

Example 3.3 Do you really want to leave now? [‘Surely you don’t want to.’] (Quirk et al, 1985: 808)

Although the above example is in the form of a positive yes-no question, because of the effect of the adverbial, “really”, it has a negative orientation instead. The speaker in Example 3.3 is making an assumption that the hearer does not want to leave yet.

As for negative yes-no questions, they are always biased. This form indicates that the questioner’s predisposition to think that one or other answer is the right one, but there is no orientation on the choice between “yes” or “no” as in Example 3.4 (Huddleston et al, 2002: 848)

Example 3.4 Isn’t this your car? (Huddleston et al, 2002: 848)

Sometimes they are utterances which are structured in the form of a yes-no question but do not necessarily function as to elicit information or confirmation. These interrogatives performing other functions are not classified as questions and are excluded in the analysis of the present study.

Example 3.5 Can’t you drive straight? (Quirk et al, 1985: 808)

Example 3.5 appears as a negative yes-no question with a negative orientation. However, this orientation can be complicated by an element of surprise or disbelief (Quirk et al, 1985: 808). It shows that there is an element of surprise or disbelief with the new expectation (expressing disappointment and annoyance) differing from the old expectation (speaker’s hopes or wishes) (ibid: 808). The implication is that the speaker originally hopes for a positive response, but new evidence now suggests that the response will be negative. Thus Example 3.5 could be understood as the speaker having thought that the hearer will be able to drive straight, but from the speaker’s new information, the hearer is clearly not able to do so.

In other cases, the structure of yes-no questions is used as exclamations (Example 3.6) or as comment questions (Example 3.7).

Example 3.6

A: Isn’t that lovely!

B: Oh that’s lovely. (Biber et al, 1999: 207)

Example 3.7

A: He’s got our books actually.

B: Has he? (Biber et al, 1999: 207)

The interrogative structure in Example 3.6 expresses exclamation. In conversation in particular, the structure of yes-no questions can consist only of the operator and a pronoun, as in Example 3.7. Although it is termed comment question, it does not ask for information. Instead, it provides feedback and keeps conversation going (Biber et al, 1999: 207). These two items, which do not function as questions, are excluded in the analysis in the present study.

In reviewing Quirk et al’s (1972, 1985) analysis of yes-no questions, Tsui (1992) detects three main problems. According to Quirk et al’s principle of analysis, the questions are classified on the basis of the answer they expect. Thus in their analyses, there are three main classes of yes-no questions – neutral polarity, positive-oriented, and negative-oriented. However, as Tsui (1992: 90) argues, there should in fact be only two classes of yes-no questions in terms of the communicative choice realized by the answer. Her reasoning means that both positive- and negative-oriented yes-no questions belong to the same class. A “yes” answer to a positive-oriented question realizes the same communicative choice of confirming the speaker’s assumption or expectation as a “no” answer to a negative-oriented question. She illustrates this point with an example of a negative-oriented question:

Example 3.8   You mean he didn’t recognize you?

Although Example 3.8 is negative-oriented, it expects a “yes” or “no” answer, both realizing a confirmation. When responded to with a “yes”, the respondent means “you are right, he didn’t recognize me; whereas when responded with a “no”, the respondent also means the same. In either case, the speaker’s assumption is confirmed.

The second problem pointed out by Tsui (1992: 91) also arises from the notion of communicative choice realized by the answer. A "yes" answer may have different realizations in terms of communicative choice. It can either be supplying information (Example 3.9) or confirmation (Example 3.10).

Example 3.9 Have you been to Paris? (Tsui, 1992: 91)
Example 3.10 Has the boat left ALREADY? (Tsui, 1992: 91)

A "yes" to Example 3.9 means "Yes, I have been to Paris" which supplies information, whereas a "yes" to Example 3.10 means "Yes, your assumption is correct" which confirms the speaker's assumption. According to Quirk et al's (1972, 1985) principle, the difference in the two questions lies in their polarity – one being neutral and one being positive-oriented. However, Tsui argues that the difference lies in the nature of the questions – one seeks new information, and the other seeks confirmation. Example 3.11 is indeed similar to a wh-question which seeks new information. Neutral polarity questions sometimes do not even expect a "yes" or "no" answer and they are instead seeking new information.

Example 3.11 Are you still here? (Tsui, 1992: 91)

As Brazil et al (1980) state, although questions such as Example 3.11 resembles a yes-no question, when the utterance is produced with high termination (see detailed discussion in Chapter 5) by the speaker to his colleague working in the office late in the evening, it does not expect either a "yes" or "no" answer. An utterance in such a situation is interpreted as "why are you still here?" to seek information. If the utterance is merely responded to by a "yes" or "no", it shows the hearer's unwillingness to interact or to engage in the interaction

The third problem is found with the class of negative-oriented questions, they express disappointment and annoyance and do not seem to expect either a "yes" or "no" answer. Tsui (1992) argues that for utterances like Example 3.5, "Can't you drive straight?" which expresses surprise or disbelief, a response is not expected but a silent acquiescence is instead. A "yes" or "no" answer would be considered as "a cheeky remark or a retort" (ibid: 91). Thus this example provided by Quirk et al may not even fulfill the requirements of what a question should be. As discussed earlier, these utterances are not classified as questions; rather it would be more suitable to identify them as requests – “Please drive straight” (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Tsui, 1992).

Concerning question intonation, Quirk et al (1985: 807) state that “rising intonation is the norm for yes-no questions”. However, they add that “falling intonation (also) occurs quite frequently”. Similarly, Carter and McCarthy (2006: 723) also observe that yes-no questions “most typically have a simple rising intonation or a complex fall-rising intonation” but falling intonation can also be found in this question form.

Example 3.12

A: ↘↗D’you want some soup?

B: No thanks. I’m not very hungry.

→ A: ↘Would you like some cheese and biscuits?

B: Mm, no, no thanks. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 723)

Carter and McCarthy (2006) suggest that falling intonation can occur with yes-no questions, as in the arrowed question, especially when they are follow-up questions in a series of such questions. The use of fall tone with yes-no questions concurs with Brazil’s (1997) discourse intonation system, that is a yes-no question with proclaiming tone (falling) projects a context in which the response is un-negotiated and the speaker tries out one possible option for the hearer to concur with or reject (ibid: 107).

3.3.2 Declarative questions

According to Quirk et al (1985), declarative questions are classified as a sub-category of yes-no questions which expect affirmation or negation of the proposition of the question. Although these questions have the same form as declarative statements, they function as questions when produced with rising intonation.

Example 3.12

He wants something to eat?

Example 3.13

You didn’t get anything to eat? (Quirk et al, 1985: 814)

These declarative questions invite hearer’s verification. If the question is assertive, that is, it contains an assertive form, it is positively-oriented and expects the answer “yes” (Example 3.12). And if the question is in nonassertive form, it is negatively-oriented and expects a “no” answer (Example 3.13).

Carter and McCarthy (2006) also state that a declarative clause may function in context as a question:

Example 3.14

A: You’re Philip?

B: Yes, that’s me. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 724)

Example 3.15 may seem to be a declarative, but Carter and McCarthy (2006) argue that it is a yes-no question.

Example 3.15

A: You want some more bread, Nick?

B: Yes please. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 719)

Carter and McCarthy (2006) argue that it is not necessary to include all the clause elements in a yes-no question, especially in informal spoken contexts. Subjects and auxiliary verbs, or the lexical verb “be”, may not need to be present; the speaker and addressee can refer to the context of interaction instead. In Example 3.15, Speaker A drops the auxiliary verb “do”, by asking “You want some more bread, Nick?” instead of “Do you want some more bread, Nick?” Utterances in the form of a declarative like Example 3.15 above, is classified as a yes-no question with an ellipted form rather than a declarative question (Carter and McCarthy, 2006). But Example 3.14 does not involve an absent ellipted element in the question, rather it is in a declarative form.

They further suggest that when a declarative question has rising intonation, it asks for confirmation. This use of a declarative question concurs with Brazil (1997) that a declarative question with referring tone (rising) seeks confirmation. But when it is produced with falling intonation, it has the function of expressing uncertainty, and the speaker may also be interpreted as questioning. This also fits in with Brazil's system that a declarative question with proclaiming tone (falling) serves to seek information, as in the example below:

Example 3.16

A: I've got her number.

B: You've got her number? (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 725)

Carter and McCarthy assert that if an addressee repeats a speaker's utterance as a request for confirmation, it may have rising intonation and is realized as a question. In other words, an utterance which repeats the speaker's previous utterance should be categorized as a declarative question which serves to seek confirmation from the first speaker. The present study also adopts this principle as one of the criteria in defining a declarative question.

Biber et al (1999) neither discuss declarative questions under yes-no questions nor do they categorize these questions as a separate question type. They instead point out that in spoken interaction, declarative clauses can be used to express questions when combined with appropriate intonation (ibid: 203). When a declarative question is produced, the speaker asks for confirmation rather than for information. Declarative questions usually signal that a conclusion is drawn by the speaker and ask the addressee to confirm.

Example 3.17

1 A: Have I got bad breath?

2 B: Yep!

3 C: Yes.

4 A: I have? (Biber et al, 1999: 203)

In Example 3.17, Speaker A starts out with an interrogative structure asking for information in line 1. In line 4, the speaker then repeats the question in the form of a declarative clause expressing surprise or disbelief after the addressee's response. This declarative functions as a question to ask the addressee to confirm its proposition.

The claim that the use of rising intonation in declarative questions can distinguish them from declarative statements is doubtful (see also Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Quirk et al, 1985), as declarative questions can also be produced with falling intonation (Brazil, 1985, 1997).

Example 3.18

//p you preFER THAT one //

Example 3.19

//p JOHN preFERS that one // (Brazil, 1997: 100)

When Example 3.18 is spoken with proclaiming tone (fall tone) and mid termination, the speaker is unlikely to be telling the hearer about his preference but rather asking him to respond to the tentative assertion. Example 3.19 can also function as a question when the hearer is privy to John's preference. Labov and Fanshel (1977) state that if the speaker makes a statement about a hearer's event with falling intonation, then it is heard as a question seeking confirmation (Tsui 1992).

Example 3.20

Doctor: //p where do you GET this pain //

Patient: //p in my HEAD //

→ Doctor: //p you GET it in your HEAD // (Brazil, 1985: 159)

In Example 3.20, the declarative question functions as an "information question". With the use of proclaiming tone (falling tone) as in the arrowed utterance, the speaker would be heard as asking for greater precision, which functions as if the patient had not yet selected a response, and leads to an answer, such as, "Yes. Behind my eyes" (Brazil, 1997: 104).

3.3.3 Tag Questions

In Quirk et al's (1972, 1985) analysis, tag-questions are categorized under yes-no questions. However, Biber et al (1999: 204) find that tag-questions sharply differ both in the form and use from yes-no questions, and they therefore classify tag-questions as an independent category.

Question tags consist of an operator and a personal pronoun. The operator is identical to the operator of the clause to which it is appended, and the personal pronoun is co-referent with the subject of the preceding clause. Question tags are most often added to declarative clauses (Biber et al, 1999: 208).

Example 3.21 She's so generous, isn't she? (Biber et al, 1999: 208)
Example 3.22 She's not a lesbian, is she? (Biber et al, 1999: 208)

The main clause and the tag are opposite in polarity. A negative tag is added to a positive declarative clause as in Example 3.21, and a positive tag is added to a negative declarative clause as in Example 3.22. The main function of tags is to elicit confirmation or agreement. In other words, the addressee is showing that he or she is involved in the interaction and wants to keep the conversation going (Biber et al, 1999: 208). When tag questions such as Examples 3.21 and 3.22 are said with rising tone, they invite verification of the truth of the statement; when they are said with falling tone, they invite confirmation (Tsui, 1992: 91).

In addition to tag consisting of an operator and a personal pronoun, there is a group of response elicitors which can be characterized as word tags. Examples are "huh", "eh", "alright", "okay", "see", and "right". Although they are more likely to function as discourse markers, seeking a signal that the message has been understood and accepted, if it invites an agreement or confirmation, they are categorized as tag questions (Biber et al, 1999: 1089). In terms of syntactic structure, tags cannot precede the verb phrase of the main clause, but they are not necessarily placed at the very end of the clause. The tag can also be placed at the beginning and in the medial position.

Example 3.23 It seems a shame to break it up, doesn't it, when it's so good. (Biber et al, 1999: 208)

As discussed earlier, a negative tag is added to a positive declarative. But the tags appended can sometimes be identical in polarity to the main clause. Nässlin (1984: 21, 91) finds that questions with tags of identical polarity to the main clause can be used to ask for information or confirmation. She finds that same polarity tag questions are more often in written texts than in spoken interaction. In her study, 21% are in this form in *A Corpus of English Conversation* (1980) and 17% in *Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus* (1978) (ibid: 93).

Example 3.24
The book is obscene, is it? (Nässlin, 1984: 21)

Nässlin explains, by uttering Example 3.24, the speaker does not express any personal opinion about the truth of the proposition, he or she rather believes that the hearer believes that the proposition is true and seeks the hearer's confirmation. However, this structure with the tag and the clause of the same polarity can sometimes be used to echo a previous statement or draw a conclusion from what the previous speaker has said. In this case, they are similar to comment questions which provide feedback and help to keep the conversation going (Biber et al, 1999: 209). Tsui (1992: 91) explains this use of same polarity tag question is suggests usually preceded by "oh" or "so". It then indicates the speaker's arrival at a conclusion by inference. With the use of rising tone, it may also have the effect of scolding, or being sarcastic, or sarcastically contradictory.

Example 3.25 So he likes his \JOB, /DOES he? (Tsui, 1992: 91)

Since this form of same polarity tag question which is preceded by "oh", "so", etc, do not function as questioning, they are excluded in the analysis of the present study.

Not all tag questions are formed by attaching a tag to a declarative, they can also be formed by adding a tag to a phrase or an incomplete clause:

Example 3.26

A: … round the back of Allard Avenue – Sherwood is it?

B: Sherwood, yeah Sherwood Avenue. (Biber et al, 1999: 208)

Example 3.27

A: When does he go to school?

B: Next June is it?

C: Next September isn't it?

D: No this September. (Biber et al, 1999: 208)

Example 3.26 elicits information. And in Example 3.27, B's positive tag asks for information while C's negative tag appeals to the addressee for confirmation.

Although tags are generally added to declarative clauses, they can also be added to interrogative and imperative clauses:

Example 3.28

Do you want this do you, anywhere? (Biber et al, 1999: 210)

Example 3.29

Give them a message from me, will you? (Biber et al, 1999: 210)

When a tag is added to an interrogative clause (Example 3.28), it underlines the speech act function of the main clause. This use is parallel to the use of declarative tags. When a tag is added to an imperative form (Example 3.29), it is usually realized in the form of "will you", but it can also be realized as "can't you", "won't you", "would you" and "shall we". It is used as a politeness strategy to tone down the imperative and appears less forceful (Biber et al, 1999: 210). Although this form resembles a tag question, it neither asks for information nor confirmation. It is, therefore, not classified as a question in the present study.

Tsui (1992) argues that Quirk et al's (1985) analysis of tag questions has the same problem as that of the yes-no questions. According to their principle of classification which is based on the analysis of the expected answer, the number of classes of tag questions should be three. It is clear that both the positive and negative tag questions (Examples 3.21 and 3.22) expect either "yes" or "no". However, in terms of the communicative choice realized by the answers, a "yes" in response to a positive one and a "no" in response to negative one have the same realization as agreeing with the speaker's assumption.

Another problem concerns the conduciveness of tag questions. As Quirk et al (1985) state, both positive and negative tag questions are neutral. However, Hudson (1975: 24) claims that tags are always conducive and cannot be neutral. With rising tone, the speaker casts doubt on his assumption and invites the addressee to confirm it. Brazil (1997: 108, 110) also notes that referring tone (rise tone) projects an assumption that the speaker knows the answer and a mid-termination choice signals the expectation of a concurring "yes". Hence, a tag question with rising tone is biased towards an expected answer rather than neutral.

Similarly, Carter and McCarthy (2006) state that tag questions may constrain the range of possible or desired responses from the addressee, and that some patterns are more conducive than others. They summarize the possible combinations of declarative clauses + tags and the functions that they perform when specific intonation is used (ibid: 725):

Table 3.2 Types of tag question

	Clause +Tag polarity	Falling Tone	Falling or rising tone	Constrained or desired answer
1	affirm + neg	They've been affected by it,	haven't they?	agreement with yes
2	affirm + affirm	He's gone back,	has he?	agreement with yes
3	neg + affirm	She never talked to anybody,	did she?	agreement with no
4	affirm + neg	You've worked hard,	haven't you?	anticipated agreement with yes but open to challenge with no
5	neg + affirm	He didn't get it,	did he?	anticipated agreement with no but open to challenge with yes

(Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 725)

According to Biber et al (1999: 212-3), although tag questions are not the most common type of questions used in all the four sub-corpora, it is found that in the conversation sub-corpus, about every fourth question is a tag question. In many of the cases, the tag question identified in Biber's (1999) corpus takes the form of a positive anchor appended with a negative tag. This group constitutes four-fifths of the total 25% identified in conversation. Tag questions, however, are not very common in the sub-corpora of news print and academic prose. The focus of these varieties tends to be on content instead of the interactive aspect, thus leading to the smaller number of tag questions used.

3.3.4 Wh-questions

Questions which expect a reply from an open range of replies are termed wh-question (Biber et al, 1999; Givon, 1993; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985). Wh-questions are information seeking questions which are generally produced with falling intonation (Quirk et al, 1985). They are formed with a wh-element coming at the beginning of the sentence, but on occasion a conjunction or preposition may come in front of the wh-element (Quirk et al, 1985).

Example 3.30 Where was she born? (Quirk et al, 1985: 820)
Example 3.31 On what did you base your prediction? (formal)
What did you base your prediction on? (informal) (Quirk et al, 1985: 817)

Wh-questions usually involve the insertion of the auxiliary "do" or the modal "be" in the formation, but not always. If the wh-word is the subject, or forms part of the subject, then subject – verb – x word order is used, and auxiliary "do" is not used:

Example 3.32 Who wants more coffee? NOT "Who does want more coffee?"
Example 3.33 Whose car got stolen? NOT "Whose car did get stolen?"
(Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 538)

According to Quirk et al (1985), a wh-question can either be positive or negative. In a positive wh-question, there is a positive presupposition. A positive wh-question such as Example 3.30 can generally be matched with a positive presupposition, “she was born somewhere”. However, if non-assertive items are present in the question, there is then no presupposition and the question is conducive with a negative orientation (Example 3.34).

Example 3.34 What help have they *ever* given us? (Quirk et al, 1985: 820)

Example 3.35 Which books don’t you want? (Quirk et al, 1985: 820)

Interestingly, negative wh-questions do not have negative presupposition. The negative wh-question in Example 3.35 suggests that “there are some books that you don’t want”. Thus there is still a positive presupposition as the presupposition is outside the scope of negation.

Example 3.36 What did you say? (Tsui, 1992: 95)

In Example 3.36, the wh-question is to seek information on what has been said previously. They are questions about the discourse itself which invite the addressee to repeat and/or to clarify (Coulthard, 1981). Biber et al (1999: 205) also agree that “what” is frequently used to ask for repetition. It can also be used to introduce a question for more detailed information as in Example 3.37.

Example 3.37 A: No, they’re in hospital, badly injured.
B: What? What? Broken limbs? (Biber et al, 1999: 205)

In cases when the wh-word is used to echo what has been said in the preceding utterance, it can stay in the regular position for the relegation of clause elements. This form of wh-questions may express surprise or disbelief and ask for confirmation rather than information (Example 3.38):

Example 3.38 A: And I think she’s stealing stuff as well.
B: She’s what? (Biber et al, 1999: 205)

A wh-question can ask for information and allow the addressee to commit him/herself to the information that is to be provided simultaneously.

Example 3.39

A: What time shall we meet?

B: Five o'clock. (Tsui, 1992: 95)

Example 3.40

A: What's the time?

B: Seven. (Tsui, 1992: 95)

As Tsui suggests, Speaker B, by saying "Five o'clock" in Example 3.39, does not merely supply missing information, but is committing him/herself to a contract which will take place in the future. The expected response from Speaker A might be "Okay". This suggests that the information that Speaker B endorses is negotiable between the two interactants. Comparing the examples, the two wh-questions have different functions. In Example 3.40, Speaker B is merely supplying the missing information that is required in the wh-question. So it is sensible that a follow-up from Speaker A, such as "Thanks" will follow. In Example 3.39, it is, however, not logical to respond to B's utterance with "Thanks". This is because, as discussed earlier, the information provided which is negotiated also functions as showing commitment towards a future action. The information provided by Speaker B in Example 3.40 is not negotiable (Tsui, 1992: 96).

Sometimes, an utterance has the form of a wh-question, but they do not invite the addressee to supply any missing information. Instead they have other speech act functions:

Example 3.41 A: Andrew and Fergie split.

B: No wonder.

A: Who cares? (Biber et al, 1999: 206)

Example 3.42 How dare you speak to me like that? Who do you think you are? (Biber et al, 1999: 206)

Example 3.43 Why don't we go next week? (Biber et al, 1999: 206)

Example 3.41 contains a rhetorical question which expresses an opinion. It functions to let the addressee be the judge and does not expect a response. In Example 3.42, the interrogative structure expresses a strong rebuke and certainly does not ask for information. A wh-question structure can also be used to express suggestions (Example 3.43). This use of wh-questions structure often begins with "why don't you/we".

3.3.5 Alternative questions

An alternative question expects the reply as one of two or more options presented in the questions (Quirk et al, 1985). The two sub-types of alternative questions are those which resemble yes-no questions and those which resemble wh-questions.

Example 3.44

Would you like /CHOcolate, va/NILla, or \STRAWberry (ice cream)?

Example 3.45

Which ice cream would you \LIKE? /CHOcolate, va/NILla, or \STRAWberry? (Quirk et al, 1985: 823)

An alternative question can either resemble a yes-no question or a wh-question. According to Quirk et al (1985: 820), Example 3.44 differs from a yes-no question only in intonation. It contains a separate nucleus for each alternative, with a rise on each item in the list and a fall on the last item indicating that the list is complete; whereas a yes-no question has a final rising tone. Example 3.45 expects the hearer to choose from the list presented in the question, whereas the alternative question in Example 3.44 expects B to say whether or not he or she would like to have some ice cream.

Tsui (1992) disagrees with Quirk et al that these are two different types of alternative question in terms of the response they expect. She argues that both types invite the addressee to inform the speaker of his choice from the list, despite their different syntactic structures. Tsui also doubts that alternative questions differ from yes-no questions only in the use of intonation. Consider Example 3.44 again:

Example 3.46

A: Would you like chocolate, vanilla, or /STRAWberry (ice cream)?

B: Yes, chocolate.

B: No, I'd like some cake.

Example 3.46 is regarded as a yes-no question as it expects a "yes" or "no" answer. But Tsui argues that it differs from a yes-no question in that a mere "yes" or "no" answer is considered incomplete because Speaker B is also expected to state the choice. The two types of alternative questions are not equivalent as Speaker B can only choose from a restricted set in Example 3.45, but Speaker B can choose from a potentially unrestricted set in Example 3.44. To support this argument, Tsui (1992) puts forward the following examples:

Example 3.47

A: How are we going to get there?

B: By \BUS. (Tsui, 1992: 92)

Example 3.48

A: Will we get there by /BUS or \TRAIN?

B: By \BUS. (Tsui, 1992: 92)

She attempts to equate Example 3.47 with Example 3.48 by arguing that in both cases Speaker A invites Speaker B to supply information. Tsui (1992) concludes that alternative questions have the same function as wh-questions as seeking information and should not constitute a separate category. However, in her analysis, she also notices that there is a difference between the two. It follows that in Example 3.47, Speaker A definitely has no assumption whatsoever in uttering the question. In Example 3.48, Speaker A has limited the "existential paradigm" (see Brazil, 1997: 23) from which Speaker B could choose from. The information that Speaker B supplies is one of the alternatives offered by Speaker A. Biber et al (1999) concur with Tsui (1992) that alternative questions are related in function to wh-questions in that both types ask for the specification of an unknown element. However, their difference lies in the expectation from the response that they elicit and also their representation (wh-questions are realized by a wh-word while an alternative question is realized by listing the alternatives).

In terms of the communicative value of alternative questions, Biber et al (1999: 207) also suggest the similarity in structure of an alternative question and a yes-no question. The former also has an operator followed by the subject, but it expects a response which is a choice of alternatives that is presented to the addressee instead of a "yes" or "no".

Example 3.49

A: Do you want one or two?

B: Two. (Biber et al, 1999: 207)

Example 3.50

A: So do you like my haircut or not?

B: It's alright. (Biber et al, 1999: 207)

Example 3.49 presents a choice between alternatives within the clause, while the alternatives in Example 3.50 affect the whole clause. Example 3.50 functions similarly to a yes-no question in that "or not" could be left out without altering the function or the expected response to the question.

In conversation, alternative questions have two interesting realizations. They are often asked in reduced form in informal speech, with just the alternatives being present in the questions (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 428).

Example 3.51

Scenario: A is a swimming instructor, b is a pupil.

A: Right then, all go and swim whichever stroke you want to swim for two lengths. When the first two get back to the side the next two are gonna do a nice jump in and race. Swim back to the side. Then the next two are gonna jump in.

B: Length or width?

A: Width.

Example 3.52

Scenario: waiter to customer in a restaurant.

A: Any tea or coffee?

B: Can I have some tea please.

Both the alternative questions in Examples 3.51 and 3.52 do not resemble either a yes-no or wh-question. The questions are reduced to consist of only the alternatives (Example 3.51) or with an assertive form (Example 3.52). It is also frequently found that alternative questions end in "or anything/something" (Biber et al, 1999):

Example 3.53 Did Jone's grandma die or something?

Example 3.54 Do you want a drink of water or anything?

Although the above two questions are realized in the form of an alternative question, they actually function as yes-no questions. The purpose of the coordination tags, "or anything/something", is to make the question less precise and functions to hedge the interrogative structure. Such structures can be disambiguated by studying how information is grouped by means of tone unit boundaries (see Cheng et al, 2008). According to Biber et al (1999), alternative questions, given the characteristic of their form, are analyzed as a separate category. Interestingly, they are less common than other question forms and there is only less than 2.5% in all of the sub-corpora studied by Biber et al (ibid: 212).

3.3.6 Insert questions

According to Biber et al (1999: 1082), inserts are "stand-alone words" which are characterized in general by their inability to enter into syntactic relations with other structures. The nine main types of inserts are: interjections, greetings and farewells, discourse markers, attention signals, response elicitors, response forms hesitators, various polite speech-act formulae and expletives. Examples of inserts are "huh", "eh", "alright", "okay", "see", "right", "pardon me", "sorry", and "excuse me". The first five which are termed response elicitors can be characterized as generalized question tags (Biber et al, 1999: 1089). When this group of inserts has the role of inviting agreement or confirmation from the hearer, which requires a verbal response, they are categorized as tag questions. Among this group, not all response elicitors can function as questions, and they are more likely to act as discourse markers (Biber et al, 1999: 1089). These response elicitors often have a more speaker-centered role, and they are used to seek a signal that the message has been understood and accepted instead of information (Biber et al, 1999: 1089). In other words, the inserts which function as response elicitors (except those inviting agreement or confirmation), acting as discourse markers, are not analyzed as questions in the present study.

"Pardon me", "sorry", and "excuse me" are termed polite speech act formulae which behave pragmatically and lexically as "unanalyzable formulae" (ibid: 1083). These expressions have various restrictions and peculiarities which make them behave like "atomic wholes". They have a pragmatically specialized function, such as apologizing and prefacing a refusal. These expressions can also function as questions which seek repetition or clarification from the previous speaker.

Biber et al (1999: 1093) give a number of inserts which can function as questions, for example: "sorry", "excuse me" and "pardon" (and variations such as "pardon me", "I beg your pardon"). Although the functions of these formulaic expressions are described and exemplified, neither Quirk et al (1985) nor Biber et al (1999) suggest a separate category for this group. In the present study, these formulaic expressions are termed insert questions when they function to elicit a repetition of the previous utterance or when the speaker wants to seek clarification from the addressee.

3.3.7 Summary on classification of questions into form categories

As discussed earlier, the interactive perspective of questions and responses is of great importance in related studies. The classification of the types of questions is determined by the relationship between the two. The classification of questions is based on the function of the questions in relation to their syntactic form. In major grammar references, questions are generally classified into five main groups, namely yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, wh-questions and alternative questions. In addition to these five categories, the present study terms a group of inserts, "insert questions", which function to elicit a repetition of the previous utterance or when the speaker wants to seek clarification from the addressee.

In the literature, yes-no questions are found to be produced mostly in rising tone and wh- and alternative questions with falling tone (Biber et al, 1999; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Quirk et al, 1985). As for declarative questions, they are described to be "identical in form to a declarative (statement) except for the final rising question intonation (Quirk et al, 1985: 814). Biber et al (1999) also state that declarative can be used as questions when they are produced with "appropriate intonation" (ibid: 203). This supports their belief that intonation is closely related to grammatical form and intonation carries particular meaning. The types of responses that are likely to occur with each type of questions are outlined in Table 3.3. And it shows that a certain type of response is elicited by a certain form of question.

Table 3.3 Types of questions, the use of intonation and their expected responses (Biber et al, 1999; Quirk et al, 1985)

Type	Expectation of response	Intonation
Yes/no question	Expects affirmation or negation	Mostly rising tone
Tag question	Expects affirmation or negation	Rising tone – invites verification of the truth of the statement Falling tone – invites confirmation and has the force of exclamation rather than a genuine question
Declarative question	Invites hearer's verification	Rising tone
Wh-question (Information question)	Expects a reply from an open range of replies	Mostly falling tone
Alternative question	Expects as the reply one of two or more options presented in the question	Rising on each item, and final falling tone on the last item of the list

3.4 Classification of questions into function categories

3.4.1 Questions as elicitations

From the previous discussion, it can be seen that questions are dealt with in terms of five categories. As Widdowson (1979) emphasizes, it is important that the context of situation is taken into account in analyses since communication does not only relate to the discourse but also to the world outside the discourse. According to Stenström (1984), questions have different “elicitative force” and the question form does not necessarily indicate question function (ibid: 45). She points out that the function of a question in discourse is determined by certain preconditions in the contextual situation:

> “that A does not know X, that A believes that B knows X, that A believes that B is willing to impart X” (ibid: 45)

This sets the preconditions for requests for information and that the relationship of A and B in terms of common ground and the context of situation which has to be considered. Stenström (1984) also states that the elicitative force of a question is closely related to the question function. This section discusses frameworks (mainly Stenström, 1984 and Tsui, 1992) which analyze functions of questions with reference to their elicitative force.

In Stenström’s (1984) study of questions and responses, questions are not classified into categories of their grammatical form but to their elicitative functions. There are in total ten elicitative functions in her model and they are presented in Table 3.4 with examples.

Table 3.4 Elicitative functions and their examples

Elicitative Function	**Examples**
Acknowledge	You see, you can't say that worth is adjectival, right?
Action	(Have you got) a pen? I'll leave a message.
Clarify	B: were you there when they erected the new signs? →A: which new signs
Confirm	See you next week no doubt?
Identify	How did he get them anyway?
Offer	Aren't you going to sit down?
Permit	May I read your message?
Polar	Is this a spare paper?
React	A: actually you'll probably get a car, won't you, as soon as you get there? B: can't drive →A: can't you? B: no.
Repeat	B: Mr. Cathode, yes, I know →A: pardon?

(Stenström, 1984: 74-76)

Stenström (1984) classifies ten elicitative functions in her study according to the question function in terms of "what type of R (response) is required" (ibid: 152). These functions do not only include all the possible functions that a question can perform, they are also clearly illustrated with examples. There is, however, a weakness with this framework. Stenström does not make the distinction between direct and indirect requests in this framework. This is found to be contradictory with regard to her definition of question, which is requesting information presented in verbal responses (Stenström, 1984). Some of the functions identified are indirect requests: <Q: action>, <Q: offer>, and <Q: react> (ibid: 149).

Focusing on only direct requests, there are only four elicitative functions in the framework. The relation of form and function in Stenström's classification framework is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Relation of form and function of questions (Stenström, 1984: 152)

FORM	**FUNCTION**	
		Most Q-like
Wh	Q: identify	↑
Alternative		
Yes-no	Q: polar	
Tag		
Decl question	Q: confirm	
Decl+tag		↓
Decl+prompter	Q: acknowledge	Least Q-like

In terms of grammatical structure, questions are classified into seven groups in this model. The first five major groups are recognized generally in the literature (see Section 3.3). There is, however, some overlapping of declarative and tag questions with the sixth and seventh groups, Decl+tag and Decl+prompter. The realization of these question types resemble the linguistic realization of a tag question. Both of them involve a statement with a tag added to it at the end. In terms of function, Decl+tag has the same function as a positive tag question which is positively oriented. In other words, this question tag is a variation found in the group of tag questions. Another problem is identified in the last question type, Decl+prompter, the first part of the question is a statement of varying length in which the speaker gives information, suggests something, or expresses his/her personal opinion, and in the second part, a prompter is added to it, by which the addressee is invited to react (ibid: 153).

This question type has the function of <Q: acknowledge>. As Stenström explains, the second part serves as an elicitation act, only if the addressee responds, otherwise as a softener or an intimacy signal. Even when these incidents of <Q: acknowledge> are responded to, they are not utterances produced by the speaker in order to seek information that is missing. They are only statements where the speaker “gives information, puts forward an opinion, (and) expresses an emotion, etc” (ibid: 157). In other words, although it elicits a response from the addressee, it does not seek information or confirmation. Thus this is not included in the analysis in the present study.

Other functions of questions are <Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, and <Q: confirm>. The function <Q: identify> is realized by wh-questions and alternative questions and asks the next speaker explicitly what information the questioner requires. Cheng and Warren (2001), however, find that the function <Q: identify> can also be performed by tag questions. Adopting Algeo’s (1988) model, their study compares the syntactic form and pragmatic use of tag questions. They find that tag questions do not only seek confirmation, emphasize what is being said, but can also ask for information.

Although the two functions <Q: polar> and <Q: confirm> are very similar, they are different in that there is no preference as to what response is anticipated in <Q: polar>, whereas, there is always a bias towards one response in <Q: confirm>. In other words, a positive yes-no question which is neutral, has the function of <Q: polar>. Whereas in a question where there is a bias towards the response, it has the function of <Q: confirm>.

As Stenström (1984: 159) stresses, there is a special case with alternative questions.

Example 3.55

A: Is your meeting at five or six?

B: At five.

Example 3.56

A: Are you going to the meeting or not?

B: Yes/no.

Both the utterances produced by Speaker A in Examples 3.55 and 3.56 are alternative questions (Stenström, 1984: 159). They differ in that they require a different type of response. Example 3.55 can be paraphrased as “when is your meeting?” which requests Speaker B to identify the information about time. Although Example 3.55 can be asked in form of both a wh-question and alternative question and still has the function of <Q: identify>, the response set is open-ended in the wh-variant while the response set is restricted to the alternatives presented in the alternative question. Example 3.56 can be paraphrased as “Are you going to the meeting?” and the response set is restricted to the polarity of the statement in the question. Stenström (1984) points out that alternative questions can sometimes carry both the functions:

Example 3.57

A: Shall I come earlier or at four o’clock?

B: No, I should come at four o’clock. (Stenström, 1984: 159)

Since both the polarity choice and the alternative identified are given in the response, Stenström refers to this use of alternative question as carrying both the function of identify and polar. However, this should be examined closely again when analyzing the exchange as a whole. If Speaker B responds with “No”, the response will be self-evidently incomplete and that Speaker A still would not know whether he should come earlier or at four. Thus this type of alternative question, taking the response into consideration, should be analyzed only as performing the function of <Q: identify>.

In short, although Stenström has a framework describing the functions of questions, it does not distinguish between indirect, <Q: action>, <Q: offer>, and <Q: react>, and direct requests, <Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, <Q: confirm>, and <Q: acknowledge>; while some of the functions are meta-discoursal, <Q: clarify> and <Q: repeat>. Also, there is perhaps some confusion with respect to the analysis of some of the alternative questions, as to whether they carry <Q: polar> or <Q: identify> or both.

Similar to Stenström (1984), Tsui (1992) adopts the term “elicitation” in the description of questions. This term is first introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) to describe utterances in classroom discourse which elicit a verbal response. Tsui (1992) uses the term elicitation as a discourse category to describe any utterance, which functions to elicit an obligatory verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate (ibid: 101). In her analysis, she classifies questions into six groups based on their function. They are: <elicit: inform>, <elicit: confirm>, <elicit: agree>, <elicit: commit>, <elicit: repeat>, and <elicit: clarify>.

Similar to the function of <Q: identify> in Stenström's model, the function <elicit: inform> invites the addressee to supply information. As Tsui (1992) suggests, this function can be realized by wh-questions, alternative questions, yes-no questions, and declarative questions. There is the same problem with this framework as Stenström's (1984) framework in that tag questions do not perform the <elicit: inform> function.

The second function <elicit: confirm> is found in questions which invite the addressee to confirm the speaker's assumption. Tsui (1992) suggests that it can be realized by yes-no questions, tag questions, and declarative questions. This function does not only have the same value as <Q: confirm> in Stenström's model, but also performs another function of <Q: polar>. In the analysis of questions and responses, it is then unclear whether the speaker has a bias towards a particular response with only one category as suggested by Tsui. Thus a description would only be informative and complete when the two functions are analyzed separately.

The third category is for those questions which invite the addressee to agree with the speaker's assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. It is most commonly realized by tag questions and negative yes-no questions with falling intonation (Tsui, 1992: 107).

Example 3.58

→A: // r i supPOSE he's a bit SENile now // p ISn't he //

B: He looks it.

Example 3.59

(A and B are talking about a kind of bread made by the Hopi).

A: It's just, oh, the taste is, it's the most delicious thing that I've ever had, light blue, translucent.

→ B: // doesn't that SOUND like a NICE name for bread //
// p Hopi BLUE bread //

A: ((laughs))

B: It's like something you get from a health foodstore,
Hopi blue bread ((laughs))

In both the arrowed utterances above, the speaker assumes that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. The speaker is inviting the addressee to agree with his/her proposition. Labov and Fanshel (1977) refer to it as an exchange about an "AB-event" while Brazil (1984) refers to it as a "world-matching" exchange (cited in Tsui, 1992: 107). Tsui (1992) states that elicitations functioning as <elicit: agree> are typically seen in Example 3.60.

Example 3.60

(On a sunny day)

A: Lovely day, isn't it?

B: Yes, beautiful. (Brazil, 1984: 36)

Tsui (1992) emphasizes that Speaker A's proposition is self-evidently true; in other words, Speaker A is not asking Speaker B to confirm his/her proposition, but instead to agree with him/her. These exchanges are indeed what Brazil (1997) terms social elicitation. They are used to establish the common ground between the speaker and the addressee and serve to promote social mutuality and prepare the interlocutors for further interaction. Hence, although these utterances elicit agreement from the addressee, they do not elicit information or confirmation and do not constitute the function of a question.

As discussed earlier, a question is identified when it requires information which is in the form a verbal response. Tsui's (1992) fourth category <elicit: commit> does not only elicit a verbal response from the addressee to give Speaker A some missing information, it also elicits commitment of some sort.

Example 3.61

→ A: Where shall I meet you?

B: Well, ah I'll be finished with class at five. It is right in Tsimshatsui, so maybe we'll meet you at the Peninsula, between say five-fifteen and five-thirty?

A: Ok wonderful. (Tsui, 1992: 108)

The function of <elicit: commit> can be realized by wh-questions or by yes-no questions. In Example 3.61, the elicitation does not only ask for information about the meeting place, but it also invites the addressee to enter into a contract with the speaker.

The last two categories are <elicit: repeat> and <elicit: clarify> (Tsui, 1992) and they are both meta-discoursal (Stenström, 1984). Both categories elicit information which refers to the discourse itself and more importantly, the exchange cannot proceed without attending to one of the two if they are produced. The category <elicit: repeat> prospects a repetition of the utterance preceding the elicitation which is realized by wh-questions and words such as "sorry?", "pardon?", or "huh?". The other function, <elicit: clarify>, prospects a clarification of a preceding utterance or preceding utterances and, apart from the realization by wh-questions, it can also be realized by a high key repetition of a word or phrase in the preceding utterance. Without attending to these elicitations, the interlocutors would not be able to proceed with the interaction that they are engaged in.

Although Tsui's (1992) classification of questions is similar to Stenström's, she classifies yes-no questions differently. Instead of putting them into categories such as "polar" and "confirm", she groups neutral yes-no questions into <elicit: inform> and biased yes-no questions into <elicit: confirm>. In her framework, there are also two functions which are meta-discoursal. The role of these questions in the discourse plays an important role in the succession progression of the interaction. In other words, these functions should also be attended to in the analysis of questions.

3.4.2 Summary on classification of questions into function categories

Both Stenström (1984) and Tsui (1992) in classification of question functions adopt the term "elicitation" introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Elicitations are utterances which elicit a verbal response. Although there are 10 elicitative functions in Stenström's framework, only four of those are direct requests, <Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, <Q: confirm>, and <Q: acknowledge>. In Tsui's classification, there are six groups which are similar to those in Stenström's framework, they are: <elicit: inform>, <elicit: confirm>, <elicit: agree>, <elicit: commit>, <elicit: repeat>, and <elicit: clarify>. Both the frameworks based their classification on the elicitative force of the questions.

3.5 Studies on questions

3.5.1 Definitions of questions

In the study of questions, the problem of definition has been widely discussed (Baker, 1989; Dixon, 1991; Greenbaum, 1991; Haegeman, 1991; McCawley, 1988; Quirk et al, 1985; Radford, 1988; Sadock and Zwicky, 1985). Huddleston (1994) points out that the problem is a result of the misuse of the term. He argues that the term "question" has been used "both for a category of meaning or use (instead or as a variant of interrogative) for a category of syntactic form" (ibid: 411). In his study, he explores the relation between interrogative as a category of grammatical form, and question as a category of meaning. He explains that an interrogative contrasts with a declarative and imperative, while a question defines a set of answers, and these two levels of interpretation should be systemically distinguished. He further outlines the different uses of questions. They are "prototypically used with the aim of discovering the answer from the addressee, to find out whether the addressee knows the answer (c.f. display question), to direct the addressee's attention to the answer one is about to give oneself (expository questions), to acknowledge with surprise what one has just heard, in wondering, to indirectly convey a request, to make an exclamatory statement, and so on" (ibid: 414). By listing these possible uses of questions, Huddleston is arguing that the inquiry force is not a necessary condition for a question. In other words, his definition of "questions" stresses the syntactic form instead of the functions of the utterances. Under this definition, interrogative utterances performing other functions, such as exclaiming, requesting and so on, are also termed "questions".

However, according to Stenström (1984, 1994), questions are defined with regard to the elicitative force that they have in a discourse. In the I-R-F model, a question is doing the move of elicitation in a discourse as an initiation (1984: 72). Stenström outlines the preconditions for requests for information, and takes the relationship between A and B, their common ground and the context of situation into consideration, as "A does not know X, that A believes that B knows X, that A believes that B is willing to impart X, etc" (ibid: 45). The primary function of such utterances is to elicit. She identifies questions as elicitation moves and then categorizes them into different elicitation acts. They are requests for acknowledge, action, clarify, confirm, identify, offer, permit, polar, react, and repeat (ibid: 74-75). The absence of a response that is expected by a request for information is more noticeable than that of a request for acknowledgement. This suggests that the elicitative force of different types of question is different. Some have a higher degree of expectation of a response than others. Stenström suggests that the degree of elicitative force is related to the form of question, which is related to its function. This is due to the fact that the types of questions are registered by the occurrence and form of the response expected. In other words, the more unshared or new information that is requested from the hearer in the question, the higher degree of elicitative force it has.

3.5.2 Structure of questions and responses

In relation to the structure of discourse, Adams (1981) examines the conversational structure of questions and answers in a performance appraisal interview between a manager and an employee. She analyzes questions and answer pairs with Schegloff and Sacks' (1972, 1973) adjacency pair model. She observes that the use of adjacency pairs allows a speaker to demonstrate an orientation towards the property of conditional relevance (1972: 73). That is when a speaker provides an answer to another speaker's questions, he/she demonstrates that the relevant second pair part, the answer, is being provided to the first pair part, the question.

3.5.3 Forms and functions of questions

As Huddleston (1994) suggests, there are studies which distinguish the two levels of "questions" (namely syntactically and pragmatically) conceptually and terminologically (such as Lyons 1977; 1981; Sperber and Wilson, 1986, Wilson and Sperber, 1988) and studies which focus on one of the two levels. There are also studies which examine the pragmatic value of questions.

May (1989) explores the different illocutionary forces of questions. He emphasizes that when people ask questions, they solicit information and suggest information at the same time. In his study, he terms questions as "interrogatory expressions" and argues that they invite inferences. Heinemann (2006) examines requests realized in interrogative structures and distinguishes between a positive and a negative interrogative request. He argues that with a positive interrogative request, the "care recipient" orients to his/her request as one he or she is not entitled to make. As for a negative interrogative request, the "care recipient", in contrast, orients to his/her request as one he/she is entitled to make. This means the polarity of the interrogative request is an indication of what the speaker expects from the addressee. Although the focus of the present study is not on request for action, it is interesting to find out how speakers make choices within the discourse intonation systems to indicate what he/she expects or predicts from the addressees for request for information and confirmation.

Different question forms have been examined in relation to context of situation, their illocutionary force and epistemic implicature. Beun (1989) finds that more than half of the declarative questions in his data cannot be identified without contextual information. He argues that the recognition of declarative questions relies on the contextual knowledge available to the addressee. He (1990) then carries out experiments to determine the contextual features that contribute to the use of declarative questions. Beun finds that speakers choose to produce a question in the form of a declarative when he/she wants to verify information that has already been provided. Findings also show that the use of declarative questions correlates with the speaker's degree of certainty about the propositional content of the question. A higher certainty of the proposition causes a declarative form and a lower certainty causes an interrogative form (1990: 87). It is hypothesized that abrupt changes of topic may decrease the use of declarative questions (1990: 88).

Although Beun (1989, 1990) points out that contextual features play an important role in the recognition of declarative questions, his results are obtained not from the examination of naturally-occurring data. Data from his study come from two experiments (1990: 83). In the first one, subjects are given written dialogues with questions and then to determine whether these questions are to be asked in interrogative or declarative form. The second one requires the subjects to estimate the speaker's certainty about the correctness of the propositional content of the questions in the first experiment. These experimental results are only able to identify subjects' perceptions and speculation on when and why a question is asked in a declarative form. Though the present study does not attempt to find out the rationale as to why a speaker chooses a declarative form instead of an interrogative, it is able to find out the correlation between the certainty of the proposition in the question and the use of the declarative form. It is then useful to study the key and termination systems in discourse intonation and the examination of pitch concord and discord (see Chapter 7) to identify the correlation.

In Štícha's (1998, 1999) contrastive study of the forms and meanings of yes-no questions in four languages, namely English, French, German and Czech, he categorizes yes-no questions in terms of forms, that is syntactic structure, and meanings, that is illocutionary force. The categories are: 1. personal pronoun subject non-inversion positive, 2. personal pronoun subject non-inversion negative, 3. non-personal pronoun subject non-inversion, 4. noun subject non-inversion, 5. negative inversion, and 6. question tag. He finds that the three most common forms are negative inversion (29.5%), question tag (28.2%) and personal pronoun subject non-inversion positive (27.2%). The other groups rarely occur in his data.

Štícha (1998, 1999) also categorizes yes-no questions in terms of their illocutionary force. The four main groups are questions of surprise, appeal questions, assertive questions, and information seeking questions. The first three categories invite the addressee to provide a confirmation or agreement while the last category invites the addressee to provide information through choosing between the two polarities, positive or negative.

Štícha's study attempts to categorize yes-no questions systemically both in terms of forms and meanings. The use of written texts as data might well facilitate the description for the forms of yes-no questions, however, it is doubtful whether it is reliable to use written data when analyzing the illocutionary force of the questions. Štícha's criterion for the identification of yes-no questions is restricted to the question-marks presented in the text (ibid: 30). Although it is easier and more efficient to adopt this criterion for identification of yes-no questions (or all questions), this would be identifying all "interrogatives" structures instead of "questions". This goes back to the definition problem of "questions", whether it is a label at the syntactic level or semantic level. Another problem arises from the categories of forms of questions. Štícha classifies declarative questions and tag questions as forms of yes-no questions (1999: 38). In fact, four out of six of the categories are non-inversion questions, that is in declarative form; and one with question tag. Although these two question forms invite the addressee to give either a “yes” or “no” response, Štícha seems to have oversimplified the syntactic forms of questions when he integrates these different forms under one umbrella term – yes-no questions.

Cheng and Warren (2001b) compare the syntactic form and pragmatic use of English tag questions by non-native speakers of English, who are Hong Kong Chinese, and native speakers of English. They classify tag questions into five groups according to their pragmatic functions: informational, confirmatory, punctuational, peremptory, and aggressive tag using Algeo’s (1988, 1990) typology (Cheng and Warren, 2001b: 1429). They find that NNS use fewer tag questions (1:4). They also find that NNS mainly use tag questions to seek confirmation from the hearer while the NS mainly use them to obtain information or to emphasize what is being said (ibid: 1436). They suggest that NNS’s insufficient linguistic knowledge of English tag questions and the lack of socio-pragmatic competence to apply appropriate linguistics rule for realizing tag questions might be the reason for the discrepancies found in the two sets of speakers (ibid: 1437).

Cheng and Warren (2001b) examine 10 hours of the Hong Kong Corpus of Conversational English (HKCCE) which is a sub-corpus of the HKCSE. The present study examines data which are obtained from business and professional settings in which the participants have institutional roles to play. From a different perspective, the present study investigates differences in the use of English tag questions with respect to the context of situation and also the institutional roles of the speakers.

When Romero and Chung (2004) examine negation questions, they compare whether yes-no questions with preposed and non-preposed negation items trigger an epistemic implicature. They find that preposed negation yes-no questions carry an epistemic implicature, but non-preposed ones do not (ibid: 633). They also find that in negative yes-no questions with an epistemic implicature, the polarity of the implicature and the polarity of the question are the opposite (ibid: 634). Romero and Chung also argue that yes-no and tag questions share some similarities. They state that in questions with an epistemic implicature, the polarity of the question and the polarity of the implicature are the opposite, that is reversed polarity tag questions in the case of tag questions (see Sadock, 1971; Millar and Brown, 1979). A type of reversed polarity tag questions is identified; it has the sequence of "positive declarative + negative tag" and has the same implicature as preposed negation questions. When these questions are asked, they suggest that the speaker conveys that he or she has a belief and that he or she wants the hearer to confirm it.

Manor (1981) examines the semantic function of questions and answers, she defines and analyzes questions with respect to the notion of proposition and the assumption of the utterance. She states that speakers, by asking a question, adhere to three criteria. First, the speaker explicitly expresses a request that the addressee expresses a commitment to the truth of a proposition of a certain kind, a proposition which is a possible direct answer to the question. Second, the speaker also expresses his or her commitment to the presupposition of the sentence he or she utters. Finally, the speaker offers a hypothesis for confirmation and thus expresses a limited commitment to the truth of the hypothesis presented (ibid: 3). Manor (1981) also emphasizes that a speaker when asking a question, does not assert a proposition, but indicates what he or she is assuming instead.

In Weber's (1993) study of varieties of questions in conversations, she examines how speakers use syntactic forms to do the social action of questioning and how recipients use the same form to interpret these utterances and how the syntactic forms that are motivated by their functions. Thus in her study, she analyzes utterances which do questioning in terms of both their forms and their functions. In the analysis of the forms of questions, Weber (1993) classifies them into two major groups: declarative questions and non-clausal questions. Declarative questions are questions which have a declarative form. These questions can either be in the form of a statement or can contain lexical elements such as "hypothetical verbs, hearsay verbs, inferential adverbs, potential adverbs, adverbs of assurance, and impersonal expressions" (ibid: 63). In Weber's analysis, as illustrated below, declarative questions can also contain a wh-word.

Example 3.62

M: Sorrel.

Sorrel has a lot of oxalic acid too.

L: heh heh heh [Sorrel

B: [Sorrel has a lot of what? (Webber, 1993: 63)

In the above exchange, the participants have been discussing foods which contain oxalic acid. In Speaker B's utterance, the wh-word takes the position of the information that is being requested. According to Weber, this question is classified as a declarative question instead of a wh-question, as it has the syntactic form of a declarative, and lacks the form of wh-question which requires a wh-word in the subject position with subject-verb inversion. In interaction, it is quite common that an interlocutor repeats a preceding utterance which causes problems and replaces that portion with a wh-element. They are however classified as wh-questions in general as they expect a response from an open range (see, Quirk et al, 1985; Huddleston and Pullum, 2000; Stenström, 1984; Tsui, 1992).

Declarative questions perform functions such as next-turn repair initiators (NTRI), requests for confirmation, instances of other functions and instances of "you're kidding". Next-turn repair initiators are used by speakers when they experience some trouble with hearing or understanding the prior utterance. These utterances have the function of "repeat" or "Q: clarify" which are like those in Stenström's (1984) and Tsui's (1992) frameworks with meta-discoursal functions, while instances of requests for confirmation are communicative.

In two of Weber's examples of request for confirmation in the form of a declarative question, the classification is found to be debatable. The first example occurs when the interlocutors are discussing the meaning of "ergodic, ergotic and argosy" (ibid: 98). And the second one occurs when the speaker offers an explanation for why the participant in the story has run off with her boyfriend and returned home to her parents:

Example 3.64

N: Is this [a ( )

M: [Ergot is a fungus of wheat

N: Yeah

→ You take it, don't you, do you, for your headaches

M: No. I take aspirin now.

(Weber, 1993: 99)

Although the arrowed utterance is requesting for confirmation, alternative choices "don't you" and "do you" are spelt out in the question. This would be classified under the criteria of Weber's definition of a non-clausal question. Thus whether this utterance should be classified as a declarative question performing the function of a request for confirmation is doubtful.

Example 3.65

B: Oh this eggplant is [so::

N: [Good, I should have made more.

The running away is running away,

no matter what country you go to, h[uh?

L: [huhuhu [hu

E: [hehehe [he

N: [Down the corner,

or if you go to Rome, =

→ B: = What happened, it didn't work out?

E: I don't know, I didn't

(Weber, 1993: 99)

The same problem arises in the above exchange, the arrowed utterance is classified as a declarative question requesting confirmation. As shown in the context and from the response, the question indeed serves to solicit more details of the story from the narrator (Weber, 1993). It follows that the details are to be preceded by either a "yes" or "no". It is then debatable whether the arrowed utterance belongs to another category in the classification system.

Another type of questions is the non-clausal questions in Weber's analysis. This type includes wh-questions, questions with tags, questions with alternative choice; and questions in which there is subject-verb inversion. As its name suggests, it is also realized by forms ranging from particles, nouns, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, verb phrases, to adverbs, and so on. Below is an example which exhibits a non-clausal question realized by an adverb, "really".

Example 3.66

K: Even infants and mothers take turns.
They well,
Children learn that the first thing.
→ M: Really?
K: Oh, yes. (Weber, 1993: 127)

In Example 3.66, the interlocutors are discussing turn-taking behaviour. Speaker M responds to Speaker K's statement with "really", registering it as news. However, this analysis is problematic. Firstly, there is a problem with the type of question form that the arrowed utterance is classified as. It is realized by a single adverb "really". Although this utterance fits the description of Weber's definition of a non-clausal question, it is also realized in a declarative form. In other words, the arrowed utterance could be classified as a declarative question when it is doing question in the context. Another problem arises with the identification of the arrowed utterance as a question. It is clear that Speaker M uses the adverb "really" to register the previous utterance as news. Although his/her utterance is responded to with "Oh, yes", it does not function to seek confirmation or information. It may indeed function as an exclamation, showing surprise in acknowledging new information from Speaker K.

In Weber's (1993) study of the relation of the forms and functions of questions, she divides questions only into two main categories, declarative and non-clausal questions. The second category is in fact an umbrella category which includes quite a number of different forms of questions. The identification of question forms seems to be problematic. The criteria by which each category of question should be classified are neither clear nor widely accepted. In her analysis of functions of the questions, although she has included in her study a wide range of functions, the meta-discoursal, discoursal, and communicative functions are not presented at different levels. In other words, there may be cases when a single question is identified with several functions.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the classification of syntactic form of questions. Questions are classified according to the types of response and in relation to the syntactic form of questions (Batliner and Oppenrieder, 1988; Biber et al, 1999; Butt et al, 2000; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985). There are 5 main categories, yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, alternative questions and wh-questions. The present study adds another category of insert questions which function to elicit repetition or clarification of previous utterances (Biber et al, 1999). In terms of question intonation, some of the frameworks suggest that different question types are said with specific intonation (Biber et al, 1999; Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Quirk et al, 1985). This is indeed misleading as intonation choices are made at here-and-now situations which enhances the local meaning of the questions. These frameworks which recognize intonation as a moment-by-moment decision are also discussed (Brazil, 1995, 1997; Hewings, 2004, 2005).

This chapter also discusses the classification of question functions. It reviews frameworks which based the classification on the elicitative force of the questions (Stenström, 1984, 1994; Tsui, 1992). Finally, this chapter reviews previous studies on questions in the last section. It is generally believed that there is a match of form and function in questions. There is also a general association of question forms with specific intonation choice. The present study aims at demystifying such general associations with the evidence from a large-scale corpus.

Chapter 4 Responses

4.1 Introduction

Based on the definition of questions in the previous chapter, the role of a response to a question is discussed. In the present study, a question is defined as an utterance that asks for information or confirmation which the speaker does not know and believes that addressee knows. It expects a linguistic response from the addresses within the set of logically possible answers that it prospects. This chapter discusses how responses are classified with reference to different frameworks (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985). In these frameworks, the respondent can choose either to answer the question or not. This suggests that a response to a question does not need to be an answer and addresses the issue raised in Chapter 2. Another framework developed by Stenström (1984) to account for responses is also discussed. Her framework for responses is built on three different levels. By adopting this framework, the present study is able to describe responses comprehensively. Previous studies on responses are summarized and evaluated at the end of this chapter.

4.2 Classification of responses

In Quirk et al's (1985) discussion of responses, they attempt to define what an appropriate response is. They state that a question that has the illocutionary force of an inquiry may be responded to in the following ways:

(i) by "I don't know" or "I'm not sure";

(ii) by a refusal to answer, e.g., "It's none of your business";

(iii) or by an evasion, e.g., "I don't know any Joan Parker" to the question "Do you like Joan Parker?".

One characteristic of Quirk et al's (1985) framework is that questions are classified into different types according to the type of response that an elicitation expects (c.f. Section 3.2). In other words, yes-no questions, wh-questions and alternative questions all expect a different type of response. Thus an appropriate response to a yes-no question is either affirmation or negation; to a wh-question, it can be a reply from an open range of replies which supplies the missing information as indicated by the wh-element in the question; to an alternative question, only one of two or more options presented in the questions is an appropriate reply. All of the above, assuming that they are logically well-formed and conform with expectations, are a subset of pragmatically appropriate answers (Quirk et al, 1985: 806). Sometimes, answers appear to be irrelevant but are indeed relevant in terms of the implicature they convey:

Example 4.1

> A: Have you seen my chocolates?
>
> B: Well, the children were in your room this morning.

In Example 4.1, although Speaker B does not supply either an affirmation or a negation, Speaker B's utterance suggests to Speaker A that the children might have eaten the chocolate and that is why Speaker A is unable to find them. It is doubtful that Speaker B's utterance fulfils Speaker A's question prospected response appropriately. If we look at the question more carefully, although it is produced in the form of a yes-no question, it does not merely ask for an affirmation or a negation. The question expects a reply that tells Speaker A where the chocolates are, the answer would be regarded as incomplete if Speaker B merely responds with a "yes" to the question (c.f. 3.2.1).

Similar to Quirk et al (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002) list the categories of different utterances which can be a response to a question. In addition, they also state the difference between an answer and a response which they regard as a pragmatic concept.

Example 4.2

A:	Have you seen it?		
(i)	No.	I have.	
(ii)	I'm not sure.	I can't remember.	Does it matter?
(iii)	I've already told you that I have.		It's on your desk.

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), the items in (i) are answers, but the others are not. The addressee avoids giving an answer by producing (ii) regardless of whether it is a lack of knowledge or for some other reasons. Although items in (iii) implicate or entail the answer, they do not logically follow the question as an answer, or they give more information than it is requested in the question thus they are not regarded as answers but responses to the question in Example 4.2 (ibid: 866).

For Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), in an exchange of information, the aim of producing an utterance is to get the addressee to say something; that is, what is being demanded is information. In these exchanges, language is both the means and the end, and the only answer expected is a verbal one. A question can be responded to verbally as expected, i.e., an answer, or as a discretionary, i.e., a disclaimer. Below is an example quoted from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 108):

Example 4.3

	A: What is he giving her?	
	B: A teapot	→ an answer
or	B: I don't know	→ a disclaimer

On the part of the addressee, he or she has considerable discretion. He or she can give any one of a wide range of different responses to a question, or may refuse to answer the question altogether.

These frameworks discuss whether a response answers a question. It can be seen that an addressee can respond to a question without necessarily answering it. In this section, suggested possible responses to different question types are discussed.

4.2.1 Yes-no questions

"Yes" and "no" serve as markers of positive and negative polarity in answers to polar questions (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston and Pullum, 20092; Quirk et al, 1985). To completely answer these questions, "yes" and "no" either stand alone or are combined with a clause that expresses the answer more explicitly, as illustrated below:

Example 4.4

A: Is this car yours?

B: Yes (it is).

or B: No (it isn't). (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 848)

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) explain that since a yes-no interrogative clause is a request for polarity, it cannot itself anticipate the choice between the two. Thus yes-no positive questions can occur and contain no suggestion regarding what the expected answer is. As Quirk et al (1985) state, negative polar questions are negatively oriented, and a negative answer is more likely to occur. Sharing the same observation, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that negative yes-no questions indicate the speaker's predisposition to think that one answer is more likely to occur than the other.

Example 4.5

A: Isn't this car yours?

B: No (it isn't) → more likely

or B: Yes (it is)

In Example 4.5, Speaker B responds to the question with either "No" or "No, it isn't" if he or she does not own the car, and vice versa.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) also have the same observation on negative yes-no questions that they behave different from positive yes-no questions. As shown in Example 4.6, a negative yes-no question can be used in a sarcastic way. Speaker A is being sarcastic when asking "haven't you seen the news?" Speaker A means "you don't know about this, it is all over the news, haven't you seen the news?" Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) regard a negative yes-no question as a marked option in which the speaker has a preference towards one polarity, but state that the preference is not necessarily a negative one.

Example 4.6

A: Haven’t you seen the news?

B: Yes (I have)

or B: No (I haven’t)

Although there is debate on whether negative yes-no questions are negatively-oriented, it is generally agreed that the speaker has a preference on the polarity of the expected response. These frameworks also agree with the view that in response to a yes-no question, the choice between “yes” or “no” depends simply on the polarity of the answer, but not on agreement and disagreement (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston and Pullum, 20092; Quirk et al, 1985). However, Tsui (1992) argues that this is the case (c.f. Section 3.2.1).

Example 4.7 A: You mean he didn’t recognize you? (Tsui, 1992: 90)

According to Tsui (1992: 90), both the answer “yes” and “no” can perform the same communicative function. A “yes” to the yes-no question in Example 4.7 can mean “Yes, I mean he didn’t recognize me” and “no” can mean “No, he didn’t recognize me”.

4.2.2 Wh-questions

In wh-questions, the wh-element indicates what information that the speaker is seeking (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Huddleston and Pullum, 20092; Quirk et al, 1985). They have a propositional content consisting of a proposition which contains a variable. Thus answers to these questions express closed propositions derived by substituting a particular value for the variable (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). There is, however, no logical limit to the number of different possible values of the variable, so the set of answers is indeed open-ended (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). Quirk et al (1985) call it a presupposition when a statement contains an indefinite expression such as “somebody” in place of the wh-element.

Example 4.8

Who opened my letter?	Someone opened my letter.
What have you lent him?	You have lent him some of the books.
When will you be promoted?	You will be promoted sometime.
How did you mend it?	You mended it somehow.

(Quirk et al, 1985: 819)

It can be seen that a positive wh-question is generally matched with a positive presupposition. However, there will be no presupposition in non-assertive items. Also, these questions are all conducive, expecting a negative answer.

Example 4.9
When will we ever win any prizes?
What help have they ever given us?
Who has any money? (Quirk et al, 1985: 820)

Although it is suggested that wh-questions can elicit answers from a set which is open-ended, there are cases where the variable is limited to the context of the question (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 873):

Example 4.10 Which of the two proposals suits you better?

In this case, the addressee can no longer choose from an open set that substitutes the variable "which", he or she can only choose between the two proposals which are in the question itself. Thus it should be noted that the context of the question is as important as the wh-variable in determining the appropriate answers to such questions.

4.2.3 Alternative questions

Alternative questions have a set of alternatives given in the question as possible answers. In other words, answers to alternative questions are completely derivable from the question itself (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). Different from yes-no questions, which presupposes, that one of two mutually exclusive possibilities (either “yes” or “no”) is true, an alternative question presupposes the truth of only one of the propositions as given in the question (Quirk et al, 1985).

Example 4.11

A: Is it right or wrong?

B: It’s right.

or B: It’s wrong. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 868)

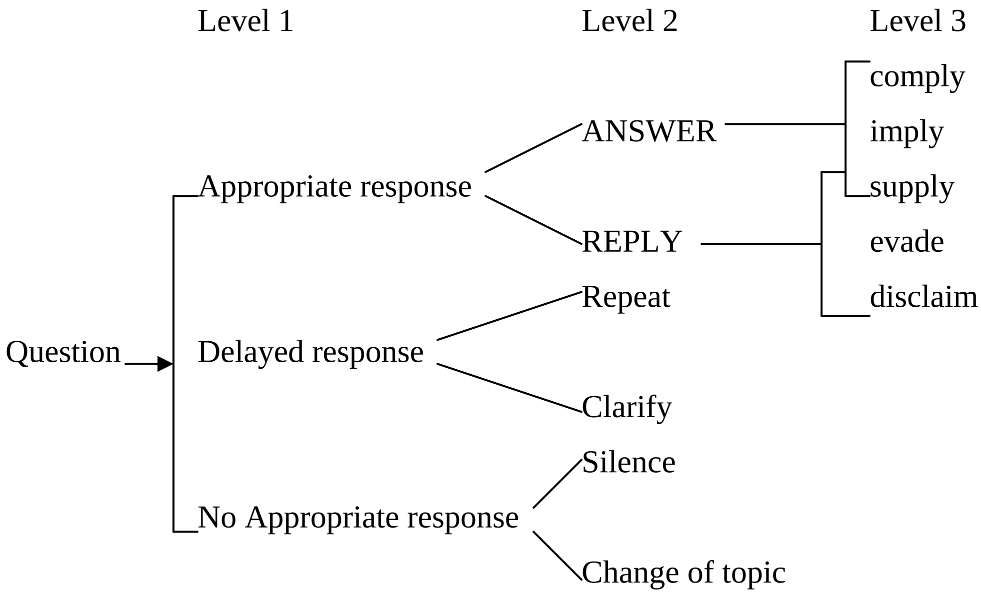
Possible responses to different question forms are discussed in terms of how the questions can be answered. Responses to questions regardless of question form are categorized according to whether the question has been answered and how it has been done. With the understanding of how different question forms can be responded to, it is then possible to divide the response into categories. The three categories are (1) answer, (2) response that avoids giving an answer, and (3) response that either entails or implicates the answer or gives more information than is requested. As type (2) suggests, not all questions will be answered as expected. This further suggests that a question is not necessarily responded by an answer. In terms of the manner answering a question (as in (1) and (2), they can either be given directly (1) or indirectly (2)).

It is suggested that in response to yes-no questions, the addressee is expected to supply information of the polarity, that is either “yes” or “no”; whereas to wh-questions, the addressee is expected to identify some elements in the content.

Although the classifications in these frameworks cover two main criteria: whether the question is answered, and how it is done. Regarding these criteria, Stenström (1984) further classify them according with reference to discourse structure and pragmatic function of the responses.

Stenström’s (1984, 1994) study of questions and responses in English conversation has suggested a list of categorizations of response options available to the hearer/next speaker in the light of both the discourse structure and speech act theory. Figure 4.1 below summarizes the available choices:

Figure 4.1 Levels of response options (adopted from Stenström, 1984: 58)



Stenström (1984) defines a response as "any verbal utterance that is elicited by a question to which it is coherently related" (ibid: 61). As can be seen in the figure above, when a question is asked, the next speaker can choose from the set of options at the first level with three alternatives. The next speaker can choose to respond at once, in the sense of giving an appropriate response. The next speaker can also put off the response momentarily until some obscure point has been cleared up. The response given by the next speaker after clarifying the question is a delayed response. The next speaker can even choose not to respond in any way which constitutes no appropriate response category.

By not responding, the next speaker can either remain silent or initiate a new topic which is a completely irrelevant next utterance in relation to the preceding one.   Although irrelevant to the question asked, both choices are reactions to the question which serve as avoidance devices. The reason for the next speaker to remain silent may be he or she does not hear the question properly and thus is unable to respond.   He or she may also be reluctant to respond to the question and so introduce a new topic which serves as a new initiation.

Sometimes it is not the case that the next speaker does not want to respond to the question. The next speaker does not provide an appropriate response as he or she does not hear the question clearly or he needs more information before responding. In that case, the next speaker has to either request repetition or clarification of the question before proceeding to produce an appropriate response. As a result, the next speaker responds by a “counter-Q” (a delayed response) to which the questioner has to respond before the next speaker can answer the first question (ibid: 59).

Example 4.12

A: Will John be back at five?

B: (a) Pardon?

(b) Who/when/where did you say?

(c) Why do you ask?

In the case of (a), Speaker B has misheard part or the entire question and requested Speaker A to repeat the whole question. Whereas only part of the question which is focused by the wh-element in (b) is requested. Also, Speaker B can only answer Q1 after Speaker A has answered Q2. Lastly, (c) may signal that Speaker B hesitates and needs a moment of reflection before responding. Sometimes Speaker A’s reason for asking serves as a guide for Speaker B to respond as shown in the possible extended version of Example 4.12 below.

Example 4.13

A: Will John be back at five?

B: Why do you ask?

A: Well, I thought he said he had an appointment somewhere at four thirty.

B: No, that’s tomorrow, so he will probably be back at five.

When Speaker B is asked a question, he or she may well choose to respond at once and provide an appropriate response. As shown in Figure 4.1, appropriate responses are further sub-categorized as answer and reply. The distinction between the two is made following Lakoff’s (1973) terminology, Stenström (1984) refers to “answer” as “the response to the questioned element”, that is the complement; and refers to “reply” as “the response to the performative”.

Example 4.14 Did John kiss Mary?

In illustrating the difference between an answer and a reply, Stenström (1984) paraphrases the question in Example 4.14 as “I request that you tell me whether John kissed Mary”. As she explains, the part “I request that you tell me” is the performative part of the utterance and “whether John kissed Mary” is the complement.   Thus if the response is related to the complement as in Example 4.15, it is an answer. But if the response is related to the performative as in Example 4.16, it is a reply.

Example 4.15 Yes, he did.
Example 4.16 Don’t ask me.

Interestingly enough, a speaker can provide an appropriate response while responding to a question differently. The utterance in Example 4.15 gives all and only the information asked for and “requires no assumption outside of those entailed by the question itself”, it is categorized as a direct, or a straight answer (Stenström, 1984: 62).

Example 4.17 I saw lipstick on John’s face.

Consider the utterance in Example 4.17, it “does not overtly give the information asked for and the direct answer can be only reconstructed by implication” (Stenström, 1984: 62).   This type of answers is categorized as indirect answers, though the direct answers can be reconstructed from these responses, they are referred to as “implies” (ibid: 62).

4.3 Studies on responses

In classification of responses, studies analyze responses from different perspectives. These studies are related to directness of the responses, that is whether the responses have been cooperative (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Joshi, 1983), in relation to the truth of the proposition in the questions (Manor, 1992), the conduciveness of questions (Stenström, 1984, 1994), the interactional acceptability (Franck, 1999), and different question forms (Bublitz, 1980; Wintergerst, 1993).

4.3.1 Cooperative responses

Halliday and Hasan (1976) make the distinction between direct and indirect responses. They define a direct response as an utterance which answers the question. In their definition, there are three types of indirect responses, an utterance which comments on the question is a "commentary", one which denies the relevance of the question as a "disclaimer" and one which gives supplementary information or implies but does not express the answer as a "supplementary" response.

Joshi (1983) describes several types of cooperative responses which are desirable in the question-answer (Q-A) systems in his study. The several types of cooperative responses are corrective indirect responses, supportive indirect responses, and suggestive indirect responses. Although these response types are all indirect, they are all cooperative responses in the Q-A systems. He gives an example to illustrate what a direct response is in comparison with indirect response (ibid: 232).

Example 4.18

A: John Smith is not a senior.
→B: No. → direct response
→B: No, he is a junior. → suggestive indirect response

In Example 4.18, when Speaker A's utterance, "John Smith is not a senior", functions as a question, then Speaker B's utterance, "NO", is then the direct response to the question. It is exactly what the question asks for. But if Speaker B responds to Speaker A's questions with "No, he is a junior", then Speaker B tries to answer a different but related question and in turn supplies more information than is needed in Speaker A's question here. This type of response is called a "suggestive indirect" response.

Example 4.19

A: How many students received the grade A in CIS 500 in Fall 1980?

B: None.

→ B: CIS 500 was not offered in Fall 1980.

→ corrective indirect response

In Example 4.19, the situation assumed here is that Speaker A's presumption that CIS 500 was offered in Fall 1980 is false. Then a response "none" to Speaker A's question is misleading, since it would implicitly confirm that Speaker A's presumption is true. Thus a helpful response here should consist of correcting the false presumption as in the arrowed one above. This is called a corrective indirect response. In the last example that follows, the response listing only all the phone numbers is not helpful unless accompanied by the associated names of the professors. Thus the appropriate response is the arrowed one which is called a supportive indirect response (Joshi, 1983).

Example 4.20

A: What are the phone numbers of all professors in Computer Science?

B: 4958, 7945, 7745, ….

→ B: Smith, 4958, Jones, 7954, Hamilton, 7754..

→ supportive indirect response

In Joshi's study, the cooperative responses are behaviour that is expected from a helpful system in a Q-A environment. With the focus on cooperative responses, he does not go into discussion into those responses which may be considered as un-cooperative. Although he only discusses several types of the cooperative responses which are desirable in the Q-A system, he stresses that the list is not exhaustive; there may also be other categories which serve as cooperative responses.

4.3.2 Functions of responses

Responses are also analyzed semantically. Manor (1992) examines answers to questions and their relations to assertions. Her hypothesis follows that in asserting a proposition the speaker is answering a question and in asking a question he or she expresses his or her commitment to the truth of its presupposition. In the examination of question-answer pairs, Manor analyses answers semantically, and terms an appropriate type of answer as “categorical” answers. In her study, she has identified three kinds of “categorical” answers to a given question: “direct answers”, “eliminative answers”, and “corrective answers”.

Manor claims that in semantic analyses of questions, answers are used to denote the types of questions by determining the sets of their possible or true answers. Thus it is as important to examine answers in as much detail as questions. By asking a question, the speaker specifies that the reaction to it should provide a direct answer to it. A direct answer denotes elements of the domain of the appropriate category.

Example 4.21 Who came to the party?

The speaker requests from the addressee the name of the person who came to the party. The question may be satisfied by any answer of the right category which is a true answer to it, such as:

Example 4.22 Mary
Example 4.23 John’s mother

Thus to satisfy the question, an addressee has to provide a direct answer, that is any expression of the right category. In short, a direct answer is “a satisfying direct answer, if it satisfies the questioner in the sense that he understands or simply accepts the answer (when it is given) without raising further questions to clarify the answer given” (Manor, 1982: 83). Even when the addressee is providing a direct answer, it could be a complete answer or just a partial one, such as:

Example 4.24 Only John
Example 4.25 John and possibly someone else (Manor, 1982: 84).

Apart from giving a direct answer which satisfies the questioner, an addressee can also offer answers which are not direct but which can help the speaker get closer to the answer.

Example 4.26 Not John
Example 4.27 John or Mary (Manor, 1982: 84).

The two utterances above are "eliminative answers" (ibid: 84) if given in response to the question in Example 4.21. Eliminative answers denote a subset of the domain of the appropriate category, within which a direct answer is to be found. If the subset is the domain itself, then the pair represents the presupposition of the question that it has a true answer within the domain. Both Examples 4.26 and 4.27 are eliminative answers to Example 4.21 and they eliminate from the category some of the possibilities for direct answers.

The speaker is making a presupposition when asking the question in Example 4.21 which is "someone came to the party". If the addressee does not accept the presupposition of the question asked, he or she then can provide the zero-eliminative categorial answer to Example 4.21 by giving the response below:

Example 4.28 No one (i.e., no one came to the party) (Manor, 1982: 85).

Although the above utterance is a reaction to the implicit assertion of the question's presupposition, this reaction is not a direct answer. Instead, it is an answer consisting of a rejection of the presupposition which is a corrective answer.

In her study of answers to questions, Manor (1982: 83) identifies the appropriate type of answer as "categorial answer". She further classifies these answers into three different groups with a different relation to their assertions: "direct answers", "eliminative answers", and "corrective answers" (Manor, 1982). In her study, although the suggested categories can define and describe the functions of the utterance in the Q-A pairs, she does not distinguish between responses which supply the information as requested in the questions and those which supply either more or less than is requested, all categories are analyzed under the same group, answers. In other words, the capacity of this model is open to question, for example, in situations when the responses do not directly or indirectly refer to the information requested in the question, this model would not allow a researcher to accurately and precisely identify the type and function of the utterance.

4.3.3 Responses to questions with different degrees of elicitative force

Different types of questions have different degrees of elicitative force, they also have different degrees of conduciveness. A conducive question is one which favours a response over another (Stenström, 1984: 47). Stenström (1984), in drawing attention to the relationship of conduciveness of questions and question form, emphasizes that the degree of conduciveness depends on how the hearer interprets the utterance in a particular situation. There is also an underlying assumption of the expected response that is to follow. Piazza (2002) adopts Stenström's (1984: 47) definition of a conducive question which conveys a questioner's expectation of and preference for a given answer, and develops a model for the analysis of conducive questions with respect to four aspects: the question's old belief underlying the question, the new assumption he or she formulates in his or her mind, the expected answer and the formal aspect of the question itself. In Stenström's (1984: 53) study, she observes that there are three types of conducive questions, exclamatory questions, rhetorical questions and suggestions. As in Stenström (1984: 53), exclamatory questions function as exclamations which might invite confirmation. Although it is believed that rhetorical questions do not expect a response (Bublitz, 1980; Hudson, 1975), Churchill (1978) argues that these questions do not only prefer but require a particular response. He refers to these rhetorical questions as "loaded questions" which require "only one possible answer, the correct one" (ibid: 135) and in these situations, a response has to be expressed. Another variant of conducive questions is called "suggestions for action" (Bolinger, 1975: 158). As Bolinger observes, these questions are often structured as negative wh-question. When such a question is asked, the addressee is expected to answer as if it is a yes-no question (Stenström, 1984: 55). Although these "suggestions for action" are realized in interrogatives, they are not intended to "find out" information or to "make sure". These interrogatives function as "suggestions for action" and are not categorized as questions in the present study.

4.3.4 Interactional acceptability of responses

Franck (1979) refers to the options available when responding to a request for confirmation as “continuation options” and classifies them into three types according to the degree of interactional acceptability. The most preferred reaction consists of “acceptance or positive confirmation”; the second preferred option is “postponing reactions” such as checkbacks; and the least preferred option is “refusal” or “doubt”. Whether these options are preferred or less preferred depends on the degree of interactional acceptability. Other responses are determined to be more favourable in accordance with the conduciveness and elicitative force of the preceding questions (Stenström, 1984). Brown and Levinson (1987) share a similar view, they state that a “preferred response” is often direct, structurally simple, and typically immediate (ibid: 38). They also emphasize that “the term ‘preference’ refers to the structure disposition, to the fact that conversational organization conspires to make it easier to use the preferred type of turn” (ibid: 38).

4.3.5 Responses to different question forms

There are also studies which focus on responses to different question forms. The actual response produced by the hearer may not agree with the expected response, despite the fact that the speaker favours a particular response. There is a need to distinguish between the two. Bublitz (1980) distinguishes between the “expected” response and the “expectable” response. In his example of a conducive yes-no question, the agreeing response is the expectable response. As for the expected response, nothing definite could be said (Bublitz, 1980: 16). In the present study, however, responses are not examined in this dimension. Instead, this study investigates how speakers make meaningful choices in the discourse intonation system to convey what responses he or she is expecting. It also examines how the addressee responds to these questions in relation to discourse intonation choices.

Wintergerst (1993) studies the use of wh-questions and the responses they elicit. She puts the emphasis on wh-questions when examining why-questions produced by teachers and students. She also investigates the responses elicited by this question type in terms of whether they are short answers (words or phrases) or long answers (extended responses). She finds that 42% of the why-questions elicit long answers which are not as high a percentage as she has predicted. She explains that whether or not long answers are elicited by this type of question depends on the task that is involved in the classroom. She has identified why-questions which are able to elicit long answers, and they are those which require students to generalize, to give rules, to offer reasons, or to speculate. In Wintergerst's (1993) study, her data only include twelve 45-minute lessons in an English language institute. Although Wintergerst studies naturally-occurring data, the small data set limits the number of why-questions (only one of the types of wh-questions) that is identified for analysis. She finds that only "very few why-questions" are asked by teachers and "even fewer" by students. Out of 2,047 questions asked in total, only 53 are why-questions. Wintergerst (1993) suggests that different types of wh-questions or other question forms should be examined to find out which type of wh-questions, or other question forms is more common. Although the present study does not attempt to compare the length of the responses that are elicited by the questions, it does reveal which of the question forms is most and/or more commonly used.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses previous frameworks in the study of responses. They are not categorized according to the syntactic form of question, but instead to whether or how the question is answered. The categories are answer, response that avoids giving an answer, response that either entails or implicates the answer or gives more information than is requested, and no response to the question. This confirms that a response to a question does not need to be an answer. These frameworks share a very similar view on how questions can be responded to and what answers are appropriate or expected by certain types of questions.

This chapter also discusses Stenström's (1984) framework of responses which is built on three different levels, allowing the present study to describe responses in a more comprehensive manner (see Chapter 6 for details). Lastly, this chapter ends with a summary and critical evaluation of studies of responses.

Chapter 5 Discourse intonation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the description and theories of discourse intonation and its communicative role following Brazil's (1997) four-system model of: prominence, tone, key, and termination. It also reviews literature relating to the theory and study of intonation and discourse intonation in English, its role in language teaching and learning, and its role in the study of questions and responses. Studies on intonation and studies in the area of discourse intonation are also discussed, with special attention paid to studies on questions and responses.

5.2 Intonation

Intonation, a non-segmental phenomenon, is the study of the pitch of voice which carries linguistic information (Crystal, 1985; Halliday, 1967, 1970; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Roach, 1991). Intonation has been described as conveying many different types of messages to a hearer related to the information structure of the discourse, the attitude and mood of the speaker, other social and psychological features of the speaker and the relationship between the interlocutors (Pennington, 1989). In the study of intonation, there are a number of theories related to its components, forms and functions. Phonologists and phoneticians (see for example, Crystal, 1985; Halliday, 1967, 1970; Roach, 1991) are more interested in the description of the forms of intonation. When they describe the use of individual tones, they have also touched on the functions of intonation in different aspects, namely, attitudinal, accentual, grammatical and discoursal (Crystal, 1985; Roach, 1991). In this area of descriptive intonation, tone choices are related to the grammatical structure of the language and certain tone choices carry a specific function (Halliday, 1967, 1970; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Roach, 1991). Recently, in the study of intonation, attention has particularly been drawn to larger stretches of discourse which go beyond the sentence level. These studies differ from those which examined lower level speech phenomena in individual segments in the past and are aimed at a more thorough understanding of second language speech acquisition (Leather & James, 1991). In the areas of discourse analysis and pragmatics, there has been a great deal of emphasis on the study of discourse intonation (Brazil et al, 1980; Brazil, 1997; Cauldwell, 2002; Hewings, 2004, 2005). Despite the differences in the phonological terms used in the description of intonation, the study of discourse intonation has emphasized mostly its communicative role rather than grammatical and syntactical aspects of the discourse.

However intonation is defined and studied, the complexity and difficulty in learning and mastering the subject, which is the "variations in the perceived pitch of the speaking voice" (Brazil, 1997: 1), have held language teachers back in incorporating it into language teaching resulting in the general implementation of an audio-lingual approach which emphasizes the drilling of sounds (Anderson-Hsieh, 1989). With the advances in the representation and theory of intonation aided by computational acoustic speech analysis, the expansion of the analytical domains to larger units, and the shift in emphasis on pronunciation and intonation from linguistic form to communicative function, more attention has been given to both research and teaching practices relating to intonation (Cauldwell, 2002; Chun, 2002; Hewings, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2005).

To reflect the advances in the intonation research, this chapter aims at reviewing literature relating to the theory and study of intonation in English, its role in language teaching and learning, and its role in the study of questions and responses. Throughout, special attention is drawn to discourse intonation with regard to these aspects. It starts with a discussion of the description and theories of discourse intonation and its communicative role in particular, following Brazil's (1997) four-system model. The second section focuses on research on intonation in second language learning and teaching, and studies in the area of discourse intonation. This is followed by studies with a focus on questions and responses.

5.3 Brazil's system of discourse intonation

Brazil (1997) suggests a model of discourse intonation which builds on a discourse-based framework and assigns "meaning" or "communicative value" to the different elements that make up the system of intonation. This model views the meaning of intonation in terms of listener/speaker interaction, shared/unshared knowledge, and conversational control. Two of the starting assumptions of this model are:

(a) that intonation choices are not related to grammatical or syntactic categories (rather, they depend on the speaker's contextually referenced perceptions), and

(b) that there is no systematic link between intonation and attitude (Hewings and Cauldwell, 1997: vi)

As can be seen in the underlying assumptions of this model, the description contrasts with other models which see intonation as presenting attitudinal meanings or meanings relating to the grammatical system. Instead, the meanings of the intonational choice is context-dependent.

In Brazil's (1997) model, the description recognizes significant intonation choices as being made within four systems, prominence, tone, key and termination. These systems contain a total of thirteen choices (these choices and their communicative value will be discussed in greater detail in Section 7):

Table 5.1 The four systems and tone choices in Brazil's (1997) discourse intonation model (Hewings and Cauldwell, 1997: vii)

System	Choices	Number
Prominence	Prominent/non-prominent syllables	2
Tone	Rise-fall, fall, level, rise, fall-rise	5
Key	High, mid, low	3
Termination	High, mid, low	3

In some grammar references, the intonation of questions is closely related to the syntactic form of the question and the types of responses that they attract (Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Quirk et al, 1985; see also Chapter 3). In the discourse intonation approach, there is, however, no fixed intonation for questions. The intonation choices are rather dependent on the speaker's choice at the time of speaking. In other words, a yes-no question is not necessarily produced with rising tone, nor is a wh-question necessarily produced with falling tone, as suggested in both the traditional and systemic-functional grammar. Different choices in the four systems contribute to different communicative values, which in turn result in a different meaning for the question asked. In Brazil's (1997) discussion of the interrogative, he outlines the communicative value of different intonation choices for three types of questions: declarative-mood questions, yes-no questions, and information questions.

5.3.1 Declarative questions

According to some grammar references, the main distinction between a declarative statement and a declarative question lies in the use of intonation – a declarative statement is signaled by a final fall whereas a declarative question is signaled by a final rise (Givon, 1993; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Quirk et al, 1985). However, in the discourse intonation model, the use of intonation alone does not tell the hearer whether the utterance is a statement or a question because it is unrelated to the grammatical structure of the utterance. Brazil (1997) states that the discourse function of an utterance depends crucially on the state of understanding that exists between the speaker and the hearer. In other words, whether the utterance is a declarative or an interrogative depends on who has the information. To quote Brazil's example:

Example 5.1 John prefers that one (?) (Brazil, 1997: 100)

In Example 5.1, the appropriacy or inappropriacy of the question mark will depend on whether it is the speaker or the hearer who is privy to John's preference. In other words, Example 5.1 is regarded as a declarative question when the hearer has the information as to which one John prefers. Thus, if Example 5.1 is produced with a falling tone (a proclaiming tone, p), the speaker either offers to change the hearer's world view or articulates an assumption that the latter will change his or her world view, depending on the existing context of interaction (1997: 101). But if the utterance is produced with a rise tone (a referring tone, r), it projects a context of interaction in which the content of the referring tone unit is common ground in case of a rising tone; whereas in the case of a fall-rise tone (r+), the speaker is asking the hearer to concur with, or adjudicate with respect to the validity of the utterance. Table 5.2 below summarizes the communicative value of the use of different intonation choices in declarative questions and the types of responses that they expect.

Table 5.2 The communicative value of discourse intonation in declarative questions and their responses (Brazil, 1997: 104)

Termination and expected response / Tone and expected response — Communicative value	Mid termination - invites concurrence response	High termination - invites adjudication
Referring tone - serves to check an inference	This is what I infer, or think I heard. Please confirm that I am right.	This is what I infer, or think I heard. Please tell me whether I am right or not.
Proclaiming tone - asks for greater precision, expects information	Can I infer, or did you say (mean), this or something else? Please confirm that it was this.	Can I infer, or did you say (mean), this or something else? Please tell me whether this is right or not.

5.3.2 Yes-no questions

It is suggested that yes-no questions are produced with rising tone (Givon, 1993; Quirk et al, 1972, 1985), there is however, no fixed intonation for this grammatical form of question in the system of discourse intonation. As discussed earlier, there is a problem of identification of declarative questions due to its syntactic similarities with the declarative statements. The grammatical form of yes-no questions marks the utterance as an interrogative even in the absence of any relevant features of speaker-hearer understanding (as compared to the case of declarative questions). This can be illustrated with Brazil's (1997: 105) example:

Example 5.2 Do you prefer that one?

The utterance above is unambiguously interrogative in situations where the value of "He prefers that one" might be in doubt and this unambiguity is a product of the grammatical form of this type of question (ibid: 105). If the utterance is produced with a proclaiming tone, the speaker means "I don't know whether you do or not – please tell me", while he or she means "Am I right in assuming you do?" when the question is produced with a referring tone (ibid: 106).

As Brazil (1997) suggests, in producing an utterance such as Example 5.2, the speaker is projecting two sense selections, that is two matters with respect to which the speaker might be declaring his uncertainty. He further illustrates this point with an example which can be commonly identified in guessing games (ibid: 106):

Example 5.3

// proclaiming IS it an <u>EL</u>ephant//

Example 5.4

			elephant
	is		
It		an	alligator
	isn’t		
			armadillo

As shown in Example 5.4, the above may seek to determine (i) whether it is or is not an elephant, or he or she may want to know (ii) whether it is an elephant or something else by producing Example 5.3. Thus a concurring yes as a response to (i) and (ii) will have the meaning of “Yes, it is” or “Yes, an elephant” respectively. In other words, a yes-no question produced in a guessing game with proclaiming tone is a genuine guessing with selections from a set, this is usually used in the beginning round of the game. Having gone through the process of genuine guessing for some time, at a later stage of the game, yes-no questions are more likely to be produced with referring tone, which are scientific deduction or hunches. If the player is unsuccessful in getting the right answer, he or she would return to guessing by reverting to proclaiming tone.

As Brazil (1997: 107) states, the communicative value of discourse intonation in yes-no questions is generally of two types:

> “With proclaiming tone, the speaker asks for the removal of uncertainty with respect to one of a number of existentially possible options: s/he projects a context in which the response is so far unnegotiated and, trying out one of the options, offers it for the hearer to concur with or reject. With referring tone, the speaker tentatively projects a context in which the response has been negotiated: all s/he asks of a respondent is

confirmation (or denial) that the assumption s/he is making about the common ground is the proper one".

In addition, an expectation of a concurring "yes" is signaled simultaneously with a mid-termination choice in a yes-no question with a referring tone. Given the different communicate values of discourse intonation in yes-no questions, it can be observed that yes-no questions are used more often with direct enquiry to a yes/no choice in circumstances where the speaker has some reasons for projecting an assumption that they know the answer (in this case with referring tone) than representing elicitation in unnegotiated situations (in this case with proclaiming tone) (ibid: 109) (this is confirmed by the findings of the present study, see Chapter 12). This can explain why it is so often asserted that it is more natural to produce yes-no questions with rising intonation. Table 5.3 below summarizes the communicative value of discourse intonation in yes-no questions.

Table 5.3 The communicative value of discourse intonation in yes-no questions and their responses

	Referring tone	Proclaiming tone
Yes-no question	- asks for confirmation (or denial) and asks for approval of modification of world view that is submitted (negotiated) - expects a concurring yes when produced with mid termination	- asks for the removal of uncertainty, asks the hearer to concur with or reject the options that are offered (unnegotiated)

5.3.3 Information questions

Similar to the previous types of questions, in the system of discourse intonation, there is also no fixed intonation for information questions. Although it is suggested in some grammar books (see Chapter 3) that information questions are produced with falling intonation, Brazil (1985, 1997) argues that these questions can actually be produced with either proclaiming or referring tones. Consider the following example which is quoted from Brazil (1997: 111):

Example 5.5

A: I can't find my book.

B: // proclaiming WHAT'S it <u>CALLED</u> //

With proclaiming tone, the existential paradigm for the item in the response that is to replace the interrogative "what" might have a considerable number of members. In the case of Example 5.5, there is an implication of openness in respect to the title of the book.

Example 5.6

A: I can't find my book.

B: // referring WHAT'S it <u>CALLED</u> //

On the other hand, if the information question is produced with referring tone, the utterance is then heard as whether it is the book he or she recently saw in the bathroom or elsewhere instead of which of the many titles the book might have. With the communicative value of referring tone, the speaker makes a provisional assumption and the question then has a similar function to a yes-no question with referring tone.

Brazil (1997) offers a rationale for the assertion that wh-interrogatives have some natural affinity with falling intonation using a similar explanation. He states that requests for information with wh-elements may occur most frequently in situations where the information is unnegotiated, indicating that "I don't know the answer, please tell me" (ibid: 113). Below is a table summarizing the communicative value of discourse intonation in information questions.

Table 5.4 The communicative value of discourse intonation in information questions and their responses

	Referring tone	Proclaiming tone
Information question	- asks for confirmation of assumption, rather than information (negotiated)	- asks for information, an implication of openness (implies an absence of prediction; unnegotiated)

5.3.4 Summary

One of the strengths of the discourse intonation approach is that in illustrating the communicative value of different intonation choices in the four systems, the different types of interrogatives described are grouped according to the types of response that they attract. Intonation, as one of the most significant features of spoken discourse, is the core of this approach and this is what the pragmatic approach seems to lack. Brazil's (1995, 1997) discourse intonation system provides the researcher with a manageable tool to describe spoken data in greater detail. There is not a formula for which intonation should be used in a particular type of question. A characteristic of this approach is that it stresses the notion of the interactive and contextual situation of the discourse. This opens up greater possibilities for interpretation of intonation used in interrogatives and discourse as a whole. As a result, the expected response can vary according to the intonation choice that a speaker chooses at the moment of speaking.

5.4 Previous studies

Intonation was often ignored or treated minimally in L2 teaching from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Since 1980s, there has been an increase in the attention paid to intonation and in promoting the teaching of higher level speech, such as stress, rhythm, and tone, in a larger stretch of discourse. One of the reasons is that ESL or EFL learners have practical, real language demands and challenges (Chun, 2002). There is a shift in ESL and EFL learning to include pragmatic, discourse-oriented approaches, particularly in the acquisition of suprasegmentals, such as stress and intonation. However, there is relatively little applied linguistic research devoted to the communicative use of intonation. In this section, studies of discourse intonation are reviewed and the subject of teaching materials is also emphasized. It also reviews studies of intonation in questions and responses.

5.4.1 Studies on intonation

James and Leather's (1987) collection of twelve papers exhibits a diversity of frameworks and paradigms in intonation. However, evidence is derived from L2 speech perceptions and productions which deal with the theoretical rather than pedagogical concerns of intonation**.** Although Lepetit (1989) finds that cross-linguistic influence in intonation is of central importance in the learner's acquisition of the target system and that the degree of complexity of this influence should not be underestimated, the intonational cues are only correlated with syntactic units. Neufeld (1987) examines how the sound system of a L2 is acquired. He reports that adult learners could imitate sound sequences in unknown languages without receiving instructions on the rules and the meaning of the language, thus proving that intonation can be taught in isolation with grammatical aspects.

Other studies on the acquisition of intonation for L2 learners examine the variables affecting the learning process and outcome. Broselow et al (1987) look at how intonation is perceived by L2 learners with regards to L1 transfer. They find that the L2 learners are able to familiarize themselves with pitch patterns automatically, but only when they occur in a comparable position as in L1. The position of the contour in the string from L1 affects how the learners identify the tone. It is common that the learners misinterpret the tones in a particular position in an utterance in the L2 with reference to the tones used in the same position in the L1. For both the cases, the learners perceive the L2 strings in terms of their native language phonological system.

So far the studies cited above focus on the underlying theoretical framework of intonation related to L2 acquisition, studies concerning the applications of these models and paradigms to teaching are addressed. Chun (1988a, b) believes that the emphasis on theoretical principles suggests a need to include discourse intonation in language teaching and she deplores the neglect of intonation in syllabi and materials. Morley (1991) agrees with the need to change the pattern in pronunciation teaching, her belief is that "intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence" (ibid: 488) which the learners need to become effective communicators in professional commitment. Morley (1991) emphasizes pronunciation teaching which includes voice, pitch, and intonation. She also strongly believes that "pronunciation" must be regarded and taught as an integral part of oral communication, thus must not be learnt or taught in isolation both conceptually and practically. The learner goals should be "functional intelligibility" and "functional communicability" rather than the ability to merely pronounce individual segments native-like (Chun, 2002: 109), since learners can only understand and be understood when "pronunciation" and comprehension skills are linked (Gilbert, 1984).

Morley (1991) then lists the principles for changing the pattern of intonation teaching in ESL including the growing trend towards communicative approaches to teaching intonation, a focus on meaningful practice, such as speech activities adapted to the communication styles and needs of learners' real-life situations. There is also an emphasis on teaching intonation using a top-down approach which focuses on the rhythm and sentence melody of entire phrases or sentences (Pennington, 1989) and a combination of listening comprehension and oral proficiency for the teaching of discourse intonation (Pennington and Richards, 1986; Morley, 1991).

Pennington and Richards (1986) advocate the extension of research and the teaching of pronunciation to encompass text and discourse comprising segmental, voice-setting, and prosodic features. Hurley (1992) acknowledges the importance of incorporating face-to-face interaction into L2 teaching programmes to help learners develop full pragmatic competence in their L2.

Wennerstrom (1994) reports that the EFL learners in her study are unable to use pitch to signal meaningful contrasts in many of the same environments, but argues that this can be solved by giving the learners explicit instruction on the suprasegmental level. Similarly, Anderson-Hsieh (1990) finds that students can use intonation more effectively to highlight contrasts and new information after they have been taught suprasegmentals.

Other studies identify the variables that affect the use and the acquisition of intonation by L2 learners. One of the main factors is L1 transfer which causes misunderstanding, including the transfer of the intonation systems of particular speech acts of the L1 to L2 and the transfer of functions of different intonation patterns to the utterances in L2. Hurley (1992) examines the use of loudness of Arabic speakers of English, showing that the learners have wrongly used the increase in loudness to signal turn-relinquish in English which should be done by reductions in loudness. This use of an increase in loudness has often been misinterpreted as an effort to hold the floor. Loveday (1981) reports that the Japanese subjects transfer the use of low intonation contours as a politeness strategy which is interpreted as the opposite in English.

5.4.2 Studies on discourse intonation

Although attention drawn to research in intonation is related to teaching and learning, there are no standard guidelines for how and what to teach, what the aims and goals should be, and the expected results of having taught intonation. One exception would be Cauldwell's (2002) discourse intonation coursebook using an innovative approach. It includes the spontaneous speech of native speakers, and teaches learners how to hear and understand "streaming speech". It is different from traditional pronunciation and intonation teaching materials in that it incorporates a great deal of listening, speaking and even transcribing exercises into the material with spontaneous speech recordings as examples and guides. This material is innovative as it has illustrated how important it is to integrate practice and theory and how pronunciation teaching can benefit from the computer-aided format. In the material, each chapter focuses on a different aspect in connected speech (such as linking sounds, rhythm, stresses, and prominence etc.) supplemented by a segmental focus (which includes vowels, diphthongs, consonants) illustrated in a spontaneous stretch of speech. Another example is Hewings' (2004) practice book. It provides a comprehensive source of teaching activity examples which has been demonstrated and proved to be successful in language classrooms in addition to the technical knowledge that the teachers need. In the activity book, after developing the awareness of English pronunciation, activities are organized at different levels: firstly sounds, secondly connected speech, and then stress in words and phrases, and finally intonation. It also provides tools for assessing learners' performance.

Other advocates of discourse intonation also raise its pedagogical value. Taylor (1993) presents an account of the general workings of English intonation and accent with an emphasis on discourse intonation. He provides an overall framework for the interpretation of intonation in a manner that is easily accessible to both teachers and learners. Although he admits that “little has been said on how to teach (discourse) intonation” (ibid: 20), he stresses its importance as a basis for interpreting and producing meaningful intonation patterns.

Clennell (1995, 1997) realizes that a failure to make use of the appropriate pragmatic discourse features of English intonation may result in serious communication breakdown between native and non-native speakers. He sets out a case for teaching discourse intonation to overseas students. He also suggests a sketch of pedagogic intervention strategies to help students develop appropriate skills in the areas of propositional content, illocutionary force, and inter-speaker co-operation and conversational management.

Goh (1994) explores the possibility of teaching discourse intonation in a systematic way, using Brazil’s model (1985) focusing on prominence and tone. She provides a detailed description of intonation features of the learners and she also suggests implications for teaching discourse intonation in schools. When Goh (1998, 2003) uses Brazil’s (1997) model to analyze and describe Singaporean and Malaysian English within local sociolinguistic contexts, she raises two methodological issues. One is whether the interpretation of data should be simplified for a closer presentation to the assumptions in the model. The second concerns applying the communicative value to a variety of English where she finds the pragmatic intentions to be differently realized. Nonetheless, in her conclusion, she claims that Brazil’s (1997) model is “adequate” (ibid: 3) for the analysis and interpretation of Singaporean and Malaysian English.

With the attention given to the study of discourse intonation, more studies have emerged using developed frameworks to analyze real-life spoken data. Hewings (1995, 1998) examines the tone choices in comparable samples of speech produced by speakers of British English and by learners from a variety of first language backgrounds. One source of the data is readings of scripted dialogued for the comparison of tone choices made by native and non-native English speakers. Another source of data is spontaneous speech using two elicitation tasks, “information-transfer” activity and “discussion” task. These tasks are intending to obtain more questions and disagreements respectively in the interactions. It is found that learners conform to native speaker use of rising and falling tones for the purpose of marking old and new information. However, the learners are found to fail to use tone choice for socially integrative purposes. Hewings (1998) observes that, in British English, people try to say something ‘positive’ in the case of agreeing with rising tone, before saying something ‘negative’ in the case of disagreeing with falling tone (ibid: 327). It is also found that the non-native speakers are find to fail to exploit the rise/fall tone opposition for socially integrative purposes” which are “observed in the native speaker area” (1998: 317). It will be useful for future study to compare how native and non-native speakers carry out the “socially integrative purposes” in terms of use of discourse intonation.

House (2006) examines paired identical utterances with different punctuation, and/or utterances with emphasis shown, read by subjects. Her analysis is conducted with reference to Brazil’s (1975, 1978) model, with an emphasis on the range of functions associated with the high key rising tone. Similar to Hewings (1995, 1998), House’s data are obtained by having subjects read sample utterances. This guarantees more comparable data with controlled variables, but the study should also take into consideration the value and importance of examining naturally-occurring data.

In Pickering’s (2001) study of the role of tone choice in improving the speech of international teaching assistants (ITA) in the classroom, she compares the tone choices made by 6 Chinese and 6 North American male teaching assistants (TAs). She studies twelve 2- to 4-minute extracts from naturally-occurring classroom presentations given by these male TAs. The data are analyzed using Brazil’s (1997) system of discourse intonation. Although the data are not analyzed with all the four systems in the model, all the tone choices are identified in the recordings. Falling tones are found to be predominant in the data. Pickering (2001: 241) explains that since teachers are involved in “telling”, that is presenting new, world-changing information to their students, it results in a higher frequency of falling tones. Falling tones are also used to frame and announce a new topic, and to present key facts or new procedures. She also finds that rising tones are less commonly found than falling tones. Rising tones are used to establish common ground, project solidarity, and avoid open disagreement with their students (Pickering, 2001). In Pickering’s study, level tone is less commonly identified in the teaching assistants’ presentations. The

TAs make use of the neutral value of the level tone to signal an incorrect student response. They are also used to encourage students to "fill in the blank" when the answer is recoverable from the context (ibid: 245). Pickering argues that the native-English-speaking TAs systematically use their tone choices to increase the accessibility of the lecture material and establish rapport with their students. It is, however, found that the non-native-English-speaking TAs make tone choices which obfuscate the information structure and are characterized as unsympathetic and uninvolved. She concludes that the tone choices made by the international TAs attributes to communication failure between them and the students. Pickering suggests that tone choice should be addressed in the linguistic and pedagogical components of the ITA instruction programmes.

Adopting Brazil's (1997) model of discourse intonation, Pickering's (2001) study is able to identify the use of different tone choices of the TAs. However, the data set are not very representative, only less than 45 minutes in total are studied. The range and nature of the data are also not sufficient in reaching the study's conclusion. The presentations recorded are 2- to 4-minute monologues, thus it is not sufficient to confirm that communication failure between the TAs and the students is caused by the tone choices made. It is suggested that a larger data sample of spontaneous interactions needs to be studied.

With the advancement in discourse intonation research, corpora have been transcribed not only orthographically, but also prosodically, using Brazil's (1997) system. Corpus-driven studies have become more mainstream in the research of discourse intonation. The Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (Cheng, Greaves and Warren, 2005 and Cheng and Warren, 1999) is an example of a large corpus which is transcribed using the model by Brazil (1985, 1997) and others (Coulthard and Brazil, 1981; Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981; Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Hewings, 1990; Cauldwell, 2002). The availability of such a large corpus with discourse intonation annotation provides researchers with the resources to investigate the communicative value of discourse intonation in naturally-occurring interaction.

When Cheng and Warren (2006) analyze the potential problems of importing media in the form of a television programme from another culture, they make use of Brazil's (1985, 1997) discourse intonation system in the interpretation of the communicative value of the interaction of both the television shows in English (UK) and in Cantonese (Hong Kong). This makes it possible for them to make a critical comparison between the two television programmes and helps to identify possible problems causing the failure of the show in Hong Kong.

Cheng and Warren (2002) examine the relevance of corpus-driven study to practitioners in Hong Kong's hotel industry. They study the checking-out discourse in terms of structural organization, politeness phenomena of utterances, and discourse intonation. They find that the hotel staff's use of rise tone is sometimes not appropriate in the context. They suggest that a substitution of fall-rise tone may avoid the assertion of dominance and forcefulness (ibid: 158).

Cheng (2004) also studies the public speeches of a former Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. She examines how meaning is made at two levels: collocational and intonational. Analyzing the speeches with Brazil's (1997) discourse intonation model, she obtains findings which conform with the model. She confirms that speakers use fall-rise tone to assert common ground and high key to indicate that the utterances go against the hearer's expectations. However, the data in this study are all monologues. Studies examining dialogic interaction might be able to reveal the communicative value of these different tone and key choices in interaction.

Warren (2004) describes the design and compiling of the sub-corpus of business discourses contained in the HKCSE. In the discussion, he finds that speakers observe the intonational system as described by Brazil (1985, 1997). He also finds that this is true for both the non-native and native speakers. The participants are able to make sense locally with the intonation choices made (ibid: 136). However, almost all of the non-native speakers in the HKCSE are Hong Kong Chinese. It should be interesting for future study to examine discourse intonation choices by other NNS so that we could compare whether it is true that both NS and NNS observe the Brazil's intonation systems or whether it is just NS and Hong Kong Chinese instead of NNS generally. In the analysis of the hotel ambassador discourse, he finds that the hotel ambassador, given her role, sometimes fails to make appropriate intonation choices (ibid: 136).

Cheng and Warren (2005) examine the use of rise and rise-fall tones to assert dominance and control in different discourse types. In their study, they find that the preference for different tone choices is not determined by native/non-native speaker or gender. The choice of certain tones is found to be determined by both the discourse type and the roles of the speaker. They have identified that the speakers use rise tone to indicate that he or she will continue to speak (ibid: 94), to portray a warmer situation (ibid: 95), to openly remind the hearer(s) of common ground (ibid: 95); and rise-fall to mark a change in the speaker's world view (ibid: 96). They conclude that the extent of dominance and control varies across discourse types due to participant roles, for example conversations have an even distribution of rise and rise-fall tones (50% vs. 50%), whereas academic supervisions have one party, the supervisor, overtly dominating the use of these two tones.

Warren (2006) studies the system of prominence when examining lexical cohesion in job interviews in the HKCSE. In his study, he describes the connection between a speaker's choice of a lexical or non-lexical word in a cohesive chain and the speaker's choice of prominence. He finds that the speaker's choice of whether to make a lexical or non-lexical word prominent is determined by what the speaker thinks is situationally informative at that point in the discourse (ibid: 320). Warren (2006) concludes that this finding supports the view that prominence is not an inherent property of words, but rather subject to "context-specific" speaker choices (ibid: 320). He also suggests that discourse intonation be given attention in the teaching materials, in the upper secondary schools in Hong Kong in particular, and that corpora such as HKCSE could be used as the basis for learning and teaching materials, offering learners the opportunity to study discourse intonation in real world contexts.

5.4.3 Studies on the intonation of questions and responses

In the identification of questions, different researchers see the role that intonation plays differently. Some researchers (Batliner and Oppenrieder, 1988; Quirk et al, 1985, Huddleston et al, 2002) believe that for some question forms, the role of intonation is the only determinant in their identification. However, some researchers do not agree and they claim that the role of intonation has been overstated (Beun, 1986; Brazil, 1997; Brown et al, 1980; Bolinger, 1957; Geluykens, 1986, 1988, 1989).

As discussed in Chapter 3, when Quirk et al (1985) classified different question forms, they have also listed the intonation that those questions are associated with, for example, fall tone with wh-questions, rise tone with yes-no (including declarative) questions. Batliner and Oppenrieder (1988), in responding to a study conducted by Geluykens (1987), emphasize that "intonation can and possibly must be the only cue for determining question-status" (ibid: 232). However, according to Geluykens (1989: 574), these views limit the task of identification of questions intonation but "fail to give any real evidence to support their … claim".

Beun (1986) finds that less than half (48%) of the declarative questions have rising intonation at the end. His findings suggest that lexical factors play an important part in the determining of question force, and when such cues are present, intonation does not serve as the sole determining cue (ibid: 6). There is a considerable drop in declarative questions judgment when the potential lexical-pragmatic declarative markers, such as particles, words indicating uncertainty are removed. Much earlier, Bolinger (1957) has also pointed out syntax, context and kinetics may be important cues for determination of question. Brown et al (1980) also conclude that some declarative and polar questions are regularly asked with fall tone (ibid: 187).

Based on similar arguments, Geluykens (1987) also finds that 53% of the utterances are to be interpreted as "question-prone" due to the lexical material employed (ibid: 488). He finds that only 31.6% of declarative questions (he terms them queclaratives) end in rising tone and the rest in non-rising tone (Geluykens, 1988: 481). He further argues that lexical-pragmatic indicators make declarative questions inherently "question-prone" which raises doubts as to whether intonation is the sole source for marking utterances as questions (Geluykens, 1988: 479-480). Geluykens (1988) suggests a number of factors which might contribute to question-status, such as facial expressions, gestures, the preceding context, and prosodic factors (ibid: 491). The intonation of yes-no questions is also studied by Geluykens (1989). Although there is a higher frequency in rising tones in yes-no questions, as compared to the frequency in rising tones in general, rising tone is not found to be the most frequent tone in yes-no questions (1989: 574). Geluykens (1989) concludes that there is a lot of evidence showing that there is indeed no simple correlation between intonational cues and illocutionary force. In other words, intonation is not the sole determinant of question-status, but it should be remembered that it plays an important role in the construction of the communicative value of questions

5.4.4 Studies on discourse intonation and questions and responses

As discussed earlier, some researchers believe that intonation plays a role in the identification of questions and some believe that a specific question form is said with fixed intonation (Batliner and Oppenrieder, 1988; Celce-Murcia, et al, 1996, Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985). However, there are researchers who argue that while there is no fixed intonation for questions (Beun, 1986; Bolinger, 1957; Brazil, 1985, 1997; Brown et al, 1980; Cauldwell, 2002; Cheng, 2004; Cheng and Warren, 2001; Cheng et. al, 2005; Coulthard, 1992; Hewings, 1990, 1995, 2004; Geluykens, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989; Goh, 1989, 2000; Warren, 2006), it contributes to the communicative value of the questions.

Cheng (2004c) examines the questions and answers in Q&A sessions from four perspectives: question types, pragmatic functions of the questions, rhetorical structure of the responses, and the intonational features of the questions and answers. More than three quarters of the questions function to elicit information (79%) while the rest involve criticism or attack, suggestions and comments. These information eliciting questions are mostly in the form of a wh-question (70%) and there are a similar number of yes-no and declarative questions, with 12.5% and 16.6% respectively.

Cheng (2004c) observes that given the nature of this sub-genre, most of the questions are answered (72%) but sometimes the presenters evade answering the question (28%). In this sub-genre, answers given by the presenters tend to be deductive (54%) rather than inductive (42%). She defines an inductive answer as characterized by the delayed introduction of the answer in the discourse while a deductive answer is when the answer to the question is at the beginning of the response. In Cheng's study, the presenters rarely answer baldly on record which is a response devoid of any redressive action (4%).

Cheng (2004c) also argues that question types do not have fixed tones associated with them. It is found that 28.2% of the wh-questions are said with non-falling tones; only 20% of the yes-no questions are said with rising tones; and declarative questions mostly with fall tones. In terms of termination, all the questions are found to have mid termination which functions as "straightforward request for information" (ibid: 120). This is what might be expected in such an institutional discourse context with a fixed Q&A session (ibid: 120).

In Cheng's (2004a) study of hotel checking out discourse, she focuses on three of the nine structural organization moves: establish the purpose of the service encounter, settle minibar account, and ask how the guest would like to pay the hotel bill. Attention is paid to the intonational feature of the questions involving the settling minibar account move. In the checking-out context, the "asking for the minibar key" move has the illocutionary force of asking if there is any outstanding payments due to consumption of the minibar. Cheng (2004a) finds that the front office staff use rise tone whether they are asking the guest to return the minibar key or if the guest has made use of the minibar. She considers this choice of tone as inappropriate in this context as it carries the assumption of the reassertion of shared knowledge coupled with a sense of insistence or forcefulness (ibid: 153). The illocutionary force of these questions might also explain why the guests' responses are said with fall tone which is an indicator of new information for the hearer (as opposed to "shared"), and typically abrupt negative responses. In most of the cases (two-thirds), the question is asked with mid key and termination which expects and receives concurrence from the hearers (ibid: 153).

These studies by Cheng give useful insights to the area of corpus-driven, questions and responses and discourse intonation studies. However, the data sets examined are relatively small, 61 questions are identified in Cheng (2004c) and only six minibar-related utterances are examined in Cheng (2004a: 146). It is therefore useful to compare the findings of the present study with this study which investigates tone choices made across a large corpus of different question types, and also discusses the communicative value of these tone choices based on participant roles.

5.5 Conclusion

Research on pronunciation (in the broad sense) and intonation has emphasized language acquisition and teaching (James and Leather, 1987; Lepetit, 1989; Neufeld, 1987; Taylor, 1993 Broselow et al, 1987; Chun, 1988a, b, 2002; Morley, 1991; Gilbert, 1984; Penington, 1989; Pennington and Richards, 1986, Hurley, 1992; Wennerstrom, 1994; Anderson-Hsieh, 1990). Others have been devoted to the area of discourse intonation recognizing its importance. There has been an increase in the number of studies involving the examination and analysis of real-life data with the frameworks and models of discourse intonation (Hewings, 1990; House, 2006; Pickering, 2001). Emphasis has then been extended to methodologies in teaching intonation, with some comparing the NS/NNS in terms of intonation (Cauldwell, 2002; Chun, 2002; Clennell, 1995, 1997; Goh, 1994, 1998, 2003; Hewings, 1990) making use of the model developed by Brazil (1985, 1997). Although many of these studies have analyzed naturally occurring data implementing Brazil's model, some of the data are obtained with controlled method leading to a lack of spontaneity and naturalness. Also, the aspect of interaction might also been neglected if monologues are the only source of data. Thus there is a need for more large corpora comprised of naturally-occurring interaction which is prosodically transcribed. Researchers can then benefit from making use of these corpora in the study of discourse intonation. There could be then a surge of studies, such as the present one, which examine the systems of discourse intonation.

The present study examines discourse intonation in a large data set. Although it is interesting to compare intonation choices made by NS and NNS and their communicative value, the focus of this study is on the institutional identities and roles of the participants. It is not appropriate for this study to draw the comparison between NS and NNS without collecting parallel corpora in the same contexts as it has in the Corpus. This study focuses on the question and responses in relation to their use in different sub-genres, and particularly in relation to the institutional roles of the participants. The communicative value of discourse intonation is examined in these utterances so as to obtain a holistic picture of its use and value in business and professional spoken communication. It is then possible to identify similarities and differences of use of discourse intonation by different participants with designated roles in different contexts of situation and how the behaviour of the participants with different roles compare with one another in the business and professional settings.

Chapter 6 Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the analytical approach and frameworks of data analysis employed in the present study. It gives a description of the data used in the study and also lists the analytical procedures that are carried out in answering the research questions.

6.2 Corpus-informed study

The present study is a corpus-informed study which utilizes corpora as evidence for language description (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, 2002). In the examination of the use of question forms and functions and response functions, the study makes use of the corpus evidence to exemplify the analytical frameworks (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 65) that are adopted (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Huddleston et al, 2002; Quirk et al, 1985; Stenström, 1984, 1994; Tsui, 1987, 1992).

The study also seeks to refine pre-existing theories with the evidence provided by the language corpus (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 74). It "uses a corpus beyond (merely selecting examples) to support linguistic argument or to validate a theoretical statement" (ibid: 84). "(T)he commitment of the (present study) is to the integrity of the data as a whole, and descriptions aim to be comprehensive with respect to corpus evidence" (ibid: 84). It takes examples from corpora which "are not adjusted in any way to fit the predefined categories … ; recurrent patterns and frequency distributions are expected to form the basic evidence for linguistic categories" (ibid: 84).

In compiling a grammar of spoken and written English, Biber et al (1999) adopt Quirk et al's (1985) framework and categories. They provide 6000 examples from a corpus, attested from people's usage and comparative statistics of the density of usage of many grammatical features. However, as Sinclair (2001) states, Biber et al's (1999) study is an example of what Tognini-Bonelli (2001) calls corpus-based studies "which (do) not permit corpus evidence to challenge received theory or description except in detail" (Sinclair, 2001: 341). Although the present study refers to and compares findings with Biber et al, it differs from their study in that it seeks to explore the corpus and describe people's language use in doing questioning and responding rather than locating examples from the corpus to "crudely squeeze into Quirketal framework" (ibid: 340). It also makes use of the corpus evidence to "refine" (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 66) existing grammar approaches, particularly with regard to the relationship between intonation and questions. The present study also attempts to offer new insights into language description in questions and responses in business and professional communication with reference to discourse intonation. The study of the influence of the institutional roles of the participants in the discourses does not work within the frame of any pre-existing theories. The local meanings of the questions and responses and the description of the local meanings carried by different discourse intonational choices are also enriched by the examples from the Corpus.

6.3 Data

6.3.1 Source

The Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) (prosodic) is the first attempt to provide a description of the communicative role of discourse intonation (Brazil 1985, 1997) manifested in a large corpus of naturally-occurring discourses. The HKCSE (prosodic) consists of 0.9 million words, comprised of four sub-corpora (academic, business, conversation and public), and was compiled in Hong Kong between 1997 and 2002 (Cheng and Warren, 1990, 2000; Cheng et al, 2008). The data for the present study came from the Business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) (the Corpus) which is especially relevant to the research questions. The Corpus contains a variety of discourse types that were obtained in a range of business and professional contexts. These include reception and information desks in hotels and the Hong Kong International Airport, and meeting rooms and administrative offices in business and professional organizations in Hong Kong.

In order to obtain a better description of the linguistic behaviour of the interactants in the business and professional domains, the spoken data from different sub-genres were analyzed. These interactions are intercultural communication in which native and non-native English speakers communicate with one another. However, the native speakers of English and Hong Kong

Chinese are unevenly spread across the different sub-genres and different interactions. Also, in addition to the communicative value of discourse intonation, the focus of the present study is on the influence of the institutional roles of the participants on the questions and responses produced by the speakers. This specialized corpus of business and professional communications which comprises discourses from different business and professional sub-genres is particularly relevant to the research questions of the present study. The table below summarizes the sub-genres and the amount of data examined in minutes.

Table 6.1 Corpus contents

Genre types	Duration	Percentage
Service Encounters	114.5 min	9.50
Meetings	199 min	16.52
Interviews	622.2 min	51.63
Informal Office Talk	120.3 min	9.98
Question and Answer Sessions	149 min	12.37
Total duration:	1205 min (20 hour 5 mins)	100

The data of Service Encounters include front desk discourses at hotels, and information desks at the airport, check-in counters at the airport and retail outlets around Hong Kong. There are in total 51 encounters amounting to 114.5 minutes. These service encounters are relatively brief goal-oriented interactions and their length ranges from 5s to 8m 32s. The Interviews include placement interviews at hotels in which final year Hotel and Tourism Management (HTM) students are interviewed to determine whether they will be taken as a management intern and which department of the hotel they are to be placed. The other group of interviews is conducted at a Hong Kong university for various research posts. The duration of these interviews ranges from 8m to 45m, amounting to 622m 12s in total. There are two types of meeting in the third category of the data, most of which are formal and informal meetings conducted in business organizations. Some are project business meetings held at a Hong Kong university. The total length of the meetings is 199m with the lengths of the interactions ranging from

10m to 46m. The fourth category of data is Informal Office Talk between colleagues in business organizations in Hong Kong, and their lengths range from 17m 7s to 70m, totaling 120m 18s. The last category of data which amounts to 149 min in total is Q&A Sessions at the end of business-related presentations. The lengths of these interactions range from 5m 37s to 23m 33s. Detailed descriptions will be given before the discussion of the linguistic behaviour of the interlocutors in the different sub-genres (see Chapter 13).

Due to the difference in length of each sub-genre, it is potentially misleading to compare directly figures from the actual frequency counts identified in different sub-genres. To reflect and present the participants' behaviour in questioning and responding more accurately, the frequency counts are normalized in relation to the total number of words found in each sub-genre. A multiplier is obtained when the total number of words in each sub-genre is then normalized to 100,000 words. In the present study, the total number of questions identified is normalized with the multiplier that is obtained. Table 6.2 shows how the calculation was done.

Table 6.2 Normalization of findings in relation to the number of words identified

Sub-genres	Total number of words	Percentage	Multiplier (normalizing to 100,000 words)
Interviews	72,016	31.89	1.3885
Q&A Sessions after Presentations and Announcements	71,537	31.68	1.3978
Meetings	45,134	19.99	2.2156
Informal Office Talk	25,333	11.22	3.9474
Service Encounters	11,786	5.22	8.4846
Total	225,806	100	

There are a total number of 225,806 words in the Corpus. As shown in Table 6.2, the five sub-genres are ranked according to the total number of words with Interviews having the largest number of words and Service Encounters the least. Individual discourses are longer in Interviews, Q&A Sessions and Meetings, while those in Service Encounters and Informal Office Talk are relatively shorter.

All of the interactions, which are obtained in business and professional settings, occur in the course of naturally occurring interaction. In other words, they are not produced for research purposes as opposed to the data of some studies such as "invented decontextualized sentences" (Channell, 1994: 38) or verbal behaviour elicited through experimental procedures and instruments such as role plays (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989), that is data based on contrived or controlled conditions. Prior to the data collection for the HKCSE, consent is obtained from the participants, and permission is sought from the participants to use the data for the purposes of research. To minimize the degree of disruption caused during the process of data collection, the interactions are audio-recorded instead of video-recorded. Before the recording took place, individual participants are given the recording device and the procedures for recording the interactions. As Weber (1993) argues, there is no evidence that audiotapes data are seriously inadequate as objects of linguistic analysis (see also Owen, 1984 and Goodwin, 1979). It is important that the participants have genuine control over the discourse and are free from the influence of the researcher or linguist's demands on their behaviour and the discourse (Roger, 1989). Cheng (2003) also notes that the use of filming equipment and data collection conducted in a studio setting with technical set-up and assistance would have been incongruent for studies involving the collection of naturally occurring data.

6.3.2 Prosodic transcription of data

As Cheng, Greaves and Warren (2005) state, HKCSE (prosodic) is the first large-scale attempt to employ the Brazil's discourse intonation system to denote intonation. However, it is not the first corpus to have added a prosodic transcription. The 500,000-word London-Lund Corpus (LLC) (Svartvik, 1990: 15), for instance, has prosodic transcription that shows tone units, onsets, location of nuclei, direction of nuclear tones and two degrees of stress. The 170,000-word Survey of English Usage corpus (Svartvik, 1990: 15) has a fuller marking of prosodic features which includes degrees of loudness and tempo, modifications in voice quality and other paralinguistic features in addition to the features in the London-Lund Corpus. The 50,000-word Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus (SEC) (see, for example, Knowles et al, 1996; Wichmann, 2000) represents the following prosodic features: tone groups, stressed and accented syllables, pitch direction, simple and complex tones, high and low tones, and significant changes of pitch not covered by the tone markings (Taylor, 1996: 28-

29). The Spoken English Corpus (SEC) is compiled during 1984-87 and amounts to 52,637 words, or 339 minutes of recording time (Leech 1996: ix). The C-ORAL-ROM Corpus for Spoken Romance Languages (300,000 words for each of the languages Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese) (Cresti and Moneglia, 2005) is prosodically tagged for terminal and non-terminal breaks, with a terminal break marking an utterance and a non-terminal break marking "the internal prosodic parsing of a textual string which ends with a terminal break" (Cresti and Moneglia, 2005: 25-26). A representative sample of 150,000 words of the 0.5-million-word Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT) is prosodically marked. The prosodic features are nucleus, tones (fall, rise, fall-rise, rise-fall, level) and tone unit boundary (COLT website, 2007). In the Intonation Variation in English (IViE) Corpus, about 12 hours of speech data are transcribed in terms of rhythmic structure, acoustic-phonetic structure, and phonological structure (Grabe and Post, 2002).

As stated by the compilers of the HKCSE (Cheng et al, 2005) the representation of prosodic features in corpus data is not well standardized due to the small number of spoken corpora that are prosodically transcribed. The transcription conventions in the HKCSE (prosodic) are based on the work of Brazil (1985, 1997) and Cauldwell (2002) who develop ways of representing the discourse intonation systems and the nature of the systems themselves. Cheng, Greaves and Warren (2005 and forthcoming) observe that, although the conventions used by Brazil and Cauldwell are reader-friendly, they are not computer-friendly. Thus in the building of the corpus, they have also devised a notation system for the systems of discourse intonation that can be read by the corpus linguistics software (iConc) designed to interrogate the HKCSE (Cheng & Warren, 2005, 2006). The different stages in the development of the transcription conventions used for annotating the data in the corpus is exemplified and illustrated below:

Conventions for orthographic transcription:

Simultaneous utterances	[
Non-linguistic features	((pause)), ((cough)), ((telephone rings)), etc.
Indecipherable utterances	((inaudible))
A short, untimed pause	(.)
Speakers identified by letters	‘a’ and ‘A’ for females; ‘b’ and ‘B’ for males; ‘x’ for female ‘Other speakers’ and ‘y’ for male ‘Other speakers’
Lower case letters (HKC)	Hong Kong Chinese speakers of English
Upper case letters	Native speakers of English (NES)

Figure 6.1 Orthographic transcription of B025

B025

1 a: [yes can i help you
2 B: [i’ve already i’ve already got my boarding pass actually i need to pay my
3 airport tax
4 a: oh you are a transit passengers [right
5 B: [well yeah
6 a: okay so since you have the boarding card already [you can pay the tax at the
7 B: [yeah
8 opposite check in counter

The notation used in the present study which is computer-friendly is listed below:

Table 6.3 Computer-friendly notation for discourse intonation

Tone unit:	{…}
Prominent syllable:	UPPER CASE
Tone:	\/ fall-rise
	/ rise
	\ fall
	/\ rise-fall
	= level
	? unidentifiable
Key:	[…] mid
	[^…] high
	[_...] low
Termination:	<…>
	[^…] high
	[_...] low
Simultaneous Talk:	* current speaker
	** speaker initiating overlap utterance

The main features of the computer readable notation include distinguishing each tone unit, and indicating key and termination in tone units with more than one prominence. Modification is then made to the notation so that single prominences are represented as both key and termination [< … >] to better reflect the status of such prominent syllables. In addition, it is found necessary to include symbols to clearly distinguish simultaneous talk in order to facilitate computer searches. Points in the discourses where simultaneous talk occurs are annotated with a single '*' in the utterance of the current speaker, and '**' in the utterance of the speaker who initiates simultaneous talk. B025 below shows the iConc readable notation described above (Figure 3.4).

Figure 6.2 The transcription of B025 typed up using the iConc notation system

B025

1. a: * { \ [< YES >] } { = can i [< HELP >] you }
2. B: ** { ? i’ve [< alREAdy >] } { = i’ve already [< GOT >] my } { \
3. [BOARding] < _ PASS > } { = actually i need to [< PAY >] my } { \ airport [< _ TAX >] }
4. a: { \ oh you are a [TRANsit] < PASsengers > } * { \/ [< RIGHT >] }
5. B: ** { = [< WELL >] } { \ [< YEAH >] }
6. a: { = [< oKAY >] } { \ so since you [HAVE] the boarding CARD < alREAdy > }
7. * { \ you can [PAY] the < TAX > } { ? at the [OPposite] CHECK in <
8. B: ** { = [< YEAH >] }
9. COUNter > }

6.4 Frameworks of analysis

The different sub-genres of the corpus are examined from five perspectives: the exchange structure of question-response sequences, the forms of the questions and the functions of the questions, the function of the responses to the questions, the communicative value of discourse intonation in these questions and their corresponding responses and the institutional roles of the participants.

The main theoretical models and analytical frameworks used in the present study include a model of discourse structure (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992), discourse hierarchy (Stenström, 1984, 1994), and discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997). The models and frameworks used in the present study are discussed in the following sections. This chapter also discusses the categorizations used for the analysis of question forms (Biber, et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Givon, 1993; Huddleston, et al, 2002; Quirk, et al, 1985), question functions and response types (Stenström, 1984, 1994; Tsui, 1987, 1992).

6.4.1 Exchange structure

In the present study, the focus is on the act of elicitation, and the response to an elicitation, and the follow up moves involved in the exchange (or exchange combination) containing the question-response sequence. In analyzing the exchange structure of the question-response sequences, the present study is based on the I-R-F structure developed by Sinclair and Brazil, and Coulthard (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Sinclair, 1992). Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) define the exchange as “the basic unit of interaction”. They regard it as basic because it consists of the minimal contributions by two participants which can form the largest unit of interaction. In their analysis, the different moves are placed in one of the three categories: initiation, response, and follow-up. Brazil and Coulthard (1992) state that an exchange can only carry one piece of information and its polarity, which could be potentially complex, and that the information and the polarity can only be questioned and asserted once (ibid: 74). They suggest that an exchange boundary might occur when the same type of move occurs twice in succession, and the previous exchange has an incomplete structure.

Based on Linear Unit Grammar, Sinclair and Mauranen (2006) recognize speech as linear without embeddings. They regard “inserted sequences” as a problem within the framework of exchange structure. The problem points to the uncertainty of prospection of who should speak after and what type of utterance should follow the inserted sequence. Sinclair (1992) argues that when a putative response is not compatible with the prospection, it is interpreted as a challenge. “A challenge (is a move which) breaks the presuppositions and precipitates a new exchange” (ibid: 87). With the new element, challenge, introduced in his new model, there is not a need for double codings. The possible structures of an exchange in this new model are summarized in Table 2.4 and Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2.

6.4.2 Classifications of questions

The research questions of this study address how speakers use different forms of questions and how these questions are responded to and to what extent the phenomena are uniform or diverse across sub-genres in the Corpus. According to previous studies on questions and responses (see Chapter 3 and 4), questions which are produced in the same form can have different functions and the same function can also be realized in different question forms.

In the analysis of the syntactic forms of questions, although there are different categories in different approaches, the major categories of different approaches are very similar. They are yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, alternative questions and wh-questions. Although some of these categories are grouped under one another in some frameworks, these categories are classified as individual category.

When Biber et al (1999) examine the forms of questions in the Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) corpus, they adopt Quirk et al's (1985) traditional grammar approach. In their study, they have identified a group of expressions which functions as questions. Expressions such as "sorry, pardon and excuse me" are used as inserts in conversations. In Biber et al's (1999) study, these expressions are studied in terms their functions, one of which is to ask for repetition, another example is for apologizing (ibid: 1074). They find that these "inserts" are often used to ask for a repetition of what has just been said previously and are often found. It is interesting that Biber et al (1999) do not classify them using an existing category, nor do they give a new category label for them. In the analysis, this study terms inserts which function as questions "Insert Questions". Thus there are six question categories in total in the present study.

Table 6.4 The classification of the syntactic forms of questions

Forms	Examples (some are adopted and modified from Stenström, 1984: 64)
Yes-no questions	Is this the High Street? Isn't this the High Street?
Tag questions	This is the High Street, isn't it? This is the High Street, right?
Declarative questions	This is the High Street?
Alternative questions	Is this the High Street or the Regent Street?
Wh-questions	Where is the High Street?
Insert Questions	Sorry?

These six categories of question forms are categories in their own group. Tag, declarative and alternative questions are not grouped under an umbrella term of yes-no questions.

Some studies do not only examine the syntactic forms but also the functions of the questions (see Chapter 4). Stenström (1984) classifies question functions in relation to the elicitative force of the questions. Tsui's (1992) analytical framework also classifies questions functions in a similar manner. Table 6.5 presents the categories of Stenström's (1984) and Tsui's (1992) framework:

Table 6.5 Summary of question functions of Stenström's and Tsui's model

Stenström's model (1984)	**Tsui's model (1992)**
Q: action	Elicit: inform
Q: offer	Elicit: confirm
Q: react	Elicit: agree
Q: identify	Elicit: commit
Q: polar	Elicit: repeat
Q: confirm	Elicit: clarify
Q: acknowledge	
Q: clarify	
Q: repeat	

As Table 6.5 shows, in addition to Tsui's categorization of question functions, Stenström has categories for requests and offers as well. Both the models have six categories for the functions of questions. This section compares the two models and justifies which of the categories is adopted in the present study and why. The two functions in Stenström's model, "action" and "offer", are indirect requests (see Section 3.4), which do not have an inquiry force (Huddleston, 1994). Thus the present study will not focus on the utterances that are classified as these two functions. As Stenström notes, the function "acknowledge" does not function as a question to elicit information, and some of the "acknowledge" questions act as softener when they are not responded to.

The focus of the present study is on questions which do questioning; in other words, utterances which do not do questioning are excluded from the analysis, even if they are in the form of an interrogative. In addition, there are the functions of “repeat” and “clarify” in both the models. Although these two functions are meta-discoursal, i.e. they refer to the discourse itself, they play an important role in the progression of interaction. A few studies examining questions and responses in business and professional contexts (Lin, 2005a, 2005b and 2005c) also study discourse intonation and the institutional role of the participants. The main finding is that there is no fixed intonational choice associated with question form. It has also found that the institutional roles of the participants in a discourse influences the types of questions that are preferred (e.g. there are significantly more alternative questions in Service Encounters). Also, insert questions are found to be used to elicit a repetition of a previous utterance (this can also be done by wh-questions in some cases). Thus the present study integrates these two question functions into a single category– “repeat”.

In Tsui’s model, “inform” “invites the addressee to supply a piece of information” (ibid: 102). It has the same function as the “identify” category in Stenström’s model. The term that Stenström uses, “identify”, does not only invite the addressee to supply information but also to distinguish the required information from the unnecessary one. As for the other two categories, “agree” and “commit”, the first invites the addressee to agree with the speaker’s assumption. This has a similar function, and might cause overlap with “confirm”. The latter, “commit” involves the addressee to make a polar choice before he or she can commit to what the speaker has proposed. As Table 6.4 shows, the “polar” category is absent in Tsui’s framework. Thus the category of “polar” in substitution might cover questions that function to invite “commit” as well as those that invite the addressee to make a polar choice.

There, therefore, is the need for the present study to combine and simplify the categories that are proposed by Stenström and Tsui. Table 6.6 shows the categories used in the present study for the analysis of question functions.

Table 6.6 The classification of the question functions and their communicative role

Functions	**Communicative roles**
Identify	Invites the addressee to supply and identify a piece of information
Polar	Invites the addressee to supply an affirmation or negation of the presupposition
Confirm	Invites the addressee to supply a confirmation or disconfirmation of the presupposition, there is always a bias towards one response rather than another
Repeat	Prospects a repetition of the utterance preceding the elicitation

Interestingly, the same form of question may perform different functions. The examples below quoted from Tsui (1992: 91) can illustrate this point:

Example 6.1 Have you been to Paris?

Example 6.2 Has the boat left already?

Both the questions in Example 6.1 and Example 6.2 are produced in the form of a yes-no question and both questions expect answers of the same form, either a "yes" or "no". However, the two questions have different functions when the communicative choice realized by the expected answer is taken into account. A "yes" to Example 6.1 is an elliptical form of "Yes, I have been to Paris" which supplies the information, whereas a "yes" to Example 6.2 is an elliptical form of "Yes, your assumption is correct" which confirms the speaker's assumption. Brazil et al (1980) argue that discourse intonation helps to disambiguate these two forms as well. Sometimes a yes-no question with specific discourse intonation can also function as an information-seeking question. Below is an example quoted from Brazil et al (1980):

Example 6.3 Are you still here?

The utterance “Are you still here?” spoken with high termination by the speaker to his colleague working in the office at 7 o’clock in the evening does not expect either a “yes” or “no” answer. It functions as an information question equivalent in meaning to “Why are you still here?” (see also Tsui, 1992). In this case, a mere “yes” or “no” response would be interpreted as unwillingness to interact with the speaker. Regarding the communicative choice of the expected answer of the question, it is important that all questions are also analyzed in terms of the functions according to the responses that they elicit.

Brazil (1997) suggests a model of intonation which builds on a discourse-based framework and assigns meaning or communicative value to the different elements that make up the system of intonation. In the discussion of the communicative value of the discourse intonation, he analyzes social elicitations and “finding out” and “making sure” questions based upon his four systems. As Brazil states, social elicitations are “phatic” and are seldom asked for the sake of eliciting information of any kind. Thus in this study, utterances which are social elicitations and so do not do questioning are excluded from the analysis.

Although Brazil (1995, 1997) states that it is easier to start his discussion with a classification similar to those of the traditional grammar and systemic-functional approaches, he disagrees with these approaches and argues that there is no fixed intonation to questions. So, a wh-question can be produced with proclaiming tone (falling) or referring tone (rising). In other words, the value of intonation plays a significant role in the analysis of the communicative value of both questions and responses in interaction as a different intonation choice of the systems with the same utterance makes a difference in meaning (see Sections 5.3, and see Table 5.2-4 for summary of the communicative value of different intonation choices for different question types).

Thus in the present study, the questions identified are categorized both in terms of their form and function, taking into consideration the communicative value of discourse intonation.

6.4.2.3 Procedures for the categorization of questions

At the beginning stage of data analysis, utterances in the Corpus are mainly labeled questions and non-questions (as shown in the first column in Example 6.1), since it is not the aim of this thesis to identify and study the speech acts of all the utterances which are not doing questioning. After the questions are identified, they are categorized into different forms (column 2) and functions (column 3). Below is an illustration of how the analysis is done:

Example 6.1

B: hotel guest b: hotel staff

Speech Act	Question Form	Question Function	No.	
NQ			1	B: { = < UM > } { = i want to [CHECK] out EIGHT TWO two < ONE > }
			2	((pause))
NQ			3	B: { / [MISter] < G__ > }
NQ			4	((pause))
NQ			5	b: { \ let me < SEE > }
			6	((pause))
NQ			7	b: { \ it’s eight [ONE] two < TWO > }
Q	Declarative	Identify	8	B: { / < ^ EIGHT > }
R			9	b: { \ eight [ONE] two < TWO > }
NQ			10	B: { = < ER > } { = < EIGHT > one } { \ eight [^ ONE] two < TWO > } { = < RIGHT
			11	> }
NQ			12	b: { \ < YEAH > }
NQ			13	B: { = < RIGHT > } { \ < SORry > }
NQ			14	b: { \ you are [TOO] < TIRED > }
R			15	B: { \ < ^ YEAH > } { \ [EIGHT] ONE two two } { = < THAT’S > stupid } { \ but i
NQ			16	[WAS] in the right < ROOM > }
			17	B&b: ((laugh))
			18	((pause))
Q	Yes-no Q	Polar	19	b: { / did you [purCHASE] anything from the Mini < BAR > }
R			20	B: { \ < NO > } { \ < NOthing > } { \ < _ NO > }
			21	((pause))
NQ			22	b: { \ your [BILL] is < ON > the way } { \ it’s < COming > }
NQ			23	B: { = < oKAY > }
			24	((pause))

The procedures of analysis are shown in Example 6.1. In the first column, utterances are labeled either as questions or non-questions by studying the speech act of the utterances. In other words, this study does not mark all interrogatives as questions; and similarly, it does not mark all declarative as non-questions. This identification process also involves the studying of the intonation of the question and its response. By doing so, it also helps disambiguate some of the problematic utterances and this is discussed in the next section, 6.4.2.3.1.

When all the questions are identified, they are then categorized into the six different forms, namely yes-no questions, tag questions, declarative questions, alternative questions, wh-questions and insert questions (as listed in Table 6.4). In the analysis, it is found that reduced or elided forms of questions are problematic. They can sometimes be interpreted differently. Some of the cases are discussed later in Section 6.4.2.3.2, the aim of the study is to obtain results that are as reliable and consistent as possible. Questions identified in the Corpus are also analyzed according to the functions that they perform, they are <Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, <Q: confirm> and <Q: repeat>. In the process of analysis, it is found that the intonation choice and termination choice are important factors in the categorization of question functions. In the Corpus, only 2% of the tone choice is unclassified (see Figure 12.1). For declarative questions in particular, a high termination choice normally entails the <Q: polar> function, while a mid termination choice normally entails the <Q: confirm> function.

And in some cases, the response that the yes-no question (and some declarative questions) elicits also helps define its function. When a mere “yes” or “no” response does not fulfill the requirement in answering the question, and requesting more detail information at the same time, it is very likely that the question is categorized as performing the <Q: identify> function. Complications and ambiguities encountered in the process of analysis are discussed in Section 6.4.2.3.3.

6.4.2.3.1 Identification of speech acts in ambiguous utterances

In this stage of data analysis, utterances in the Corpus are mainly labeled as questions and non-questions, taking the response into consideration. There are cases when there is an absence of a response following the question either because it is inaudible, or it is not recorded. In many cases, the presence and the role of a response help to confirm that an utterance is functioning as a question. It is important to examine whether the hearer responds to the utterance as a question. Thus in cases where there is no response, the questions are excluded from the qualitative and quantitative analysis. In Example 6.2, the hotel guest has lost his room key, and he wants the staff to re-issue a new one to him.

Example 6.2
b2: hotel guest

	11	b2: { \ [FOUR] zero six < FOUR > }
→	12	b2: { \ you [^ HAVE] a < REcord > of that }
B014: 11-12		

In line 11, the hotel guest tells the staff his room number for the re-issuing of the key. Without getting a response from the staff, he utters a declarative "you have a record of that" in line 12. This declarative might function as a question to seek confirmation or validation from the staff. Due to the absence of a response, this utterance is excluded from further analysis. Without evidence from the response that the hearer is responding to the utterance as a question, it is then difficult to determine thus it is important that the response is present in the discourse.

In the Corpus, there are cases where utterances are ambiguous. In particular, it is often difficult to determine whether the service provider is making an offer or asking a question in Service Encounters.

Example 6.3
b: hotel front desk staff B: hotel guest

	1	b: { = good < AFternoon > }
	2	B: { ? my name } { ? ((clear throat)) * sorry }
→	3	b: ** { ? < CHECK > in sir }
	4	B: { = [YEAH] i'm mister < ^ F__ > }
	5	b: { = < _ Okay > } { = mister < F__ > }
	6	((pause))
B011: 1-6		

In line 3 in Example 6.3, it is ambiguous whether the hotel staff is making an offer or asking question after the hotel guest has provided his name. Since the tone choice of the arrowed utterance is unidentifiable, it does not help to give additional information to the communicative meaning of the utterance. In this case, the role of the response plays an important part in providing relevant information for the question-status of the utterance. In line 4, the hotel guest responds by saying "yeah", confirming with the hotel staff that he is here to check-in and then providing his name so that the hotel staff can carry out the procedures. Although it is very often the case that a hotel guest visits the front desk to check-in, other services are also provided. In other words, the hotel staff is asking whether the guest would like to choose the check-in service instead of other services, such as check-out, complaints, arranging for airport shuttle that they offer. Thus the arrowed utterance is analyzed as a question not an offer. Below is another example from Service Encounters.

Example 6.4
b: hotel front desk staff B: hotel guest

→	20	b:	{ \ [^ WHAT] about i just ASK the house < KEEping > } { \ to [MAKE] up the
	21		< ROOM > } { \ [WHY] < NOT > }
	22	B:	{ = < UM > } { ? IT'S } { = < ^ IT'S > } { = < UM > } { = < Okay > }
	23		* { ? SURE }
	24	b:	** { \ you've * [PAY] for the < ROOM > }
	25	B:	** { ? okay < THANK > you * so much }
	26	b:	** { = < ALright > }
B002: 20-26			

The problem encountered in this example is whether the arrowed utterance is a question or an offer. Earlier in Example 6.4, the hotel guest is asking the staff to give him a new set of towels. Although the arrowed utterance is in an interrogative form, this needs to take the response and the institutional context into consideration to see if the utterance is functioning as a question. In lines 20-21, it seems that the hotel staff is asking if it is fine for the house-keeping staff to go and clean up his room in addition to providing a new set of towels. In line 22, the guest responds by "um, it's it's um okay", which declines the offer. In this type of encounters in hotels, it should be remembered that, it is the responsibility of the hotel staff to offer the best services to their guest, such as offering services before the guest has even requested them. This incident is an example of the staff offering house-keeping service (which is initially included in the room charge) to the guest on top of the new set of towels that the guest has requested. This utterance, like others whose illocutionary force is an offer, request for action, or a social elicitation, does not perform questioning. As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, utterances not doing questioning are excluded from the present study, even if they are in the interrogative form. Example 6.5 below shows a request for action.

Example 6.5
b: interview

→	150	b: { \ < OH > } { \ < REALly > } { = < MM > } { = [DO] you < MIND > } { = <
	151	SPEAking > } { / [PUtonghua] with < ME > } (.) { \ [I] know JUST a < LITtle
	152	> }
B065: 150-152		

In Example 6.5, it is ambiguous as to whether the arrowed utterance is a question or a request. In the example, the interviewer says "do you mind speaking Putonghua with me" in lines 150-51. Although the utterance is in interrogative form, it functions as a request for action. The interviewer employs a negative politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and chooses to be conventionally indirect (ibid: 132). This is done by making use of an interrogative question form (ibid: 223). Instead of asking the interviewee for his preference of choice of language to be used, the interviewer is requesting the interviewee to speak Putonghua "indirectly". Whereas in Example 6.6 below, it is controversial if the question is a request or genuine enquiry.

Example 6.6
b3, b4: hotel managers
b1: hotel general manager (chairman of meeting)

	790	b3: ** { \ [CAtalogue] < PRINting > } { \ [^ THOSE] are the
	791	comPRESsible < SPEC > } { \ [THAT] you can < TARget > }
→	792	b1: { = [Any] other < QUEStions > }
	793	b4: { \ yes < J__> um } { \ i [^ GOT] an < imPRESsion > that okay } { = < ER > }
	794	{ \ for the free < MARket > } { = is < Using > the } { = sort of < Online >
	795	system to } { ? what er } { \ [PURchasing] to reduce the < COST > }
B094: 790-795		

In Example 6.6, the arrowed utterance is in the interrogative form, but it is unclear if it functions as a question or as a request, indicating the transition from one topic to another. In the example, the chairman of the meeting produces an interrogative, "any other questions" in line 792. Similar to Example 6.5, this interrogative might be interpreted as a request for action. In Example 6.4, the interviewee can either choose to fulfill the request or refuse to do so. But no matter how the interviewee responds to the request, the interviewer has the intention of having the interviewee speak in Putonghua. In this case here, the chairman of the meeting is requesting the members to ask questions. Although it is similar to Example 6.5 that a mere “yes” response does not constitute an appropriate response if other members have questions to ask, the chairman here does not intend to make the other members ask questions. It is very often that in a meeting, the chairman genuinely does not know whether or not the other members have questions. Thus this particular interrogative found in Meetings is identified as a question.

Another group of utterances, social elicitation, is difficult to be distinguished from genuine questions as well. Let’s consider Example 6.7 below from Interviews.

Example 6.7
b: interviewer a: interviewee

	5	b: { \ < THANK > you } { = < UM > } { = < AND > } { \ [^ GOOD] < MORning >
→	6	to you } * { / [HAVE] you have < BREAKfast > }
	7	a: ** { \ < MM > }
	8	a: * { = < YES > } { / < SURE > }
B066: 5-8		

In Example 6.7, after the interviewer has introduced himself and greets the interviewee, he asks “have you have breakfast” in line 6. In Chinese culture, it is very common for people to ask whether the other person has had a meal yet, breakfast, lunch or dinner. The speaker does not intend to know whether the hearer has had that particular meal, indeed these questions have the same or similar function as the question, “how are you?” or “how do you do?” By producing this type of question, such as “have you have breakfast?” in line 6, the speaker indicates that he or she is building rapport between him/herself and the hearer. As Brazil (1997: 114) states, social elicitation or “phatic questions are seldom asked for the sake of eliciting information”, their aim is for “social bridge-building”. In this example, the interviewer tries to “insulate togetherness” by the phatic question and this is usually done by producing the question with rise tone (ibid: 114).

In determining whether an utterance functions as a question, the institutional role of the participants also plays an important part in determining the illocutionary force of the utterances.   Below is an example.

Example 6.8

a: hotel staff (hotel ambassador) A: hotel guest

→	17	a: { = < ARE > you } { \/ [FIRST] time to < VIsit > hong kong }
	18	A: { = < ER > } { / < NO > } { \ it's our < THIRD > time here }
B003: 17-18		

The arrowed utterance in Example 6.8 might seem to like a social elicitation, taking the institutional role of the participants, it is analyzed as a question. The hotel staff often produce a social elicitation at the front desk. In Example 6.8, while the guest is trying to get some stamps at the front desk, the hotel staff asks if it is the first time that the guest has visited Hong Kong. This yes-no question can easily be identified as a social elicitation since it is found at the beginning of the service encounter. Given the institutional role of this particular staff as a hotel ambassador, her job is to talk to hotel guests and elicit their comments about their stay, suggestions and advice for the hotel. In this encounter, the staff asks this question as she is planning the questions that she could ask later to elicit comments and suggestions from the guest. It is the "no" response which allows her to elicit comparison of the hotel she is working for and the hotel the guest has previously stayed with. Although it is easy to interpret the question in line 17 as a social elicitation, the institutional role of the participants helps disambiguate whether the question is a social elicitation or genuine enquiry.

6.4.2.3.2 Analysis of ambiguous question forms

Utterances which function as questions are identified with consideration of the intonational choice of the questions and the response that follows.

In the analysis of questions, it is difficult not only to decide whether utterances are functioning as questions, but also to categorize them into different forms, particularly when the utterances are in an elided form. As Biber et al (1999: 719) observe, some questions do not necessarily include all the clause elements, such as subjects and auxiliary verbs, or lexical verb. In the analysis of question forms, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether an utterance is an elided form of a yes-no or declarative question.

Wittgenstein (1953: 8-10) argues that it is not necessary for the hearer of the ellipted utterance to re-construct the full form in order to correctly interpret it. He illustrates this argument with an example of a builder saying "Slab!". In this example, the builder is simply uttering a shortened form of “Bring me a slab”. The hearer does not need to put back the “missing” words to understand what the builder means. Wittgenstein (1953: 8-10) states that when speakers converse, they are engaged in a different “language game” in which spoken language actively shapes context. The argument follows that when a speaker utters an ellipted form, the structure of that utterance is simply how the utterance is presented. It is not necessary to speculate or formulate what could be its full form. The present study follows Wittgenstein’s argument, thus for consistency, an utterance is analyzed as a yes-no question when it has the characteristic of a yes-no question, such as auxiliary-verb-fronting (as in Example 6.11); and a declarative question when it has a single phrase or a fragment which is not in an interrogative structure (as in Examples 6.9 and 6.10).

Example 6.9
B: hotel guest a: hotel front desk staff

	10	a: { = < SO > er } { = would you need a < ^ LOCker > }
	11	B: { = < ^ NO > thank you }
	12	a: { \ the < TOWELS > for you } { ? that’s the }
	13	B: { = the < ^ TIME > }
	14	a: { = the time < ^ NOW > is } { \ [FORty] < FIFty > }
→	15	B: { \ [FORty] < FIFty > } { \ < ^ FORty > }
	16	a: { \ < ^ fourTEEN > }
B020: 10-16		

In Example 6.9, the guest is asking the hotel staff about the time. Since what the staff has provided could not be an accurate time, the guest asks for clarification by a repetition in line 15. In this question, both the subject and the auxiliary verb are omitted. It could be argued that this is either an elided form of a declarative question, “the time now is forty fifty, forty”, or an elided form of a yes-no question, “did you mean forty fifty, forty”. In the analysis, this utterance is analyzed as a declarative question since it does not have an interrogative structure.

Example 6.10
b1: airline check-in desk staff x: passenger

→	14	b1: { = you < MEAN > er } { = the [caTHAY] make the < reserVAtion > }
	15	x: { / < YES > } { \ [^ LAST] name is < C__ > and } { ? t and t }

B009: 14-15

In Example 6.10, although the utterance in line 14 is a declarative, “you mean er the cathay make the reservation”, it could be argued that it is an elided form of “do you mean…”. Following the consistency principle, these two utterances, which do not have the structure of an interrogative, are categorized as declarative questions in the analysis. Below is another example of an elided question.

Example 6.11

B: passenger a1: airline staff

	103	B:	{ \ < ALright > } { = < AND > } { = < AND > } { = [THANK] you the Other thing
	104		is I’M on your < FLIGHT > um } { \/ er < ^ toMORrow > } { = i’m < ON > your }
	105		{ = er [C] < X > } { \ [^ EIGHT] three < EIGHT > } { \/ to < vanCOUver > }
	106		(.) * { \/ [SIXteen] forty < FIVE > } { = [WHAT] time do i < CHECK > in }
	107	a1:	** { / < Uhuh > }
	108		{ \ < BUSIness > class }
	109	a1:	{ = < ER > } { \ < ACtually > } { \ [Any] < TIME > } { \ will < DO > } { \ [NOT]
	110		< LAter > } { = < THAN > er } { \ [THREE] forty < _ FIVE > }
	111	B:	{ \ [THREE] forty < FIVE > } { \ so [ONE] hour before < TAKE > off }
	112	a1:	{ \ < YEAH > }
→	113	B:	{ = is < ALright > } { \ for < BUSIness > class }
	114	a1:	{ = \ < YES > }

B035:103-114

In Example 6.11, the passenger is asking the airline staff whether it is fine for business class passenger to check-in at the same time as the economy class. The question he produces “is alright for business class” in line 113 is in elided form. It could be an elided form of a yes-no question, “is that alright for business class” or a declarative question, “that is alright for business class”. Since the utterance in discussion has the characteristic of auxiliary-verb-fronting, it is categorized as a yes-no question in the analysis.

6.4.2.3.3 Analysis of ambiguous question functions

Similar to the identification of question forms, it is also difficult to identify the functions of the questions. The problem occurs with yes-no and declarative questions in particular. Both question forms expect a “yes” or “no” response, but they can also be used to request detailed information. In the analysis, the intonational choice and the response to the question play important roles in clarifying the ambiguity.

Example 6.12 below takes place in a management meeting in a hotel (this example will also be discussed in Chapter 12, as Example 12.2). The sales manager, Speaker a1, is reporting to the management team about a potential client. The sales manager has reported that an airline is thinking of booking rooms and conference facilities in their hotel. The general manager, Speaker b2, who is the chairman of the meeting, wants to find out more about the airline.

Example 6.12
b2: hotel general manager (chairman of meeting)
a1: hotel sales manager

→	294	b2: { = [< THIS >] } { = ((inaudible)) [< airLINE >] is } { = [< IS >] } { \ [^
	295	NOT] the SAME as the euro < AIRline> }
	296	a1: { \ [NOT] the < SAME > } { = [< THIS >] is } { = a [< ERM >] } { = a [<
	297	CARgo >] airway } { = [< ER >] } (.) * { = [< ER >] }
	298	b2: ** { \ [< OH >] }
B017: 294-298		

In this meeting, the general manager acts as the chairman and guides the managers of the different departments to report on their operations to the board . The general manager produces a declarative after the sales manager has reported about an airline as a potential client. Given that the purpose of the meeting is to let the general manager elicit information on the progress of work from the managers of all the other departments, the declarative in lines 294-295 functions as a question because of the prevailing state of speaker/hearer understanding. This declarative question serves to elicit a response which removes some kind of uncertainty from the mind of the general manager.

The general manager chooses high key on “not” in line 294 to signal surprise, and present contrastive implications (Brazil, 1997: 41). This key choice, however, does not have an implication on the key choice of the following response. It is the termination choice which is echoed in cases of pitch concord. The general manager chooses mid termination on the declarative question signaling “can I infer, or did you mean (this airline is not the same as the Euro Airline?) Please confirm that it was this” (Brazil, 1997: 104). In other words, the general manager believes that the airline in discussion is not the same as “the

Euro Airline" and he expects the sales manager to confirm his inference. This declarative question, requesting the respondent to provide a confirmation can be interpreted as performing the <Q: confirm> function. However, taking the intonation choice into consideration, it indeed performs the <Q: identify> function. The general manager chooses to use fall tone on the declarative question. His choice of fall tone suggests that the message presented in the question has not yet been negotiated. When the question is responded to, the response changes the world view of the general manager and in turn enlarges the convergence of "common knowledge" of the managers. A referring tone on this declarative question would have signaled that he is surprised that "the airline is not the same as Euro Airline". His choice of mid termination indicates that he expects a concurrence of "the airline is not the same as Euro Airline", and his choice of fall tone on the declarative question serves "to ask for greater precision" (Brazil, 1997: 104). In other words, a simple "yes" or "no" response does not fulfill the requirement of answering the question. It can also be shown by the response that follows, in lines 296-297, the sales manager concurs with the general manager's inference that "the airline is not the same as Euro Airline" and she further gives information that "the airline is a cargo airline" instead. As Example 6.11 shows, the fall tone choice on this declarative question indicates that the speaker wants the hearer to remove the uncertainty of the proposition of the question that is produced, and expects the hearer to provide more specific information in addition to the "yes" or "no" answer.

6.4.3 Responses

The present study also investigates how questions are responded to and how the responses are related to or affected by the form or function of the questions and the communicative role of discourse intonation. It is also the interest of the present study to find out whether the linguistic behaviour of questioning and responding is uniform or diverse across different sub-genres in the Corpus. Based on previous studies on questions and responses (see Chapter 3, 4), a distinction is made between a response and an answer. A response is one which is appropriately and coherently related to the preceding question. An answer supplies the exact and no more or less than the information that is requested in the preceding question.

Stenström (1984) has classified reactions to questions into three major types: appropriate responses, delayed responses, and no appropriate response. When a question is asked, the addressee can respond at once and give an appropriate response. He or she can also put off the response momentarily until some obscure point has been cleared up, then the response given by the addressee after clarifying the question is a delayed response. The addressee may even prefer not to respond in an appropriate way which constitutes the "no appropriate response" category. In the present study, the focus is on appropriate responses which include both answers and replies. Below Table 6.7 summarizes the categories of appropriate responses which are used in the analysis of responses:

Table 6.7 Categories of appropriate responses (Stenström, 1984)

<table>
<tr><th>Category</th><th>Sub-category</th><th>Details</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Answer</td><td>Comply</td><td>Gives adequate information explicitly</td></tr>
<tr><td>Imply</td><td>Gives adequate information implicitly</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Supply</td><td rowspan="2">Provide inadequate information</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Reply</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evade</td><td>Avoid maneuvers consciously which also give inadequate information</td></tr>
<tr><td>disclaim</td><td>Overt declarations that the addressee ignores response or does not know how to respond</td></tr>
</table>

As Stenström (1984) observes, the categories of responses to questions are problematic. She suggests that special attention be drawn to different response choices, between "supplies" and "evades" in particular, and sometimes between "evades" and "disclaims". Their difference lies in whether or not a respondent has the "ability" and "willingness to cooperate" (ibid: 221). When the respondent is willing to give an appropriate response, he or she may produce a "supply". He or she may produce an "evade" when the respondent is not willing to make an attempt to give an appropriate response. The respondent is aware that he or she is not able to produce an appropriate response, a "disclaim" might be produced by explicitly declaring that the answer is not known. In the present study, an extra item is added to the above 5 categories – repeat. These are responses produced in reaction to questions which function to elicit “repeat”. In other words, there are altogether 6 categories in the analysis of response types.

6.4.4 Discourse intonation

The prosodic features of the corpus are transcribed using Brazil’s (1985, 1997) model which is adopted by others (Coulthard and Brazil 1981; Coulthard and Montgomery 1981; Sinclair and Brazil 1982; Hewings 1990; Cauldwell 2002a). Discourse intonation is based on the view that spontaneous speech is purpose-driven and it is speaker-controlled, interactive, co-operative, context-referenced, and context-changing (Cheng et al, 2008). The communicative value of intonation is concerned with the choices that speakers make, and their reactions to the ongoing task of making sense to their hearers in context in real-time (Cauldwell, 2002b). Discourse intonation is of particular relevance to the present study and the researchers working with the HKCSE (prosodic) to further the understanding of the way speech functions in interactive discourse through careful examination of naturally-occurring data (Cheng and Warren 1999a, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Cheng et al, 2008).

In the present study, Brazil’s (1997) interpretation of discourse intonation is employed. This framework is especially relevant in the examination of the intonation on questions. It can happen that a question spans a number of tone units. In the analysis of the communicative value of the questions, the questions are examined in relation to which intonation choice they end with. In other words, in interpreting the meaning they are making in the context, it is the tone choice in the last tone unit of the question that is studied. In Brazil’s framework, the system of termination also plays an important role in the analysis of the function of questions in general, and between the “confirm” and “polar” function in particular. Example 6.4 below illustrates the interpretation of a declarative question quoted from Brazil (1997):

Example 6.4

1	Speaker A:	{ \ i [SAW] him in < OXford > street }
2	Speaker B:	{ / you [SAW] him in < OXford > street}
3	Speaker A:	{ \ [< YES >] }
(Brazil, 1997: 103; annotation adopted from Cheng et al, 2005)		

When Speaker B echoes the lexis and grammar of an utterance in Example 6.4, it can be paraphrased as “am I right in you said (and meant) you saw him in Oxford Street”. The use of referring tone indicates that the information presented in the utterance in line 2 is not new information. It also indicates that what has been heard is in some way contrary to expectations. If the utterance in line 2 is produced with proclaiming tone, it carries a different communicative value (Brazil, 1997: 103).

Example 6.5

Speaker B:	{ \ you [SAW] him in < OXford > street}
(Brazil, 1997: 103; annotation adapted from Cheng et al, 2005)	

With proclaiming tone, according to Brazil, it lacks the element of expectation and asks for more precise information, “think again – was it Oxford Street, or was it somewhere else?” or “where in Oxford Street did you see him”. The communicative value of an utterance is also determined by the termination system (Brazil, 1997: 103). By re-examining Example 6.5, the choice of referring tone with mid termination invites the addressee to concur with the speaker. Thus the declarative question functions as “confirm” in this context. However, consider the following:

Example 6.6

Speaker B:	{ \ you [SAW] him in < ^ OXford > street}
(Brazil, 1997: 104; annotation adapted from Cheng et al, 2005)	

The declarative question in Example 6.6 can be paraphrased as “is that, or is it not, what you said (meant)?” (ibid: 104). With the use of high termination, the speaker is inviting the addressee to adjudicate. In other words, the declarative question functions as “polar”.

6.5 Selection of examples

The present study adopts a corpus-informed approach in the examination of question-response sequences in business and professional settings. Throughout the discussion, examples are extracted from the Corpus for illustration. In the discussion chapter, frequency counts are obtained and reported. Examples are presented either to exemplify the structure of a question-response sequence, a question form, a question function, a choice made within the systems in discourse intonation, a response type, or a sequence identified in a particular sub-genre. The aim is to present examples that are illustrative and typical of the aspect under discussion. Sequences are more likely to be selected when they are shorter in length, not in terms of the number of utterances but those that allow readers to appreciate the maximum amount of information in terms of the context of situation and interaction in the shortest excerpt. Shorter examples also facilitate the presentation of the concepts under discussion. Examples are also selected to maintain a more balanced sub-genre mix so that there are a similar number of examples from each sub-genre.

In the discussion chapter, information about the speech situation is given prior to the presentation of the examples. Information includes, the gender, speaker group, and designated role in the context of the speakers, background information of the interaction, the sub-genre type of the interaction and what has been going on in the interaction previously and the background to the question-response sequence(s) under discussion.

6.6 Analytical procedures

In the process of analysis, the moves and acts of the utterances are first examined, the communicative value of questions and responses with reference to discourse intonation and the relations of questions and responses in terms of key and termination are studied, the exchange structure of the sequences are analyzed, and the forms and functions of the questions and responses are then classified. In answering the research questions, the following procedures are carried out:

1. describe the general findings obtained from the above analyses
2. discuss the exchange structure of question-response sequences
3. discuss the use of question forms by the interlocutors in all sub-genres
4. compare the use of question forms in performing different communicative functions
5. compare the different response types in reacting to different question functions

6. discuss the communicative values of different tones for different question forms and the relationship between question and response in a sequence using the systems of discourse intonation
7. discuss the influence of the speaker’s role and context of situation on question-response sequences in each sub-genre
8. compare the pattern of question-response sequences and the influence of the speaker’s role and context of situation on these sequences across sub-genres

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter describes and justifies the approaches and analytical frameworks employed in the present study. It gives a description of the data being used in the study and lists the analytical procedures followed in answering the research questions.

Chapter 7 Quantitative findings

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the total number of questions and the normalized frequency counts in different sub-genres.

7.2 Quantitative findings of number of questions

After the acts and moves of the utterances in the Corpus are examined, a frequency count of the total number of questions identified is obtained. A total of 1827 question-response sequences are identified (see Table 7.1). The six different question types are ranked according to the frequency counts from the highest to the lowest respectively: declarative questions (32%), yes-no questions (29%), wh-questions (23%), tag questions (10%), alternative questions (5%) and insert questions (1%).

Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 present the actual frequency counts and normalized frequency counts of questions in each sub-genre.

Figure 7.1 The comparison of actual frequency counts and normalized frequency counts of question types

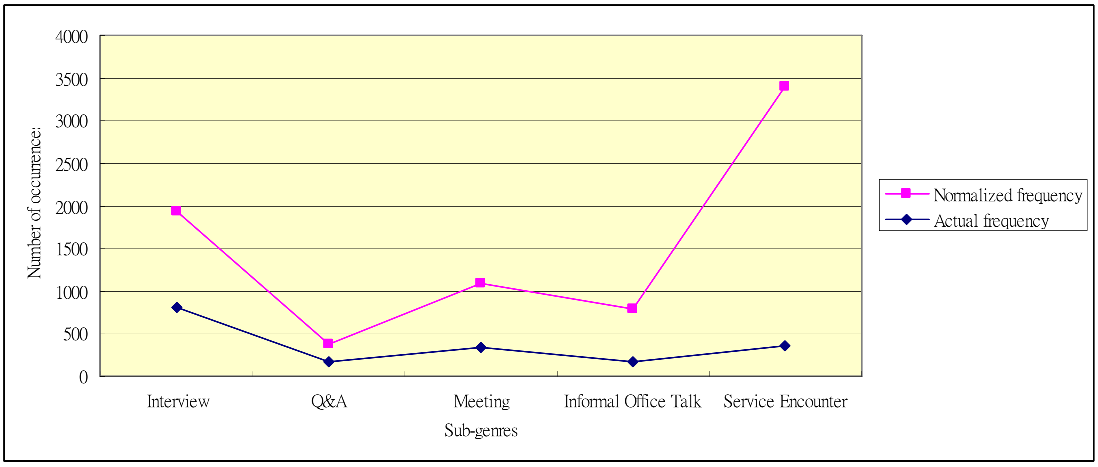


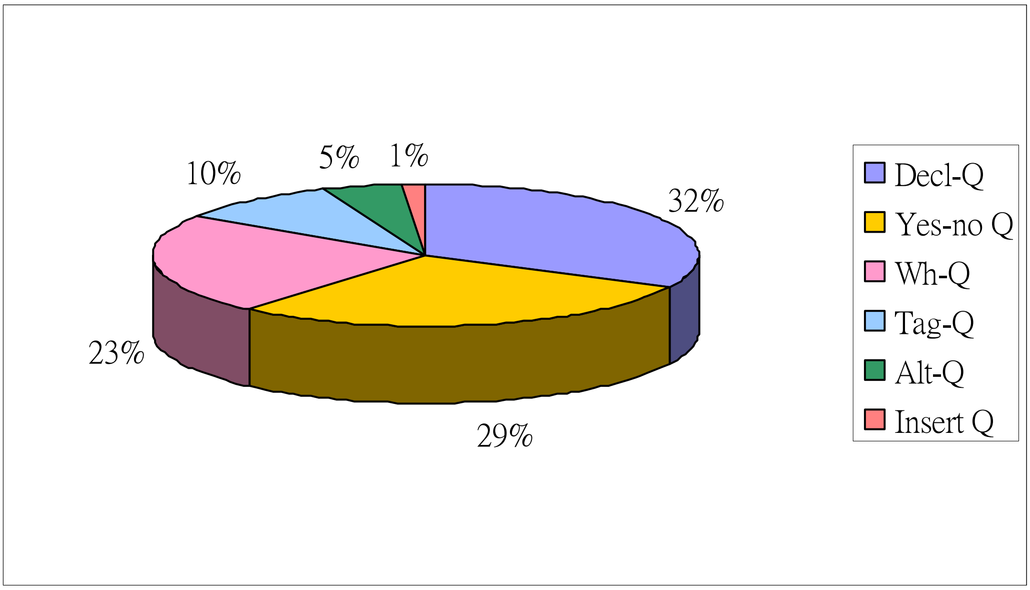
Table 7.1 The actual and normalized number of questions across sub-genres

Subgenres	Occurrence counts	Percentage	Normalization factors (times)	Normalized occurrences	Percentage
Interviews	809	44.28	1.3885	1123	19.44
Q&A Sessions after Presentations and Announcements	160	8.76	1.3978	224	3.88
Meetings	339	18.55	2.2156	751	13
Informal Office Talk	160	8.76	3.9474	632	10.94
Service Encounters	359	19.65	8.4846	3046	52.74
Total number of questions	1827	100	-----	5776	100

There are 5776 questions in the Corpus after normalization. As shown in Table 7.1, the largest number of questions is found in Service Encounters, with 3046, which is half of the total number of questions. In Interviews, 1123 questions are identified. Although 20% of all the questions are found in this sub-genre, it is only one third of the total when comparing to the largest number identified (in Service Encounters). The possible reasons for explaining the differences in the number of questions identified are further explored when different aspects of question-response sequences are compared across different sub-genres in Chapter 10.

To have a clear picture of which question form is more prevalent in the Corpus, Figure 7.2 below shows the distribution of different question forms identified in the Corpus.

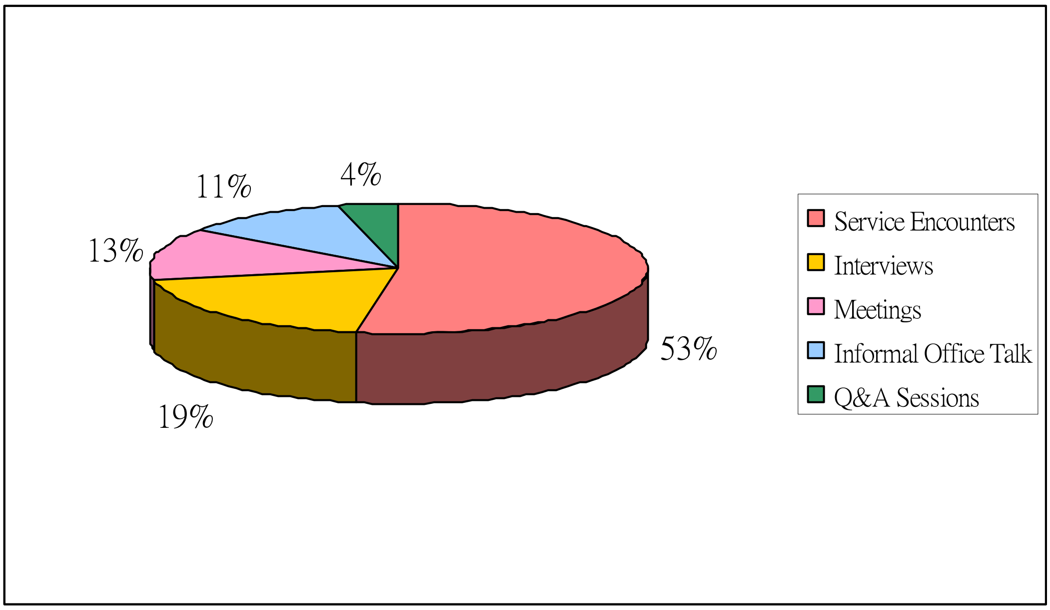
Figure 7.2 Normalized percentages of different question forms



Among the six different question forms, declarative questions occur most frequently. There are a total of 1883 declarative questions identified across all sub-genres, that is 32% of the total. In other words, one third of the questions identified in the Corpus are in the form of declarative questions. The second most frequently found question is yes-no questions (1646 or 28.5%). The third most common question type is wh-question (1331 or 23%). These three question forms add up to 85% of the total, suggesting that only relatively few (i.e. about 15%) are of the other three forms: tag questions (10%), alternative questions (5%) and insert questions (1%).

There are significant differences in the number of questions identified in different sub-genres. Figure 7.3 shows the normalized percentages of questions found in each sub-genre.

Figure 7.3 Normalized percentages of questions identified in the six sub-genres



More than half of the questions identified are found in Service Encounters. There are more than 3046 questions in Service Encounters which is 53% of the total of 5776 questions. All the questions identified in the other four sub-genres add up to the other half of the frequency counts (see Table 7.1 for normalized frequency counts). In Chapter 13, the possible reasons for the differences in the use of questions are discussed.

7.3 Organization of discussion chapters

In the following chapters, excerpts of the question-response sequences are discussed with regard to different aspects of the study. In Chapter 8, the exchange structures of question-response sequences are analyzed. Possible reasons for typical exchange structures of question-response sequences are discussed. The different question forms found in the Corpus are exemplified and the different functions of the questions are discussed in Chapter 9, and 10. The function of responses is discussed in Chapter 11. Chapter 12 discusses intonation choices on questions, and how different intonation choices on different question forms influence the function that the question carries are explored. In Chapter 13, the impact of the institutional role of speakers and settings on the use of questions are examined. Each of the six different sub-genres is studied in detail, a comparison of the six sub-genres is also provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 8 Exchange structures of question-response sequences in business and professional settings

8.1 Introduction

After the speech-acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) in the utterances in the Corpus are identified, the exchanges involving question-response sequences are analyzed following the framework for exchange structure (Coulthard and Brazil's 1992; Sinclair 1992; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, 1992). This process gives a clear picture of how a question-response sequence is structured in business and professional settings in the Corpus. The patterns of the typical exchange structures of question-response sequences in different sub-genres are also described. The findings provide evidence that such sequences are structured differently in different contexts where the participants have different institutional roles to play. This chapter discusses and exemplifies the findings of different exchange structures of question-response sequence in the Corpus.

8.2 Typical exchange structures of question-response sequences

A move consists of one or more acts and is an interactive unit indicating what an utterance does in the discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Moves are defined by their internal function in the discourse in relation to the other moves in the discourse. In other words, they cannot be defined independently of their role in the discourse organization. When analyzing the move structure of a discourse, this study uses Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) initiation-response-feedback (I-R-F) structure. This model is developed when they study classroom discourse. In the present study, the last element is labeled as follow-up instead of feedback according Coulthard and Brazil's (1992) model (see Chapter 2). This study also follows Sinclair's (1992: 87) notion of a "challenge move" which marks the beginning of a new exchange (ibid: 83). The exchange structures of question-response sequences in the present study are described below:

Table 8.1 The frequencies of occurrence of the exchange structures of question-response sequences in business and professional English in Hong Kong.

Structure of question-response sequences	Frequency	Percentage
I	10	0.67
IR	**941**	**63.4**
IRF	**338**	**22.78**
IRFF	20	1.35
IRFFF	5	0.34
IRFFFF	1	0.07
IC	1	0.07
ICR	**114**	**7.68**
ICRF	24	1.62
ICRFF	5	0.34
ICCR	18	1.21
ICCRF	4	0.27
ICCCRF	2	0.13
ICCCCR	1	0.07
Total	1484	100

Key	
I	Initiation
R	Response
F	Follow-up
C	Challenge

In the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE, 14 different combinations of exchange structures are identified although they do not represent the exhaustive possibilities. It should be remembered that a challenge marks the beginning of a new exchange (Sinclair, 1992: 83). In other words, some of the above structures of question-response sequences are represented by more than a single exchange in which a challenge move (or more) is involved. The most common structure identified is IR (941 or 63.4%), followed by IRF (22.78%), and ICR (7.68%).

This section presents examples from the Corpus illustrating the different exchange structures of the sequences identified.

Unless there is an initiation which does not prospect a verbal response, which results in an I* structure, IR could be regarded as the typical minimal structure in question-response sequence. This structure actually fits in the adjacency pair framework in the conversation analysis approach. In such exchanges, there is only an initiation move containing a question followed by a response move. Example 8.1 is taken at the reception desk in a hotel. The front desk staff is asking the guest questions about previous stays at other hotels when checking her out.

Example 8.1

a: hotel front desk staff   A: hotel guest

I [que]	184	a: { = [< HAVE >] } { / have you [STAYED] the Other hotels in hong < KONG > }
R [ans]	185	A: { / [< YEAH >] } { = we [< STAYED >] } { = [< ER >] } { \ [^ MOSTly] at
	186	the < REgent > } { \ we really [LIKE] the < REgent > } { \/ just [beCAUSE] of its
	187	loCAtion by the < WAter > }
B003: 184-187		

In Example 8.1, the front desk staff initiates by asking a question to find out whether the guest has stayed in other hotels before. The initiation is then responded to with an answer. There are only two moves in the sequence, an initiation and a response. As Sinclair and Brazil (1982: 45) state, the follow-up move has an important role to play in classroom discourses, but it does not function in the same way in everyday conversation (see later discussion). In a classroom setting, follow-up moves allow the teacher to shape the material being taught, to select, edit, and evaluate (ibid: 45). Since a lot of the responses do not require or expect evaluation (feedback), there is a high frequency in the Corpus of exchanges that are made up of two moves with no follow-up move.

However, in other discourse, there are utterances which acknowledge or evaluate the prior response, and this is done by follow-up moves. About 23% of the exchanges have a follow-up move (see Example 8.2 below). A passenger is checking that he has an excess baggage weight waiver at the check-in counter at the airport. There is, however, no record of such a request in the airline's computer records.

Example 8.2

B: Passenger a1: airline check-in desk staff

I [que]	77	a1: { = we can [SEND] a < MESsage > to } { = is [< THAT >] say your } { \
	78	[TRAvel] < Agency > } { \/ in [< Adelaide >] }
R [ans]	79	B: { \ [< YES >] } { \ [< IT >] is }
F [ack]	80	a1: { = [< oKAY >] }
B035: 77-80		

When the passenger explains that he has already confirmed the excess baggage weight waiver with his travel agent in Adelaide, the airline staff wants to confirm who to check the request with. She then initiates an exchange by asking the passenger, Speaker B, the question in lines 77-78. In line 80, the airline staff acknowledges the answer in a follow-up move. The airline Speaker signals that she knows who to contact and send the message to by this follow-up move. In this sequence, when the passenger responds to the question in line 79 by confirming that the agency in Adelaide is the right place to double-check the status of the waiver. Thus, in the follow-up move, the airline staff acknowledges that she has the correct information and that she can continue on the other procedures.

When there are more than two participants in the interaction, it is not uncommon to have more than one follow-up move in the sequence. In such cases, not only does the participant who asks the question follow-up on the response, the other party also provides such follow-ups so as to acknowledge understanding. Such sequences with multiple follow-up moves identified can have up to 4 follow-ups in the data studied, although they are not commonly found. There are 20 IRFF (1.35%), 5 IRFFF (0.34%) and 1 IRFFFF (less than 0.1%) identified in the data. The sequence below is recorded in a hotel at the reception desk. A front desk staff has been chosen to be the hotel ambassador. This hotel ambassador has this special role to talk to hotel guests and elicit their comments about their stay, suggestions and advice for the hotel.

Example 8.3

A: Hotel guest a: hotel front desk staff (hotel ambassador)

I [que]	112	a: { \ [< YES >] } { \ [WHY] you < KNOW > that } ((laugh))
	113	A: ((laugh)) { \ [< _ WELL >] } { \ [beCAUSE] i would have apPREciate < THAT > }
R [ans]	114	{ \ that kind of [< ^ MUsic >] }
F [ack]	115	a: { \ [< _ YES >] }
F [agr]	116	A: { \ [< YEAH >] } ((laugh))
B035: 112-6		

In the sequence, the guest, Speaker A, and the hotel ambassador, Speaker a, are discussing the music in the restaurant in the hotel. The ambassador says that she could sing very well and she is surprised when the guest said “yes, of course”. Thus she initiates a new exchange by asking why she knows about her singing in line 112. She then acknowledges the traveller’s response in the follow-up move in line 115. And in line 116, it is followed up by the traveller. The passenger produces a second follow-up move may be out of playfulness because she laughs as she says it.

Although not common, there are also cases in which up to 3 or 4 follow-up moves are identified in the sequence. Example 8.4 takes place at the reception desk in a hotel. The front desk staff asks the guest about her next destination.

Example 8.4

A: hotel guest a: hotel front desk staff (hotel ambassador)

I [que]	118	a: { \ [< SO >] } { / [< NOW >] } { ? [< YOU’LL >] } { ? go [< BACK >] } { \
	119	[< CAnada >] }
R [ans]	120	A: { \ to [< CAnada >] } { \ to [< vanCOUver >] } { \ [< YEP >] }
F [ack]	121	a: { \ [< vanCOUver >] }
F [agr]	122	A: { \ [< YEP >] }
F [agr]	123	a: { \ [< YEP >] }
B003: 118-23		

After the front desk staff’s question is responded to in line 120, she produces a repetition of the response in the follow-up move to signal acknowledgement in line 121. Sinclair and Brazil (1982:45) state that follow-up moves can function to summarize, review contributions to the discourse and draw a conclusion by putting them together. Here in the exchange, the front desk staff reviews the contribution to the discourse given by the guest and put it in a follow-up move. The guest acknowledges in a second follow-up move, and the exchange ends with another follow-up move produced by the front desk representative.

In the Corpus, there is one occasion when up to 4 follow-up moves are identified (less than 0.01%). Example 8.5 takes place in a university where two professors are interviewing a candidate for the post of research assistant. In the exchange, one of the interviewers is concerned about the candidate’s experience in data collection and analysis in research, and thus initiating the question.

Example 8.5

B, a1, a2: interviewer a3: interviewee

I [que]	85	B: { / did [YOU] have to colLECT spoken DAta < yourSELF > } { / and [< anaLYZE >] it }
R [ans]	86	a3: { = [< UM >] } { = [< I >] did } { = [< I >] did a } { = [< LONG >] } { = essay [< IN
	87	>] } { = [< IN >] } { = [< Analyzing >] } { \ [I] c q < _ converSAtions > } { = [< AND
	88	>] } { = [< I >] use } { = [poLITEness] THEOry < TO > } { = [< Analyse >] those } { \
	89	[< SO >] } { = [< I >] think } (.) { = [< ^ THOSE >] are not } { \ [spoKEN] < DAta > }
	90	{ = [< BUT >] } { = [< JUST >] um } { = [< CONverSAtion >] in } { \ [< COMPUters
	91	>] }
F [ack]	92	a2: { \ [< MM >] }
F [agr]	93	a1: { \ [< RIGHT > } }
F [agr]	94	a2: { \ [< _ YEAH >] }
F [agr]	95	a1: { \ [< _ YEAH >] }
B0079: 85-95		

After the interviewee has informed the interviewer that she has not worked with spoken data before, another interviewer acknowledges her response with a minimal response in a follow-up move in line 92. Another interviewer then acknowledges with a “right” in line 93. It is surprising that neither of the interviewers asks a follow-up question or initiates a new question which is usually the case in an interview. Instead, the interviewer produces another follow-up in line 94. She then indicates explicitly that she has an intention to retire from the exchange by “prolonging the (follow-up) move to continue to speak” (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 51). The prolonged follow-up move on the interviewer's part could be explained by the dispreferred response from the interviewee. This puts the interviewer out of track, he does not know or want to react to that response, forcing the other interviewer to react. It suggests that the dispreferred response is not what the interviewer expected and both the interviews do not know where to start again after the two follow-up moves in lines 92 and 93, thus resulting in yet another round of follow-ups. This confirms Sinclair and Brazil's (1982: 45) observation that only a speaker with a rather privileged position is expected to make extended follow-ups since it confers much authority on the pronouncements. In the case of an interview, the interviewers are in such a privileged position that they can make extended follow-up moves and restrict the interviewee in initiating a new exchange and force him or her to only produce another follow-up. It is interesting to study the key of the follow-ups in line 94 and 95 which are triggered by the dispreferred response. These two final follow-ups are produced with low key and fall tone, suggesting that it adds nothing to the value of the preceding utterances (Brazil, 1997: 53). This usage also suggests that what has been said is now shared and common ground, nothing additional is expected and thus closes the topic as well as ends the exchange.

Question-response sequences of the various structures that are identified have been illustrated and discussed. Now, the structure of question-response sequences involving challenges is studied. In the Corpus, there is an occurrence of an exchange with up to four challenges. Sinclair (1992: 83) states that a challenge move marks the beginning of a new exchange. These sequences can span from one to five exchanges until a response or a follow-up is obtained. The sequence ICR is the most commonly identified structure containing a challenge move, it is the third largest type (8%) among all sequences.

The sequence below takes place in an office where two co-workers are having an informal conversation. One of the co-workers is trying to refer to another colleague who she has forgotten the name of. The two of them are negotiating who it is that is being referred to.

Example 8.6

B, a: Co-workers

	333	a:	{ = [< ^ THERE >] } { \ [THERE] was a < LAdy > } { \ i [CAN'T] remember
	334		her < NAME > }
	335	B:	{ \ [V__] < K__ > }
I [que]	336	a:	{ = is [< ^ THAT >] right }
C [que]	337	B:	{ = you mean the [BUSIness] manager of * < auSTRAlia > }
R [ans]	338	a:	** { \ [< AH >] yeah yeah }
B113: 333-338			

There are two exchanges in Example 8.6. The question in line 336 is the initiation of one exchange, and the challenge move in line 337 is the beginning of the second one which ends with the response in line 338. In the first exchange, the question in line 336 produced with high termination on "that" is asking Speaker B for adjudication (Brazil, 1997: 118). Speaker B does not provide a yes/no answer but instead asks a declarative question in line 337 to confirm that the two co-workers are referring to the same person. This declarative question breaks the prospection of the exchange, it comes in the place where a prospected yes/no answer is expected and thus functioning as a challenge move. This question-response sequence ends when Speaker a provides confirmation in line 338. It is very common for a challenge move to occur when there is the need to check whether the discourse is on the right track or to ask for more information before the interaction can proceed. These challenge moves usually help prevent the possibility of misunderstanding.

The above ICR question-response sequence takes place in an informal setting where two co-workers are engaged in an informal office talk. It can be seen that although there is negotiation of meaning, the sequence is short and informative, and thus there is an absence of follow-up in this particular sequence. However, this does not mean that a follow-up is always absent in informal office talk.

Below is an example of an ICRFF sequence, and it resembles an IRFF sequence which has a challenge move that seeks confirmation on the accuracy of the information provided in the previous initiation. This question-response sequence takes place in an internship placement interview in a hotel. The two interviewers and the interviewee are discussing the length of the internship training.

Example 8.7

a1: interviewee a2, a3: interviewers

I [inf]	563	a2: { \ [OH] i < SEE > } { \ so not [^ NOT] the < SIX > months } (.) { \ [< FOR >] }
	564	(.) { \ [KIND] of < MIX > }
C [que]	565	a3: { \ [SIXteen] < WEEKS > right } { = is that [< corRECT >] }
R [ans]	566	a1: { / [< YES >] } * { \ sixteen [< WEEKS >] }
F [ack]	567	a3: ** { \ sixteen [< WEEKS >] } { = [< oKAY >] }
F [agr]	568	a2: ** { \ i [< _ SEE >] } { \ [< _ oKAY >] } (.) { = [< NOW >] } { =
I [que]	569	[^ WHAT] do you < THINK > are the } (.) { \ [WHAT] sorts of < criTEria > } { \
	570	do you think is [< NEcessary >] } (.) { / to [< WORK >] } { \ in the [GUEST]
	571	conTACting < poSItion > }
B061: 563-571		

In line 565, when the interviewers and the interviewee are discussing which department and the length of the internship, Interviewer a2 expresses that the period of training will be carried out in a mix of different departments. Interviewer a3 produces a query in a challenge move in line 565 so as to confirm the period of the internship. The interviewee, Speaker a1, then responds by giving a confirmation in line 566 and a repetition of the period of time. The fact that there are two interviewers in the interview explains why there are two follow-ups in the sequence. These follow-ups are produced simultaneously after the interviewee's response. It is interesting that when the two interviewers do not agree on the information presented, they go to the interviewee for confirmation instead of discussing between themselves. In other words, the interviewee has accurate information on the duration of the internship. This sequence also confirms earlier findings that follow-ups are more likely to be produced by participants in dominant position, that is the interviewers in the case of a job/internship interview.

As has been discussed, challenges are typically produced to make sure that the information or the assumption perceived is accurate. An interactant asks a question to seek confirmation and extra information when performing such tasks. Although such challenge moves hold up the progress of a topic (Burton, 1980: 151), and break the prospection of the initiation in an exchange (Sinclair, 1992: 83), they do not affect the coherence of the exchanges (Warren, 2006: 171). Since a challenge move can only be interpreted when it encapsulates the preceding initiation, or initiation and response (Sinclair, 1992: 86) (see Section 2.5 for discussion on encapsulation),these challenge moves serve to ensure that the preceding utterances convey information and are perceived accurately before the interaction can proceed. In the data, there are sequences in which there is more than one challenge move (25 or 1.7%). These sequences with multiple challenge moves are discussed in the following. The first sequence takes place at the check-in desk at the airport. A passenger is checking the availability of an aisle seat.

Example 8.8

B: passenger a: airline check-in desk staff

I [que]	44	B: { ? er er } { / is that [< RIGHT >] } { / that that er [< THIS >] } { = no [< AISLE >] is } { \ is
	45	[EIGHty] < ^ TWO > }
C [que]	46	a: { = [EIGHT [< ^ TWO >]
C [que]	47	B: { = [< OH >] the } { = [< ER >] } { = [< NO >] } { \ [< PLACE >] } { \ at the [< AISLE >] }
R [ans]	48	a: { \ [< OH >]} { \ [< I >] see } { \ [< YEAH >] } { \ [acCORding] the < SEAT > map } { =
	49	[ALL] the < AISLE > seat } { \ [WINdow] seat is all * < OCcupied > }
	50	B: ** ((laugh))
B030: 44-50		

In line 44, the passenger produces a question to check if there is an aisle seat available on row eighty two. The airline staff repeats the number as “eight two” to confirm if she has the correct row number in line 46. She uses fall tone on the declarative question and high termination on “two” to invite adjudication; in other words, rephrasing what is inferred and inviting the passenger to tell her whether she is right or wrong (Brazil, 1997: 104). The passenger in line 47 produces a declarative to invite the airline staff to confirm whether his assumption that there is no aisle seat is right. He does not mention the row number when producing the declarative question, suggesting that he regards the row number as shared knowledge between the two participants. The response given by the airline staff in line 48, “oh I see yeah” signals that she has got the confirmation of the correct row number and then she continues to confirm with the passenger that there is no aisle seat available. In such an interaction, it is necessary to make every piece of information very accurate before proceeding. The challenge moves in such sequences involve the checking of the assumption of the perceived information which allows the interaction to proceed smoothly.

In Example 8.9, the challenge involves confirmation about the discourse. It takes place at the front desk office at a hotel when a guest is checking-out.

Example 8.9

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

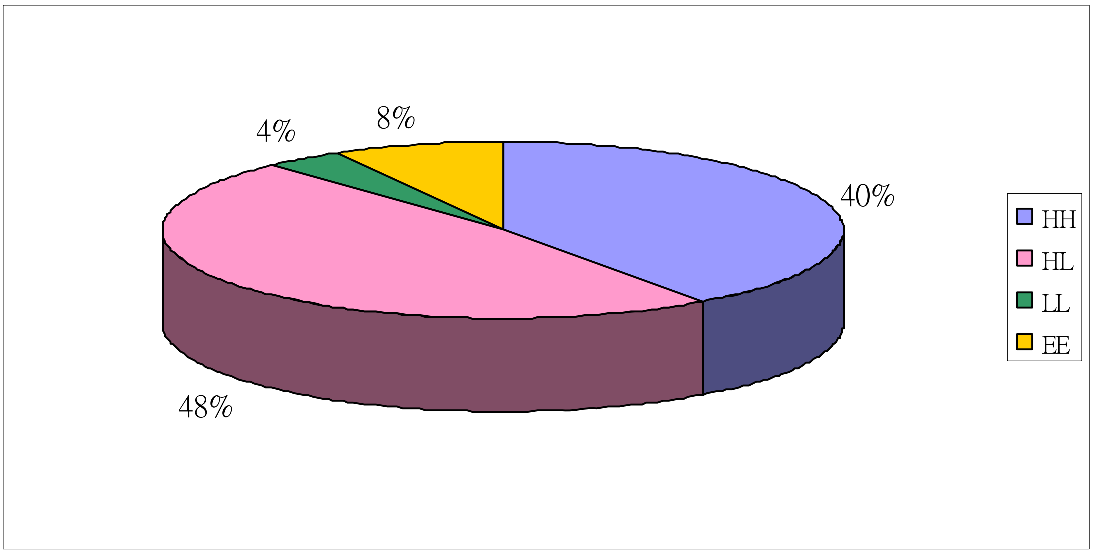
I [req]	17	b: { / [CAN] i have your credit card < PLEASE > }
C [que]	18	B: { = [< ER >] } { / [DIDN’T] you < HAVE > that }
C [que]	19	b: { / [< PARdon >] }
C [que]	20	B: { / you didn’t [< HAVE >] that }
R [ans]	21	b: { = [< UM >] } { \ [LAST] night we just imPRINT the < NUMber > } { \ [<
	22	NOW >] } { \ i need your [CREdit] card aGAIN for < PAYment > }
	23	((pause))
B004: 17-23		

In line 17 the hotel front desk staff requests the passenger to give him his credit card to settle the bill. The guest asks a negative yes-no question in response in line 18, assuming that the staff has got his credit card already. The hotel staff, however, could not hear that utterance and asks the guest to repeat. Instead of asking for adjudication or confirmation of the speaker’s assumption, this challenge move asks about the discourse itself. It requires the guest to repeat what has just been said. The referring tone used on the declarative question in line 20 invites the representative to tell the guest whether his assumption is right or wrong. This sequence ends when the representative responds by giving an explanation. In these sequences with multiple challenges, they typically involve “language about language” (Warren, 2006: 171). They ask about the discourse itself which usually requires a repetition or rephrasing of the previous utterance.

8.3 Exchanges with extended follow-up moves

There are also exchanges in which there is a follow-up move (27%). Among these exchanges, 8% have extended follow-up moves, that is more than one consecutive follow-up move in the exchange. It is found that the participants in a more privileged position are more likely to produce a follow-up, and in multiple sequences. Figure 8.1 below shows the distribution of 2 follow-ups among participants (participants in a more privileged position are represented by H, those in a less privileged position are by L, and those with a similar position E).

Figure 8.1 Distribution of 2 follow-ups among participants

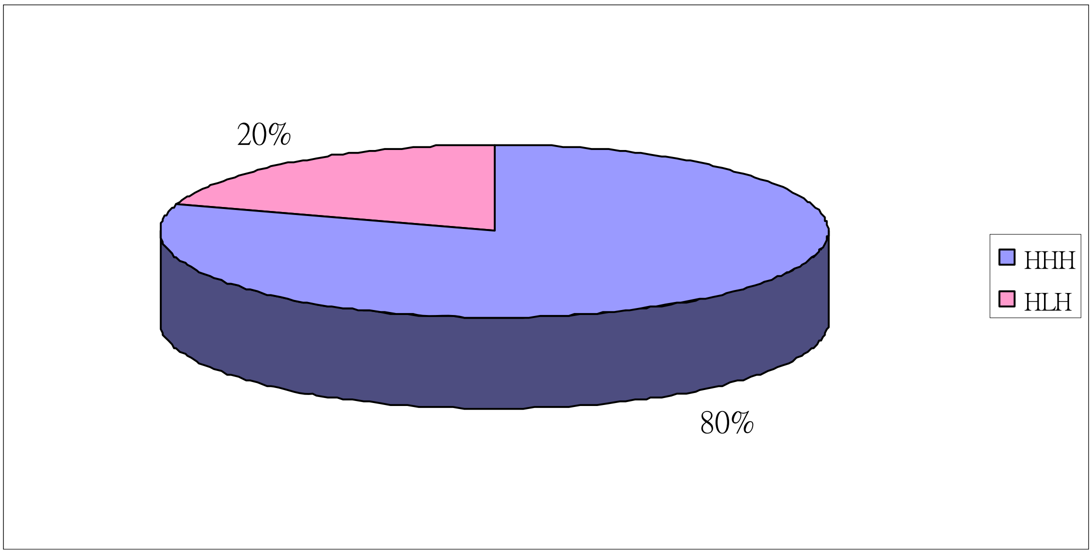


As shown in Figure 8.1, 8% of the exchanges with 2 follow-up moves are produced by participants of equal or similar rank, and only 4% are solely produced by the participants in a less privileged position. It is found that 88% of the extended follow-up moves are initiated by the participants in a more privileged position.

When the exchanges are examined (HH, HL), it is found that it is common for the L participants to produce another follow-up move after the H participants (HL: 48% of the total). In these exchanges, the H participants, who have more control of topic initiation, produce a follow-up move instead of introducing a new topic, has prompted the L participants to produce another follow-up move. By doing so, the L participants can show the H participants that they have been attentive and that they have no intention to take control over the interaction. In fact, all of the HH exchanges are found in Interviews (40% of the total). In these exchanges, there are two or more interviewers and only one interviewee. After one of the interviewers has produced a follow-up move, the other interviewees echoes with a second follow-up move to show acknowledgement or agreement to what has been discussed in the previous utterances. The high percentage of exchanges with follow-up moves initiated by H participants (88%, HH and HL) might suggest that due to the inherent role of topic control by the H participants, they might then have the choice to either initiate a new topic in a new exchange or to produce a follow-up. The H participants might want to produce a follow-up move so that he or she can show acknowledgement to what has been discussed previously or to make time for formulating a new topic to be initiated.

The finding suggesting that extended follow-up moves are more likely to be associated with the H participants is further supported by the evidence of 3 or more follow-up moves in an exchange. Figure 8.2 shows the distribution of 3 follow-ups among participants.

Figure 8.2 Distribution of 3 follow-ups among participants



As shown in Figure 8.2, all the exchanges with 3 follow-up moves are initiated by H participants. Interestingly, 80% of these are produced by the H participants (see discussion in Example 8.4). More interestingly, there is one exchange identified in the Corpus in which 4 follow-up moves are found. In this exchange all the four follow-up moves are produced by the H participants (see discussion in Example 8.5). Similar to the 2 follow-up moves exchanges, they are identified in Interviews. These extended follow-up moves might be used by the H participants to summarize, review contributions to the discourse and draw a conclusion by putting them together (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982: 45). The H participants may also use them to indicate that what has been said is shared and common ground, and nothing additional is further expected. This extended use also helps to make time for the H participants to formulate what should come next in the following utterances.

8.4 Conclusion

In general, most question-response sequences consist of only two moves in the Corpus, an initiation and a response (64%) which is regarded as the typically minimal structure of a question-response sequence. There are also exchanges in which there is a follow-up move (27%). It is found that the participants in a more privileged position are more likely to produce a follow-up, and in multiple sequences. A follow-up move usually serves to summarize and conclude what has just been said. A speaker can also signal that he or she does not have anything to add, wants to retire from the topic or discourse by prolonging the follow-up moves.

On occasion, there is a need to check whether what has been perceived and what has been concluded is right or wrong by producing a challenge move. The challenge move is also produced when something preceded is not clear. The ICR sequence which resembles the IR sequence is by far the most common type for the sequences with (a) challenge move(s). The ICRF sequence (24 occurrences) is the second most commonly identified sequence among those with a challenge move. Challenge moves do not affect the cohesion of the discourse but instead help these discourses proceed smoothly.

Chapter 9 Question forms

9.1 Introduction

With reference to the communicative value of questions and responses , the forms of questions are closely studied after the question-response sequences are identified. This chapter discusses the use of different question forms.

9.2 Questions forms

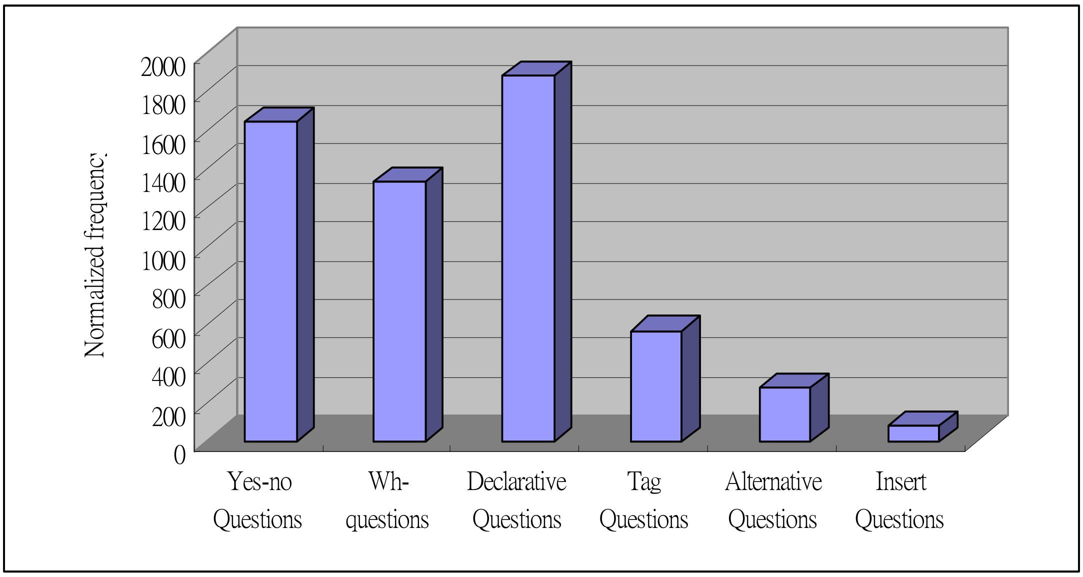
As discussed in the methodology chapter, the questions identified are classified into 6 categories, namely: yes-no questions, declarative questions, tag questions, wh-questions, alternative questions and insert questions. Due to the difference in length of each sub-genre, the number of occurrences is normalized with regard to the total number of words identified in each sub-genre. Table 9.1 shows the actual occurrence counts of total number of questions and the normalized total number of questions in different sub-genres.

Table 9.1 The total number of questions across sub-genres

Sub-genres	Occurrence counts	Percentage	Normalized occurrences	Percentage
Service Encounters	376	20.21	3,190	53.79
Meetings	325	17.47	720	12.14
Interviews	820	44.09	1,139	18.19
Informal Office Talk	161	8.66	636	9.7
Q&A Sessions during presentations and after announcements	178	8.57	249	4.18
Total number of questions	1860	100	5,933	100

There is a normalized total of nearly 6000 questions identified in the Corpus. The largest number of questions is found in Service Encounter, with a total of 3190, which is half of the total number of questions identified. In Interviews, 1,139 questions are identified. Although 20% of all the questions are found in this sub-genre, it counts only one third of the total when comparing to the largest number identified (in Service Encounters). The third and fourth largest number found has a very similar value; with 720 occurrences (12%) in Meetings and 636 (9.7%) in Informal Office Talk. There are only a total of about 250 questions (5%) in Q&A Sessions. Possible reasons for explaining the differences in the number of questions identified are studied when different aspects of question-response sequences are compared across different sub-genres below. Figure 9.1 shows the frequency of different question forms.

Figure 9.1 Distribution of question forms



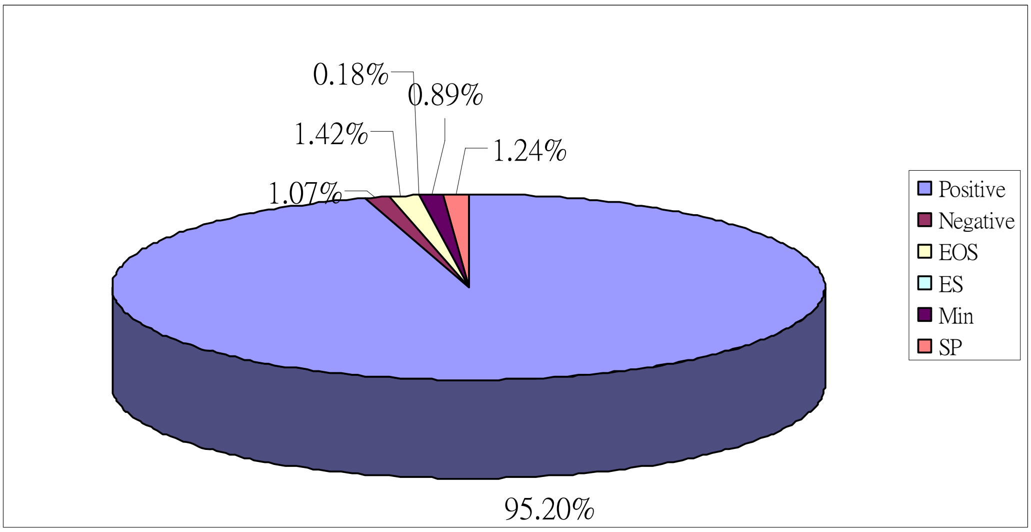
As shown in Figure 9.1, one-third of the total number of questions identified (1883) are declarative questions. The second most common form is yes-no questions (1646, 28.5%). The third is wh-questions, with a total of 1331 (23%). The fourth category is tag questions, with about 567 instances (8.9%). As for alternative questions, there are 273 occurrences which is less than 4.7% of the total. The least common question form, insert questions, occur only 76 times (1.4%) in the Corpus. In the following section, the use of these different question forms in business and professional settings is illustrated.

9.2.1 Yes-no questions

In the Corpus, 28% of the questions identified is produced in the form of yes-no questions. This confirms Biber et al's findings that this question form is very commonly used. It is found that yes-no questions are predominant in their conversation corpus, indeed a quarter of all the questions are produced in this form (Biber et al, 1999: 212).

Yes-no questions are usually formed by placing the operator before the subject (Quirk et al, 1985: 807; Biber et al, 1999: 206). Huddleston et al (2002) term questions of this form polar questions. They state that polar questions have the form of a closed interrogative clause, such as “is it breathing?” (ibid: 868). They also note that polar questions are not always produced in this form, such as “another cup of tea?” (ibid: 868). Carter and McCarthy (2006) term these questions “reduced yes-no questions” (ibid: 425). In their study of the grammar of English, they also find that yes-no questions are one of the most common question forms (ibid: 718). Yes-no questions are categorized into two main types: positive and negative yes-no questions. Some of the elements are sometimes ellipted, with either the subject or the operator missing (Biber et al, 1999). Ellipted yes-no questions can also contain only a single phrase. The frequency counts of the different forms of yes-no questions are shown in Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2 Distribution of different forms of yes-no questions



Key:
Positive – positive
Negative – negative
EOS – elliptic with missing operator
ES – elliptic with missing subject
SP – elliptic with a single phrase
Min – minimal form

The vast majority (95%) of the yes-no questions found are positive yes-no questions, there is only about 1% for the other forms, negative, elliptic with a missing operator, elliptic with a single phrase and minimal form. Less than 1% of yes-no questions is found to be produced in the form of an elliptic yes-no question with a missing subject. The use of different forms of yes-no questions is illustrated with examples.

Example 9.1 is taken from Informal Office Talk in which the two co-workers are talking about another colleague.

Example 9.1

B, a: co-workers

→	142	B:	{ = is she the [SAME] level as < ^ YOU > }
	143	a:	{ \ [< _ YES >] } { \ as a [< V >] p } { = [< WE >] } { = [< PRObably >] she }
	144		{ = when [< ^ SHE >] } { \ [JOIN] < M__ > } { \ [PRObably] about FIVE to six
	145		years < _ aGO > } { \ [SHE] was a v < P > } { = [< AND >] er } { = [< AND
	146		>] } { \ but her [< BOSS >] } { \ is [NOW] an f v < P > } { \ i [DON’T] know
	147		< WHEther > } { = [< SHE >] } { \ is [GOing] to GET < proMOted > } { = [<
	148		beCAUSE >] you got } { = [< ON >] your um } { \ [NOmination] < FORM > }
	149		{ = i [< DON’T >] know whether you } { \ you [WROTE] ONE < beFORE > }
B113: 142-149			

In line 142, Speaker B asks “is she the same level as you”. The question produced by Speaker B prospects a “yes” or “no” answer which others (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Huddleston et al, 2002; and Quirk et al, 1985) categorize as yes-no or polar questions. In the question, the operator “is” precedes the subject “she”; and the polarity of the operator is positive. This positive yes-no question, as Biber et al (1999: 206) state, expects the addressee to supply a truth value. These positive yes-no questions are not conducive (Biber et al 1999, Carter and McCarthy 2006, Huddleston et al 2002, Quirk et al 1985, Stenström’s 1984, 1994 and Tsui 1992). In other words, the speaker does not have a preference for either of the two polarities.

A speaker who wishes to produce a conducive question may then choose a negative yes-no question. In Example 9.2, two research project leaders are having a meeting with a research assistant. They are discussing the collection of data for a research project.

Example 9.2

B: research project leader a1: research project leader

→	365	B: { \ [< YEAH >] } * { / [DON’T] you reMEMber that M__ < GAVE > us }
	366	a1: ** { = [< _ MM >] }
	367	a1: { \ [< Okay >] } { = [< THOSE >] are } { \ [< M__’s >] } { \ [< LECtures >] }
B059: 365-367		

Speaker B asks “don’t you remember that M__ gave us (some data)” in line 365. He chooses to use “don’t” instead of “do”. According to Romero and Han (2004: 610), a yes-no question with preposed negation carries the epistemic implicature that the speaker believes or expects that the positive answer is true (see also Quirk et al, 1985: 809). When a speaker thinks, expects, or knows that one answer is the right one, he has a bias towards that answer, and Huddleston et al (2002: 880) term it epistemic. It is a term whose primary application is in the field of modality. Huddleston et al also state, when the speaker “judges” that one answer ought to be the right one, he or she has deontic bias towards the answer. In the example, Speaker B’s use of a negative yes-no question carries a positive epistemic implicature and indicates that he believes or expects that Speaker a1 remembers that M__ gave them some data.

According to Carter and McCarthy (2006: 719), in informal spoken contexts, it is not necessary to include all the clause elements in the question. When the elements such as subjects and auxiliary verbs, or lexical verb, are obvious to the speaker and the addressee, they may not need to be present as references. In the data, there are situations where one or more of the elements are absent in yes-no questions. Below is an example in which the subject is missing in the yes-no question. In this service encounter at the airport, the passenger is asking information for the appropriate time for checking-in.

Example 9.3

B: passenger a1: airline front desk staff

	103	B: { \ < ALright > } { = < AND > } { = < AND > } { = [THANK] you the Other thing
	104	is I’M on your < FLIGHT > um } { \/ er < ^ toMORrow > } { = i’m < ON > your }
	105	{ = er [C] < X > } { \ [^ EIGHT] three < EIGHT > } { \/ to < vanCOUver > }
	106	(.) * { \/ [SIXteen] forty < FIVE > } { = [WHAT] time do i < CHECK > in }

	107	a1: ** { / < Uhuh > }
	108	{ \ < BUSIness > class }
	109	a1: { = < ER > } { \ < ACtually > } { \ [Any] < TIME > } { \ will < DO > } { \ [NOT]
	110	< LAter > } { = < THAN > er } { \ [THREE] forty < _ FIVE > }
	111	B: { \ [THREE] forty < FIVE > } { \ so [ONE] hour before < TAKE > off }
	112	a1: { \ < YEAH > }
→	113	B: { = is < ALright > } { \ for < BUSIness > class }
	114	a1: { = \ < YES > }
B035: 103-114		

The passenger is asking about the time for checking-in. He is told that he should check-in before three forty-five, that is one hour before take off. The passenger then asks a yes-no question to confirm that the airline staff knows that he is travelling business class and that the check-in time given earlier is also correct for business class. He formulates the question as “is alright for business class” instead of “is that (checking-in at three forty-five) alright for business class”. In this yes-no question, the subject is missing and yet the reference is clear to both the passenger and the airline staff from the previous utterances. Thus it does not create any problem for the airline staff to respond to it.

Example 9.4 is taken from a meeting at a hotel in which the managers are discussing the new video system to be installed. It illustrates the form of an elliptic yes-no question with both the operator and the subject missing.

Example 9.4

b4: hotel general manager a1: hotel marketing manager

→	143	b4: { = [< ERM >] } { = [< Any >] } { / [< NEWS >] } { = on the [< VIdeo >] }
	144	a1: { = [< ER >] } { \ i have [< alREAdy >] } { = [< ER >] } { / [< CHECKED
	145	>] } { = [ER] with the proDUCtion < HOUSE > } { \ and i’m [^ GETting] <
	146	QUOTE > } { = [< _ ER >] } { \ from [< THEM >] } { \ whether we [CAN] <
	147	exPAND > } { = [< _ ER >] } { \ the [eXISting] T v ((inaudible)) } { \ we have
	148	[TWO] ((inaudible)) systems < PRINted > } ((inaudible))
B019:143-148		

After the managers have finished with the issues of room bookings discussed earlier, the general manager asks the marketing manager about the new video system to be installed. In line 143, the general manager formulates the question as “any news on the video” instead of “is there any news on the video”. Both the operator “is” and the subject “there” are missing in the question. Yet the focus of the question, “news on the video”, and the quantifier, “any”, are sufficient to allow Speaker a1 to respond to the question. As Quirk et al (1985: 808) state, yes-no questions containing non-assertive forms such as “any” and “ever” are generally neutral, that means there is no bias in expectation towards a positive or negative response.

So far, elliptic yes-no questions with a missing subject and with both the operator and subject missing have been illustrated.   There are cases where the yes-no question is reduced to a single phrase. Example 9.5 is an excerpt from a meeting in a university. These meetings recorded in the university among professors involve discussing budget management of projects, hiring of people for the project and performance of project and the staff. These tasks do not involve teaching and learning and are clearly not unique to academia. In this particular exchange of the meeting, the two professors are discussing how the budget of the project should be spent and the performance of former employers of the project (see more details in Chapter 13 on discussion on different sub-genres).

Example 9.5

B: research project leader   a1: research project leader

a2: research assistant

	967	a2: { / a [< MONTH >] } { \/ [< TWO >] months } { / one and a [< HALF >] months } { \ [<
	968	^ whatEver >] } { = [< AND >] } { / [USE] the REST of the money to < emPLOY > } { \
	969	[HALF] a dozen < STUdents > } { \/ during the [< SUMmer >] } { \ to [DO] some <
	970	iNItial > } { \ [< ^ transCRIPtion >] } { \ if [WE] could GET some of those < ^ SEcond >
	971	years } { \ who were [QUITE] < ^ GOOD > } { \ [< WEREN’T >] they } { \ the [LAST]
	972	< GROUP > } { \ were the [BEST] we’ve ever < ^ HAD > } { \ for [< transCRIPtion >] }
	973	* { / [< R__ >] } * { = [< R__ >] }
	974	a1: ** { / [^ WHO] are < THEY > }
→	975	B: ** { / [< A__ >] } * { = [< ER >] was } { = [V__] ONE of
	976	a1: ** { / is [A__] < GOOD > }
	977	< THEM > }
	978	a2: { / [< V__ >] } * { = [< YEAH >] }

	979	B:	** { = [< V__ >] } { = [< A__ >] } * { = [< ER >] }{ = [< K__ >] }
	980	a2:	** { / [< K__ >] }
→	981	B:	{ = [< K__ >] } { = i mean [< THEY >] } { / [< THEY >] } { = were [< PRETty >] } { \
	982		[THEY] were the BEST we've ever < ^ HAD > } * { \/ they [< DID >] it } { = [< THEY
	983	a1:	** { \ [< REALly >] }
	984		>] } * { \/ [THEY] < DID > it } { \ [< DIDN'T >] they }
B059: 967-984			

The professors and the research assistant are discussing whether the student helpers have done a good job. It is shared knowledge that there is a group of these helpers, Speaker B then asks if V__ belongs to that last group in line 975. Speaker a1 then asks at the same time "is A__ good" which receives no response. After Speaker a2 has confirmed that V__ is in the last group of student helpers in line 978, Speaker B tries to figure out who else is in the same group, he names, A__ and V__. Then in line 980, Speaker a2 says "K__", it can be seen that there is only a single noun phrase in this yes-no question. It is an elliptic form of "is K__ one of them". The response in lines 981-2 and 984 shows that it causes Speaker B no trouble in comprehending the elliptic yes-no question. Although Speaker B does not give an explicit yes or no answer in response, he goes on to discuss the performance of the group of student helpers, implying that "yes, K__ is one of them". This elliptic form of a yes-no question is not common in the Corpus.

Having examined positive and negative yes-no questions, the minimal form of a yes-no question is now illustrated. Example 9.6 below comes from the same business meeting as shown in Example 9.5. In this part of the discourse, one of the research project leaders are telling the other participants the plan he has made for a weekend.

Example 9.6

B: research project leader a1: research project leader

	417	B:	{ = [< _ MM >]} { = [< ON >] s } { \ [NOT] this < SAturday > } { = the [NEXT]
	418		saturday i am GOing < TO > a } { \ a [< ^ WEDding >] } { \ a [FORmer] P g < ^ D >
	419		student } { \/ she [HAPpens] to work < HERE > } { \ [SO] i don't < KNOW > } { = that
	420		[< SHE >] will } (.) { \ she [WORKS] < HERE > } { = [SHE] is < A > } { = an
	421		[eXEcutive] OFficer over < IN > er } { \ [acaDEmic] < ^ secreTAriat > } { \ [_ I] <

	422	THINK > }
→	423	a1: { \ [< IS >] she }
	424	B: { \ [< YEAH >] }
B059: 417-424		

In lines 420-2, Speaker B says “she works here, she is a an executive officer in er academic secretariat, I think”. Then in line 423, Speaker a1 asks a yes-no question to confirm what she has heard is correct. There is only the operator, an auxiliary verb “is” and the pronoun “she” in the yes-no question. This form of yes-no question is termed a minimal form of yes-no question.

Yes-no questions, although they expect a “yes” or “no” answer in response, can sometimes have a built-in bias towards one of the two polarities. It is found that positive yes-no questions are most commonly identified in the Corpus (almost 96%). These do not carry a bias, whether epistemic or deontic, towards a preference polarity. Negative yes-no questions which have a bias towards positive polarity are less commonly found in the Corpus. It might be the case that in business and professional settings, yes-no questions are produced to seek information rather than to confirm the speaker’s assumption (this is further examined in the discussion of functions of yes-no questions in Chapter 11), but this needs to be confirmed by studies of other discourse types. Other elliptic forms involving a missing element whether it is a subject and auxiliary verb, or lexical verb are found to be less common. Yes-no questions produced in a minimal form are rarely found. It is suggested that further studies examine participants’ use of different forms of yes-no questions and the relationship between the functions and the different forms.

9.2.2 Declarative questions

Despite the claim that declarative questions can only be distinguished by rising intonation (Quirk et al, 1985) (the discourse intonation of declarative questions is discussed in Chapter 10), a factor which may hinder the speaker’s choice in terms of question form, Biber et al (1999: 212) argue that the speech-act function of these declarative questions (the functions of declarative questions are discussed in Chapter 13) can be made clear not only by intonation (not restrictive) but also contextual clues. In their study, 10% of the questions produced in conversation are declarative questions. There is a significant difference between the number of declarative questions identified in Biber et al's study and the present study. There are three times as many declarative questions in this study than in Biber et al's. The greater number might be explained by the large number of declarative questions identified in Service Encounters. In the Corpus, 53% of the questions are identified in Service Encounters. And 41% of the questions in this sub-genre are in this form. In these encounters, both the service providers and service recipients make use of declarative questions to seek confirmation or information. These participants are completing some tasks at hand, such as checking-in for a flight, checking flight information or checking-out from a hotel, when interacting. It is then necessary for them to ensure that all information has been accurate by seeking confirmation so that the transaction can be carried out successfully in such a short encounter (see detailed discussion in Chapter 13, Section 13.2.3.1). The prominent use of declarative questions which is necessary and required by the institutional role of participants in the Service Encounters might explain the reason why there are many more questions in this form than the others in the Corpus.. Beun (1990) carries out two experiments to determine the contextual features that contribute to the use of a declarative question. His findings show that questions in spoken dialogues are often uttered in a declarative from. He further (1990: 80) claims that 20% of all questions are declaratives in form. The findings support Beun's (1990) study that declarative questions are more common than Biber et al's (1999) (10%).

Quirk et al (1985: 814), who classify declarative questions under yes-no questions, argue that this is a type of yes-no question which does not involve subject-operative inversion. A declarative question which expects a "yes" or "no" answer is identical to a declarative in form (Biber et al, 1999: 211; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 724; and Quirk et al, 1985: 814). Although Biber et al (1999) classify questions into four main types (which does not include declarative questions), they find that "questions expressed by declarative clauses" are found particularly in conversation and fiction (ibid: 211). Both Quirk et al (1985: 814) and Biber et al (1999: 203) states that questions in declarative clauses can be understood by the intonation choice of the question. Biber et al, however, only state that it can only be done by "appropriate speech intonation" (ibid: 203) while Quirk et al restrict the intonation choice to a rising one (ibid: 814). It should be borne in mind that Quirk et al, when exemplifying grammatical points, do not draw examples from the Survey of English Usage, but they largely made up examples (Sinclair, 2001: 339). When they examine the different question types, they did not include prosody in their discussion. As for Biber et al, their corpus only contains orthographic sentences which they define as units beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period or other sentence-final “punctuation mark” (my emphasis), and the transcribers use just punctuation to reflect spoken prosody (Biber et al, 1999: 10). It would be inappropriate, therefore, to conclude that declarative questions can only be done by “appropriate speech intonation” when the prosody of the questions are not examined in Quirk et al’s and Biber et al’s study.

As discussed above, declarative questions are very common in the business and professional settings in the Corpus. Below is an example of a declarative question. In the discourse, the hotel managers are having a meeting. In this part of the meeting, they are discussing the information of a new client.

Example 9.7

b2: hotel manager　　　　a1: hotel manager

→	294	b2: { = [< THIS >] } { = ((inaudible)) < airLINE > is } { = [< IS >] } { \ [^ NOT]
	295	the SAME as the euro < AIRline> }
	296	a1: { \ [NOT] the < SAME > } { = [< THIS >] is } { = a [< ERM >]} { = a [<
	297	CARgo >] airway } { = [< ER >] } (.) * { = [< ER >] }
	298	b2: ** { \ [< OH >] }
B017: 294-298		

Speaker b2 produces a declarative in lines 294 to 295 to ask if their new client is the same as Euro Airline. He uses fall tone to articulate his assumption that the response will change his world view (Brazil, 1997: 101). This use of fall tone indicates that Speaker b2 is not certain about his assumption. He then uses mid termination on “airline” to seek confirmation on his assumption in line 295. In line 296, Speaker a1 confirms that the airline is not the same and then she further clarifies that it is a “cargo airway”. This response serves to confirm the status of the declarative question by removing Speaker b2’s uncertainty.

The response plays an important role to determine whether the declarative functions as a question. When the response clarifies the speaker’s uncertainty as presented in the questions and it becomes an evidence of the status of the declarative question. The examples studied provide evidence that a declarative is not necessarily uttered with rising tone in order to function as a question.

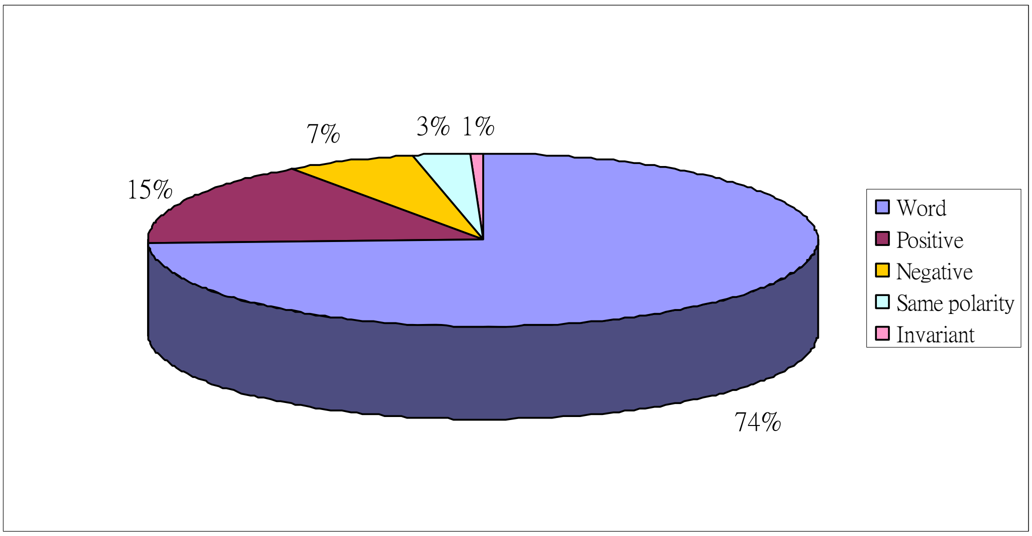
Instead, the tone and termination choices of the declarative question determine whether the declarative question functions to "make sure" or "find out".

9.2.3 Tag questions

In this study, 10% of the questions are produced in the form of tag questions. There is a considerable difference compared to the frequencies of tag questions in Biber et al's study (1999). In their findings, 25 % of all the questions belong to this group. Similar to yes-no questions, it is one of the most common forms to be used in conversations.

A tag is a short structure that is added to a statement (Sinclair et al, 1990: 433), although not necessary to the end of the clause. They are usually attached to a declarative, but sometimes an interrogative or an imperative (Biber et al, 1990: 139). In the present study, tag questions are further classified into five categories, word tag (Cheng and Warren, 2001: 1422; Weber, 1993:71), positive tag, negative tag, same polarity tag and invariant tag (Cheng and Warren, 2001: 1422; Quirk et al, 1985). Figure 9.3 shows the distribution of different types of tag question.

Figure 9.3 Distribution of different forms of tag questions



Three quarters of tag questions are formed by word tags; it is the most frequent type of tag in the Corpus. There are more positive than negative tag questions found (15% vs. 7%). Tag questions with anchor and tag of the same polarity constitute 3% of the total. A considerably smaller number, 1%, are in the form of invariant tag. Below are examples from the Corpus illustrating different categories of tag questions.

Example 9.8 is taken from a checking-out service encounter at a hotel. The hotel ambassador (see Chapter 13 for details of the role of hotel ambassador) is discussing the handbag that the guest has.

Example 9.8

A: hotel guest a: hotel ambassador

	375	a:	{ \ [< ^ OH >] } { \ your [< BAG >] } { \ for your [HANDbag] is < MATCH > }
	376	A:	{ \ er [< ^ YEAH >] } { \ it [< DOES >] } ((laugh))
	377	a:	{ \ [I] like < BLACK > } { \ [< ALso >] }
→	378	A:	{ = [< YEAH >] } * { = it is [< NICE >] } { \ [< Isn't >] it }
	379	a:	** { = [< YEAH >] }
	380	A:	{ / it [KIND] of goes with < Everything > right }
	381	a:	{ \ [< YES >] }
B003:375-381			

In line 378, the guest produces a tag question to seek agreement from the hotel ambassador. In the question, the anchor contains a positive clause with the modal "be". The guest follows the "tag rules" and has attached a negative tag to the anchor. In the negative tag, there is the modal "be" which has an opposite polarity to that of the anchor and the same pronoun as found in the anchor. These negative tag questions are used to seek agreement from the addressee. By choosing mid termination on "isn't" on the tag in line 378, the guest expects the hotel ambassador to give a concurring response.

This tag question is formed following the "tag rules", but this syntactic form of tag question is rarely found in the Corpus. Biber et al (1999: 213) in their analysis find that negative tag questions are widely used in conversation. As mentioned earlier, 25% of all questions are tag questions, and 80% of the tag questions are negative tags. In other words, 20% of all the questions are negative tag questions which indicate that this form of question is very common in their conversation corpus. Their findings, however, are not comprehensive because they only have two categories – positive and negative tags presented in the findings. Cheng and Warren (2001: 1427) also find that 55% of the tag questions in their data are produced in this form. There is an even lower percentage, 7%, identified in the present study. Despite the fact that Biber et al (1999) discuss tag questions formed by attaching a response elicitor (such as right, okay and see), there are no findings presented with regard to this type of tag questions. Similarly, although Cheng and Warren (2001) discuss the use of invariant tags by HKC, they do not present the frequency of this question form. It is not clear whether these studies exclude the above mentioned types of tag question in their analyses or whether they categorize them under other types. It is then uncertain as to whether this leads to a divergence in the findings for these types of tag questions between these two studies and the present study.

Similar to negative tag questions, positive tag questions are found to be relatively uncommon across the sub-genres. The example below presents a positive tag question found in a meeting. The two professors are having a meeting with a research assistant discussing the matter of getting a new assistant.

Example 9.9

B: research project leader a1: research project leader

	331	B: { \ [< WELL >] er } { \ we [NEED] to discuss whether we want to < ^ USE > it or not }
	332	* { ? i think may }
→	333	a1: ** { \ but we are [< NOT >] } { ? we are not } { \ we are not [alLOWED] to use the <
	334	DAta > are we }
	335	B: { = [< ER >] } { = well [< THAT'S >] not } { = [< THAT'S >] not } { \ that's not [<
	336	CERtain >] } { = i need to [< FOLlow >] that up } { \ that [< UP >] } { = [< ER >] } { \
	337	at the [MOment] i've < SAID > to erm } (.) { \ to [A__] to give it < ^ BACK > }
	338	* { ? but to } { = [MAKE] sure we've got < COpies > of it } * { = [< AND >] }
	339	a1: ** { \ [< MM >] } { \ [< ^ YEAH >] } ** { ? no my question }
	340	{ = er i'll [CHECK] the < STAtus > of it }
B060: 331-340		

The research project leader, Speaker a1, asks a tag question in line 333, “but we are not, we are not, we are not allowed to use the data, are we?” She begins the tag question with a declarative and then attaches a positive tag to it. She indicates that she has a negative-oriented assumption with the negative anchor, i.e. they are not allowed to use the data. She chooses mid termination in the tag question on “data” in line 334 to invite the other research project leader to concur with her. However, she does not get a confirmation but an <R: disclaim> (see Chapter 11). It might indicate that research project leader B does not have enough information on the matter discussed. This is further supported by research project leader B’s statement “I need to follow that up” in line 336

Tag questions are usually formed by adding a tag with a modal of reversed polarity to the anchor. In spoken discourses, tag questions attached with a tag of the same polarity can be found. Quirk et al (1985: 814) claim that this form of tag question is less common, and there are only a few occurrences of this form. Unlike Quirk et al’s findings, almost a quarter of the tag questions (23.3%) are found to be in positive tag forms in Cheng and Warren’s study (2001). In this study, there are 16%. Example 9.10 illustrates a tag question with the same polarity tag. The tag question is from a meeting in a hotel in which the managers are discussing whether the assigned tasks are being carried out on time.

Example 9.10

B3: hotel manager (chairman of the meeting) b2, B1: hotels managers

	207	B3:	{ = [< ER >] } { = there’s [aNOther] one < DUE > to come off } (.) { \ [< SORry
	208		>] } { = we’ve [< aNOther >] one } { \ due to [< START >] today } (.) { =
	209		[LISted] at < NUMber > four } { \ [< WITH >] these }
	210	b2:	{ ? [< oKAY >] }
→	211	B1:	{ = so that’s [< ALL >] running } { = [< ON >] schedule is it }
	212	b2:	{ = on [< SCHEdule >] } { = [< _ ER >] } { = [< aPART >] from those er } { = we
	213		[< SCHEduled >] for for } { \ [< JUNE >] } { \ we will [< _ deFER >] all them } (.)
	214		{ = [< BUT >] } { = the [< REST >] are all } { \ on [< _ SCHEdule >] }
B022: 207-214			

The maintenance manager is reporting to the chairman of the meeting that there is one project which is due to finish and another one to start soon. The chairman asks if all the projects are on schedule by means of a tag question. In line 211, the anchor has a positive modal “be” which usually requires a negative tag. Here the chairman attaches a tag with the same polarity, that is a positive polarity tag “is it” to the anchor “so that’s all running on schedule”. Although the chairman fails to comply to the tag convention that the tag has to be formed in the reverse polarity of the anchor, the tag question produced here is still understood without causing any problem. This form of the tag question instead indicates that the chairman does not only expect a response but indeed expects to get a positive concurring response, thus resulting in a positive-positive structure in the tag question.

As Biber et al (1999: 1089) state, tag questions can be formed by attaching a clausal tag to an anchor, a lot of tag questions can also be formed by attaching a response elicitor to the anchor. This type of tag questions is termed “word tag” (Cheng and Warren, 2001; Weber, 1993). An example of “word tag” is presented below, the managers of the different departments at the hotel are having a meeting. They are discussing the business of renting their business centre to airlines and other companies for training and conferences.

Example 9.11

b4: hotel manager a1: hotel manager

	222	b4: { = well [I] have a < DIFferent > } { \ [< THINking >] you know } { = [< ER >] } { \
	223	i’m [< ^ SURE >] } { ? when you } { = when you [< BROUGHT >] } { = [< THIS >] }
	224	{ \ [BUSIness] < _ RIGHT > } { = you [< HAVE >] } { \/ [< TALKED >] to } { \/ a__
→	225	[< L__ >] right }
	226	a1: { \ [< YES >] }
B017: 222-226		

After Speaker a1 has explained the details of the new service that they are marketing, Speaker b4 shows his disagreement and then asks a tag question before he continues. He wants to make sure to see if Speaker a1 has sought the opinion of another senior colleague. In line 224, he asks “you have talked to A__ L__ (name of person), right?” Speaker b4 puts his assumption in a declarative which becomes the anchor of the tag question and then attaches a response elicitor “right” to the anchor. In this example, Speaker b4 asks this tag question to seek confirmation of his assumption that Speaker a1 has already talked to A__ L__ before bringing the issue up in the meeting.

These response elicitors do not have explicit polarity. They are more speaker-centered in that the polarity of the preferred prospected response relies on what the speaker has put in the previous anchor. Biber et al (1999: 1089) suggest that other response elicitors such as ‘alright’, ‘okay’, ‘see’ and ‘eh’ can also perform such functions. Cheng and Warren (2001) find that 8.4% of tag questions are produced with a word tag. However, there is a very different picture in this study. Three quarters of tag questions are produced in this form. As discussed previously, Cheng and Warren (2001) find many more negative tag questions whereas there are only a few in the present study (55% vs. 7%). And it is found to be the opposite case for word tag questions (8.4% vs. 75%). Cheng and Warren compare the use between HKC and NS which is not the focus of the present study. Further studies may examine the use of this form of tag question in both the HKC and NS and different institutional role dimensions to determine whether there are other factors influencing the use of this form.

Biber et al (1999: 1089) warn that these response elicitors can also function as discourse markers. Considering Example 9.11 again, when Speaker b4 says, “i’m sure when you brought this business right” before the tag question, he does not intend to get a response of confirmation or agreement. This use of “right” has the function of a discourse marker. Discourse markers can function “to signal a transition in the evolving progress of the conversation” (ibid: 1086). Here it is used “to signal an interactive relationship between speaker, hearer, and messages” here (ibid: 1086). Speaker b4, by using the first response elicitor, “right”, shows Speaker a1 that he is continuing, and that something is coming up and then he puts forward the tag question in which he uses another “right” to seek confirmation of his assumption. This form of tag questions with an attachment of a response elicitor is very commonly found in the Corpus. All occurrences of a tag question with a response elicitor are found to be attached with “right”. This confirms Cheng and Warren’s (2001) findings that all word tags in their data are produced with “right”. Future studies might examine whether other elicitors are rather more typical and appropriate to be used in familiar, casual exchanges and informal situations (Biber et al, 1999: 1089).

Another form of tag questions is identified in the data. Although not as frequently found, this form of tag questions is far more common than the two forms with a reversed polarity or same polarity clausal tag. Quirk et al (1985:

814) term this form of tag question an “invariant tag question”. They state that the tag attached has the same form regardless of the polarity of the anchor. In their classification system, invariant tag questions can be formed by attaching response elicitors to the anchor, other fixed phrases such as “am I right, isn’t that so, don’t you think, wouldn’t you say” can also function as invariant tags.

Example 9.12, an invariant tag question is used when the hotel guest is checking-out from the hotel. The front desk staff is asking the purpose of the guest’s stay in the excerpt.

Example 9.12

b1: hotel front desk staff x: hotel guest

	33	b1:	{ / [< Mhm >] } { ? so you } { = so you [^ COME] with the < GROUP > for }
→	34		{ \/ for [< TRAIning >] right } { \ for [< MEEting >] } * { / is it }
	35	x:	** { = [< YEAH >] }
	36	b1:	{ ? er [< oKAY >] }
B009: 33-36			

In lines 33 to 34, the hotel front desk staff asks a tag question “so you so you come with the group for for training right for meeting, is it”. According to Huddleston et al’s (2002:892) steps for forming a tag question, the statement in the anchor should be deduced as follows to obtain the tag:

Figure 9.4 Deduction of anchor to obtain the tag

1	so you so you come with the group for for training right for meeting	Anchor
2	You don’t come with the group for training for meeting	Reverse polarity
3	Don’t you come with the group for training for meeting?	Form interrogative
4	Don’t you?	Reduce

From the deduction above, the clausal tag attached to the anchor should be “don’t you?” forming that tag question, “so you so you come with the group for for training right for meeting, don’t you?” In many of the cases, not all of the tag questions are formed “neatly” according to the tag rules in English. There is an invariant tag resembling a clausal tag attached to the anchor instead. In this case, the tag question with the invariant tag is “so you so you come with the group for for training right for meeting, is it?” Matthews and Yip (1994: 317-318) state that Cantonese speakers do tend to use an invariant form in turning statement into tag questions. The most common types of tags are “isn’t it” and “is it”. In Cantonese, the anchor is always affirmative, and the affirmative-negative structure is embedded in the tag itself. Thus the tag question produced by the Hong Kong Chinese with an affirmative tag is prospecting an affirmative response. Cheng and Warren (2001: 1436) explain that the use of invariant tags, namely “is it” and “isn’t it” by Hong Kong Chinese, might be influenced by the invariant tag form in their mother tongue, Cantonese. It might also be due to the lack of linguistic knowledge of the rules of concord in English tags.

Indeed in English, not all tag questions are formed “neatly” according to the tag rules in English. There is an invariant tag resembling a clausal tag attached to the anchor instead. In addition to the two invariant forms that the HKC use, Quirk et al (1985: 814) state that other fixed phrases can also function as invariant tags in English. These tags have the same form regardless of the polarity of the anchor, examples are “am I right, isn’t that so, don’t you think, wouldn’t you say” and etc.

As Cheng and Warren (2001: 1427) find, these invariant forms that the Hong Kong Chinese produce do not seem to have affected the pragmatic functions of the tag questions. There is, however, no evidence about whether the use of this invariant form might influence the communication between NS and NNS. Future studies could examine whether this particular form used by Hong Kong Chinese might lead to difficulties in communication with speakers from other linguistic/cultural background

All of the above types of tag questions have the tags attached in the final position of the questions. Example 9.13 shows a tag question with a tag attached in a non-final position. It takes place in a check-in service encounter at the airport. One of the passengers asks the airline information desk staff if they are the 288th to check for the flight.

Example 9.13

B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

→	26	B: { / is that [< RIGHT >] } { = that [< WE > [are the } { = [< THE >] } { = two [HUNdred]
	27	and < EIGHty > } { \ [PERson] that who are < CHECKED > in }
	28	* { \ is [< THAT >] right }
	29	a: ** { \ [< ^ YES >] } { \ [THIS] is your BOARding < NUMber > } { = [THAT] means <
	30	YOU > are the } { \ [TWO] hundred and < EIGHT > }
B030: 26-30		

As Carter and McCarthy (2006: 550) observe, although question tags normally occur after the main clause, they may sometimes interrupt the clause or be put before the clause. In lines 26 to 28, the passenger asks a tag question "is that right that we are the the two hundred and eighty person that who are checked in, is that right". It can be seen that the tag "is that right" is attached to the anchor in the final position and also at the onset of the anchor. An early placement of a tag serves to project or acknowledge a shared perspective with the listener. This is more common in reporting structures especially when the clause seems to be unusually long. The passenger chooses to attach the tag at the onset of the question, and also adds the same tag again in the final position. It may be the case that after this long clause, the passenger wants to remind the information desk staff or to emphasize that this is a tag question which requires a response.

Biber et al (1999) claim that tag questions are used as a means to seek agreement which keep the conversation going. Given the interactive nature of conversation, this characteristic of tag questions may explain the high frequency counts obtained in their study (ibid: 211).

As Biber et al (1999) state, clausal question tags invite agreement or confirmation from the hearer. They have also observed that response elicitors, such as "right, okay, see" are used in question tags. These response elicitors as question tags have a more speaker-centred role and ensure that the message has been understood and accepted (ibid: 1089). Carter and McCarthy (2006) agree with Biber et al (1999) with the function of tag questions, they also argue that in addition to checking or clarifying information, tag questions are also used to involve the listener in a more interactive way. They believe that this characteristic of tag questions explains why they are very frequently used in spoken English (ibid: 925, 926).

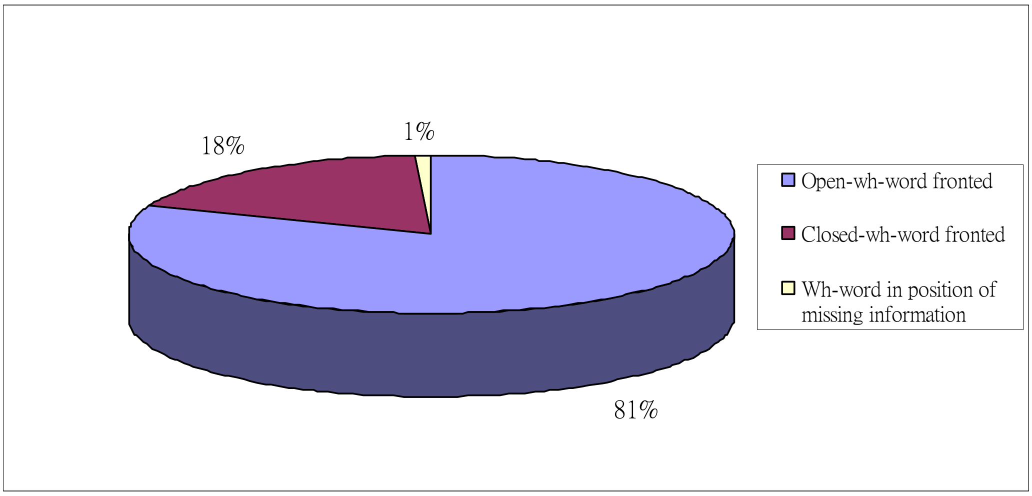
Cheng and Warren (2001: 1419) find that tag questions can be used for other pragmatic functions as well. Although Hong Kong Chinese tend to limit their use of tag questions to seek confirmation, they found that native speakers of English used them for a wider range of functions, such as asking for information, seeking confirmation and emphasizing what is being said.

9.2.4 Wh-questions

There is a very similar percentage for this question type in this study and in Biber et al's study, with 23.83% and 20% respectively. These questions are mainly used to seek information rather than to maintain and reinforce the common ground among the participants (Biber et al, 1999; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Huddleston et al, 2002; O'Keeffe, 2007; Quirk et al, 1985).

As Biber et al (1999: 204) state, wh-questions begin with a wh-word which indicates an element to be specified by the addressee and the rest of the question taken to be already known. These wh-questions usually take the subject-verb order with the wh-word fronted, sometimes the wh-word stays in the regular position for the relevant phrase or clause element, especially in echoing what has been said by the previous speaker (ibid: 204-5). The wh-words could be any of the following: who, whom, whose, what, which, when, where, how, and why (Quirk et al, 1985: 817). Wh-questions are categorized into two main types based on the types of wh-word used: open and closed (Biber et al, 1999). Sometimes, there is an absence of subject-verb inversion in the wh-questions and the wh-word stays in the position where the missing information is. The frequency of these forms of wh-questions is shown in Figure 9.5.

Figure 9.5 Distribution of different forms of wh-questions



Only 1% of the wh-questions do not involve subject-verb inversion. It is found that 81% of those wh-word fronted questions are formed with an open wh-word and 18% with a closed wh-word. Examples illustrating the above two forms of wh-question are discussed in the following. In Example 9.14, a research project leader is having a meeting with a research assistant.

Example 9.14

A: research project leader b: research assistant

→	319	A: { = [< ERM >] } { \ [WHEN] do you < THINK > } { = [< THAT >] will be }
	320	b: { = [< BY >] by } { ∨ [< NEXT >] week }
	321	A: { ∨ [< oKAY >] }
	322	b: { = oKAY [< NEXT >] week }
	323	A: { \ [< FINE >] }
	324	((pause))
B058: 319-324		

The research project leader, Speaker A, wants to find out when the t-test results will be done after the research staff has informed him that it will be ready. He asks the research staff a wh-question seeking that particular piece of information. It can be seen that the wh-element (that is the clause element containing the wh-word) comes first in the question. And the wh-word itself takes first position in the wh-element. This form of wh-question is most commonly found in the business and professional settings. The majority of wh-questions belong to this form (99%).

Example 9.15

a: airline information desk staff B: passenger

	93	a: { \ so [WOULD] you please COLlect your < BOARding > card } { \ at [B] < COUNter
	94	> now } { = [< oKAY >] }
→	95	B: { = at [< WHERE >] }
	96	a: { \ [JUST] at COUNter < B > } * { \ on the [< Other >] side }
B029: 93-96		

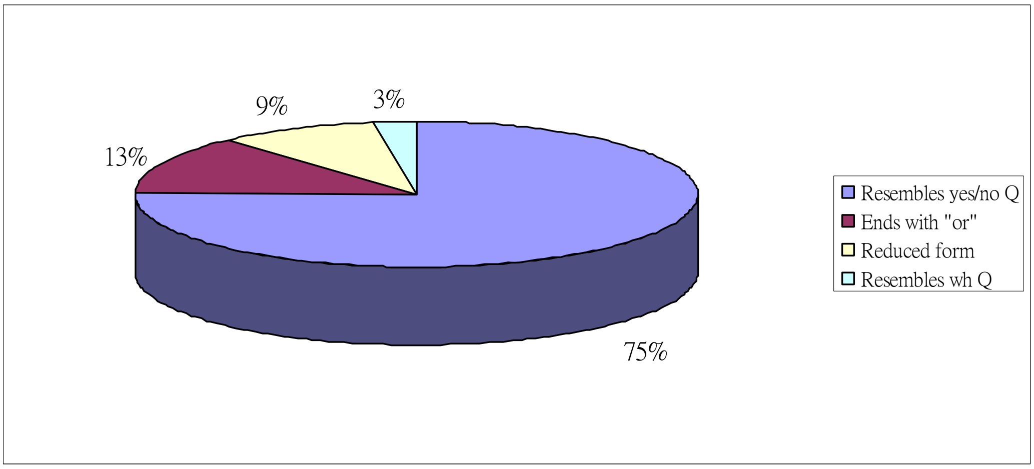
The wh-question in line 95 is not in the wh-word-fronted form, the wh-word is placed in the position where the missing information is. The passenger tries to echo what the airline staff says in line 93, using the same structure. This results in placing the wh-word in the position of the missing information. This wh-question type is rare in the Corpus with only a few occurrences. In Biber et al's (1999: 106) study, these wh-questions with stranded preposition is a "minority choice" except for academic prose. Although statistics are not available, Biber et al suggest that this form of wh-question is common in casual conversation. Future studies could examine whether the use of this form of wh-question is influenced by the formality of the discourses or compare the results with other native speaker corpus.

9.2.5 Alternative questions

Alternative questions are questions which give the addressee a set of alternatives in the question. The essential feature of alternative questions is the coordinator "or" which links the alternatives (Biber et al, 1999: 207; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 428; Huddleston et al, 2002: 868; Quirk et al, 1985: 722). It is found that this question form is not common in the Corpus, with only about 5%.

Alternative questions are further classified into two main types: one which resembles a yes-no question and one which resembles a wh-question (Biber et al, 1999: 207; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 428; Huddleston et al, 2002: 868; Quirk et al, 1985: 722). Carter and McCarthy (2006: 428) suggest that there is a reduced form of alternative question which is more common in informal speech. In the Corpus, it is found that the majority of the alternative questions resemble a yes-no question (more than 80% of the total). The second most common type of alternative question is those produced in reduced form (10%). There is only 3% of the total which resemble a wh-question. Although not common, it is found that there is a form of alternative questions ending with “or” (approximately 5%). Figure 9.6 shows the frequency of each type of alternative question in the Corpus.

Figure 9.6 Distribution of different forms of alternative questions



Three quarters of the alternative questions resemble a yes-no question. The other three forms make up one quarter of the total. In the following section, different forms of alternative questions are illustrated with excerpts from the Corpus. The first one is an alternative question which resembles a yes-no question. In the service encounter below, a passenger is arranging a ticket for his next trip. The airline information desk staff is checking the details of the ticket.

Example 9.16

B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

→	13	A: { / would you [LIKE] to have one-way TICket or < ROUND > trip }
	14	B: { = [< ERM >] } { \ [ROUND] trip i think < PLEASE > }
B029: 13-14		

After the passenger says that he wants to get another ticket for his next trip, the airline staff asks him about the route of the ticket. The airline staff asks an alternative question in line 13 which resembles a yes-no question. Although the question in line 13 starts with “would you like”, it does not prospect a yes or no answer; and such a polarity answer would not fulfil answering the question appropriately (Tsui, 1990: 96-98). This type of question rather seeks information (ibid: 98). Thus the passenger has to choose between one of the two alternatives given in the question.

This form of alternative question which resembles a yes-no question is by far the most common form of alternative questions in the Corpus. Three quarters of the alternative questions are produced in this form with almost half produced by the service provider in Service Encounters. Their inherent role of knowing the options and providing service to the service recipients results in the use of a larger number of alternative questions (see detailed discussion of institutional roles of participants in Chapter 13). Of all the alternative questions, 48% of alternative questions are found in Service Encounters and 90% of those are produced by the service providers.

As Tsui (1990: 86) argues, alternative questions should be categorized as information-seeking questions, and most of these questions are produced resembling the form of a wh-question. Example 9.17 illustrates an alternative question which resembles a wh-question. In the interview, the interviewer is asking about the approach of the research that the interviewee (a candidate for a research post) is implementing.

Example 9.17

B: interviewer   a1: interviewee

→	54	b: ** { ? in what } { ? excuse me } { / in what [< apPROACH >] } { = are you going
	55	to [< COM >] } { = to to [< DO >] this um } { \ [< _ reSEARCH >] } { = [< socioLOgical >]
	56	ap } { / [socioLOgical] < apPROACH > } { = [< OR >] } (.) * { =
	57	a1: ** { = [<
	58	[PSYchological] < _ apPROACH > }
	59	UM >] } { = [< WE >] }
	60	a1: { = [< UM >] } { = it’s [< ^ NOT >] really } { = it’s [< NOT >] really } { = [<
	61	PSYchoLOgical >] or } { = [< soCIOlo >] } { \ [socioLOgical] < apPROAches > } { = [< …
B80: 54-61		

When asking the interviewee about the research approach used, the interviewer has already in mind two possible approaches. Thus producing a wh-question while outlining the two possible alternatives in mind to the interviewee in lines 54-58. However, the interviewee does not choose either of the alternatives. She explains that she is using neither of these approaches from line 60 onwards.

Although a wh-question is the main form of information-seeking question, alternative questions are rarely produced resembling such a form (3%) (despite Tsui's (1990: 86) classification of alternative questions as information-seeking questions with reference to wh-questions).

Another form of alternative question is the "reduced form" (Carter and McCarthy, 2002: 428) which contains only the alternatives and the coordinator "or" in the question. In the check-in service encounter below, the airline staff is asking the passenger for his preferred seat arrangement.

Example 9.18

B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

→	10	a: { = [WINdow] or * < AISLE > seat }
	11	B: ** { \ [< WINdow >] }
B048: 10-11		

The airline staff asks the passenger's preference for the location of his seat. She produces an alternative question in reduced form in line 10 which only consists of the two alternatives "window" and "aisle seat" and the coordinator "or". This reduced form of alternative question is straightforward due to its simple structure in syntactic form – a minimal form of alternative questions.

Nine percent of all alternative questions are produced in this reduced form. Given its simple structure, which makes this reduced form of alternative questions straightforward, this might explain why half of the reduced form of alternative questions is found in Service Encounters which are relatively routine and so more predictable. It is found that 20% of the alternative questions identified in Service Encounters are produced in reduced form. The rest are in the form resembling a yes-no question.

When asking the interviewee about the research approach used, the interviewer has already in mind two possible approaches, and thus producing a wh-question in lines 54-58 while outlining two possible alternatives to the interviewee. However, the interviewee does not choose either of the alternatives. She explains that she is using neither of these approaches from line 60 onwards. In line 60, the interviewee informs the interviewer that she is not going to use either of the approaches, and chooses high key on “not” to signal that it is not what the interviewer has expected. She also chooses high key on “would” in line 61 when she starts describing what she is doing in the research project. Similarly, by choosing high key, the interviewee signals that the information that she is presenting is surprising. Although the respondent is expected to identify one of the two alternatives as presented in the question, it is possible that, as shown in Example 9.17, the respondent could respond with something not presented in the question and the response might not be what the questioner has expected. In other words, the alternatives provided in the question do not constrain the respondent, signal to the respondent what the questioner has in mind.

The last form of alternative questions may not contain two or more alternatives as others have stated (Biber et al, 1999: 207; Carter and McCarthy, 2006:428; Huddleston et al, 2002: 868; Quirk et al, 1985: 722). But this form of alternative question has an essential element which is the coordinator “or”. This form of alternative question can resemble either the form of a yes-no or wh-question but the main character is that it ends with the coordinator “or”. Example 9.18 shows an alternative question of this form. In the discourse, the interviewer and the interviewee (a candidate for a post in the professional sector) are discussing the location of the interviewee’s home.

Example 9.19

a: interviewee b: interviewer

→	16	b: { / i [< SEE >] } { = is it } { / far [< aWAY >] } { = [< OR >] }
	17	a: { \ [< NO >] } { \ [NOT] eXACTly very far < aWAY > } { = [BUT] i need < TO > }
	18	{ / er [TAKE] the < BUS > } { \ [< FIRST >] } { = [< ER >] } { = [^ IT] will < BE
	19	> } { = [< QUITE >] } { \ not [< SURE >] } { = [aBOUT] the < UM > } { / [< BUS
	20	>] } { \ to [TRAvel] < HERE > } { = [< BUT >] } { = [< exCEPT >] this } { =
	21	[exCEPT] the < BUS > } { / travel [< TIME >] } { / er i [< THINK >] } { = i will [<

	22	BE >] } { \ very [< CERtain >] } { \ to [COME] < HERE > } { = at this time }
B066: 16-22		

In the interview, the interviewer wants to get information regarding the interviewee's residential addresss. He does not ask the exact district or area of where the interviewee's home is. Instead, he asks an alternative question concerning the distance from the workplace is. He produces an alternative question ending with the coordinator "or" in line 16. This form of alternative question opens up an infinite selection of alternatives from the existential paradigm of "not far away". In other words, the interviewee has a lot more "freedom" in responding to this question.

Around 5% of alternative questions end with the coordinator "or", and all of these occur in the setting of an interview. This form of alternative questions by nature allows the addressee more "freedom" to respond to the question. The addressee is not restricted to only the alternatives listed in the question. In other words, this form of alternative questions might serve to encourage the addressee to be more specific or elaborate when responding to the question.

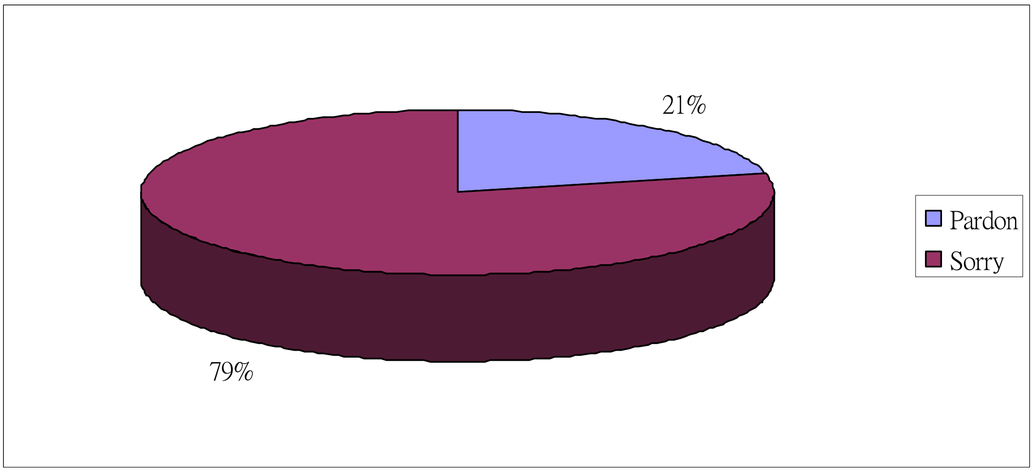
It is found that about 5% of the questions are produced in the form of an alternative question. The majority of the alternative questions resemble the form of a yes-no question (80%). The second most common group is alternative questions in a reduced form (approximately 10%), and half of those are identified in service encounters. Although the form of alternative questions ending with the coordinator "or" is rarely found (approximately 5%), it is found to open up an infinite selection of alternatives to the addressee. The least frequently identified form is alternative questions which resemble a wh-question (3%).

9.2.6 Insert questions

There is a group of polite speech act formulae which behave as invariable items functioning as inserts. According to Biber et al (1999: 1082), inserts are "stand-alone words" which are characterized in general by their inability to enter into syntactic relations with other structures. These inserts behave pragmatically and lexically as "unanalysable formulae" (ibid: 1083), examples are "pardon me", "sorry", and "excuse me". These expressions have various restrictions and peculiarities which make them behave like "atomic wholes". They have pragmatically specialized functions, such as apologizing in general. These expressions can also function as questions which seek repetition or clarification from the previous speaker.

These insert questions are not commonly found in the Corpus, there are only less than 1% of the total which is around 50 occurrences. As Biber et al (1999: 1093) state there are a number of inserts which can function as questions. They include: “sorry”, “excuse me” and “pardon” (and variations such as “pardon me”, “I beg your pardon”). “Excuse me” is however not found in this study. Only “sorry” and variations of “pardon” are identified. Figure 9.7 shows the distribution of insert questions with “sorry” and “pardon”.

Figure 9.7 Distribution of different forms of insert questions



In the Corpus, 79% of the insert questions are realized as “sorry” and 21% as “pardon”. Example 9.20 illustrates the use of “sorry” functioning as an insert question. In the discourse, a research project leader is having a meeting with a research assistant discussing the time for data collection.

Example 9.20

A: research project leader b: research assistant

	215	A: { = would [THAT] be < ALright > }
	216	b: { = [< YEAH >] } { ? the [< TIME >] er } { = [< ER >] } { = [< aBOUT >] the }
	217	{ = [< STEreo >] } { \ [AFter] < FOUR > }
→	218	A: { = [< ^ SORry >] }
	219	b: { ? i [< MEAN >] } { \ i mean the [< TIME >] for } { \ for [TAPE] < reCORding> }

	220	{ ? is that } { ? is that } { \ after [< FOUR >] } { \ o'[< CLOCK >] } { ? because i } { \
	221	[< ofFIcially >] } { \ leave [< OFfice >] } { \ after [< THREE >] }
	222	A: { \ [< YEAH >] } * { \ [< YEAH >] }
B58: 215-222		

The research project leader is asking the research assistant to record some data in line 215. The research assistant then reminds the professor that the time for collection is after four o'clock, since his official time to finish work is at 3 o'clock. The professor either does not hear what the assistant has said in line 216 or does not quite get the assistant's implicature the he would be working outside office hours, thus producing an insert question in line 217. She chooses to use high termination on the insert "sorry" to indicate surprise, signalling that the insert is not just an apology and invites the assistant to make a response to it. So the assistant then explicitly informs the professor about his official working hours. In the Corpus, most of the insert questions are produced in the form of "sorry".

In Example 9.21, the front desk staff at the hotel is asking the guest to give him his credit card to settle the bill. However the guest thinks that he has already given the credit card to the front desk for authorization the night before.

Example 9.21

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	18	B: { = [< ER >] } { / [DIDN'T] you < HAVE > that }
→	19	b: { / [< PARdon >] }
	20	B: { / you didn't [< HAVE >] that }
	21	b: { = [< UM >] } { \ [LAST] night we just imPRINT the < NUMber > } { \ [<
	22	NOW >] } { \ i need your [CREdit] card aGAIN for < PAYment > }
	23	((pause))
B004:18-23		

In line 18 the hotel guest asks a yes-no question seeking confirmation from the hotel staff that the hotel already has the credit card information. The guest's use of a negative yes-no question indicates that he has epistemic bias towards a positive answer, suggesting that he believes that the hotel has the information for authorization of the transaction. The hotel staff does not hear or understand the utterance thus asking an insert question to seek a repetition. This use of insert question illustrates a case where the participant probably does not catch what has been said earlier. This is suggested by the guest rephrasing of the utterance without the addition of extra information. The hotel staff is able to respond to the question in line 20 with a mere rephrase of the question in line 18.

Insert questions are not commonly identified in the Corpus (1%). Although Biber et al (1999: 1093) state that "sorry", "excuse me" and "pardon/ I beg your pardon" can function pragmatically as question which seeks repetition and clarification of the previous utterance, only insert questions with "sorry", "pardon" (and its variations, i.e. "I'm sorry" or "Pardon me", "I beg your pardon") are identified. There are 79% and 21% of the two groups respectively. No instances of insert questions with "excuse me" are identified. Further studies could look into how these formulaic expressions are used by other sets of speakers and whether there is the same pattern for these formulaic expressions in other contexts as well.

9.3 Conclusion

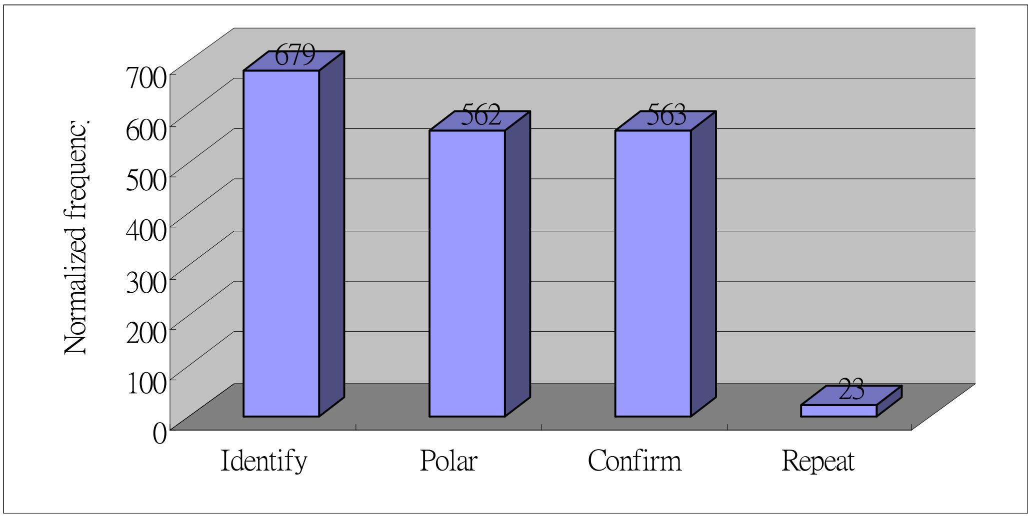
This chapter discusses different sub-categories of question forms in terms of their syntactic structure. Their frequency and use are illustrated with examples from the Corpus. Possible explanations are also explored. It is found that some question forms are more common than the others due to linguistic background. It might also be affected by another socio-cultural factors such as institutional role of participants which will be discussed later. Other socio-cultural factors, such as NS-NNS differences, gender and cultural background might also an influence. Further studies are suggested to investigate more on these areas.

Chapter 10 Question functions

10.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, both Stenström (1984, 1994) and Tsui (1992) outline the functions that are performed by different types of questions. This study adapts and modifies the two frameworks Stenström and Tsui have developed. There are in total four categories in the modified framework: <Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, <Q: confirm>, and <Q: repeat>. These four functions are discussed in this section illustrated with the examples from the Corpus. Figure 10.1 shows the frequency counts for the different question functions.

Figure 10.1 Distribution of different question functions



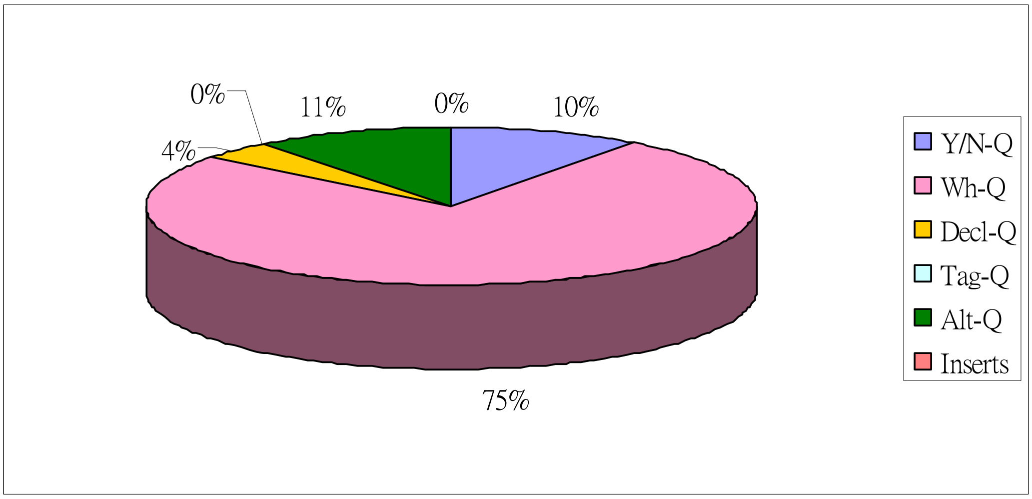
Three of the question functions have a fairly similar frequency found in the Corpus, each of them accounts for about one-third of the total, <Q: identify> (37%), <Q: polar> (31%), <Q: confirm> (31%). There are considerably fewer instances of <Q: repeat> (1%). Each of these functions, and how they are realized in different question forms and are discussed in this chapter.

10.2 Identify

According to Stenström (1984, 1994), requests for identification are most often realized by wh-questions. These questions ask for the referent of the wh-word (1984: 155), she further classifies wh-word into two groups. The first group, open-ended: what, how, and why; and the second group, specifying:

which, who, when, and where. The reason why Stenström makes this distinction between the two groups is that she believes that this semantic distinction is crucial as this factor affects the response that the question gets (ibid: 155). It has an effect on the response's exactness, amount of detail, length and grammatical completion (ibid: 155).

Figure 10.2 Distribution of question forms that realize the <Q: identify> function



<Q: identify> is found to be realized mostly in wh-questions (75%). There is a similar number of yes-no questions and alternative questions realizing the function of <Q: identify>, 11% and 10% respectively. An even smaller number is found to be realized in the form of a declarative question (4%). None is found to be realized in insert questions and tag questions. The realizations in different question forms are illustrated in this chapter.

In Examples 10.1 and 10.2, the <Q: identify> function is realized by a wh-question in the first one with an open-ended wh-word, and the second one with a closed wh-word. Both of the examples are taken from the same discourse, from Informal Office Talk, the two co-workers are discussing work and personal life.

Example 10.1

B: co-worker a: co-worker

→	16	B: { \ so [^ WHAT] have you been working on < REcently > }
	17	a: { = [< ER >] } { = we are [< prePAring >] for the } { \ [< reNEwal >] } { = [<
	18	FOR >] the } { = [< _ ERM >] } { \ [< GOLD >] membersh } { \ [< MEMbers
	19	>] } { \ [< ACtually >] } { \ [< beCAUSE >] y } { = if you [reMEMber] we
	20	START the < GOLD > } { = er [< LEvel >] e } { = [< ^ enROLment >] } { = [<
	21	_ ER >] } { = in [< MARCH >] } { \ last [< YEAR >] } { = [< SO >] } { \ it's
	22	already [< FEbruary >] } { = so it's [COMing] in a year < ^ TIME > }
	23	B: { = it's [< oKAY >] }
B075: 16-23		

Example 10.1 is taken at the beginning of an interaction between two co-workers. Speaker B asks a wh-question to find out what Speaker a has been working on, he also opens up a topic for the two to talk about at the beginning of the interaction. This wh-question in line 16 realizes a <Q: identify> function, it expects the addressee, Speaker a, to give information on the referent "what" regarding "work recently". In the Corpus, 60% of the <Q: identify> functions are realized by an open-ended wh-question.

Example 10.2

B: co-worker a: co-worker

→	43	B: { \ so [WHEN] did you get the other four < PEOple > }
	44	a: { = [< ER >] } { = [< ^ SINCE >] } { / since [< deCEMber >] } { / [< LAST >] year }
	45	B: { = [< oKAY >] }
B075: 43-45		

After Speaker a has told Speaker B about her recent work, she also indicates that she has four extra people working in her department. In the example, Speaker B asks a wh-question with a closed wh-word requesting Speaker a to identify information related to the wh-referent. This wh-question in line 43 expects Speaker a to identify the date when the other four people came to the department. In the Corpus, 14% of the <Q: identify> function is realized by a closed-wh-question. As Stenström (1984: 155) observes, the use of the two different groups of wh-word has an influence on the response that the question expects. The wh-question in line 16 in Example 10.1 is formulated with an open-ended wh-word, these open-ended wh-words expect that Speaker a gives a response which is longer in length, and in greater detail compared to the expected response for the wh-question in line 43 in Example 10.2. The closed wh-question asks for the date when the four staff joined the department and the open-ended wh-question asks for the details of what work Speaker a has been engaged in recently. When we compare the response obtained from the two wh-questions, it can be seen that the response for the when-question in line 44 only tells which month, the response is 6 words in length. In the response to the what-question in line 17-22, Speaker a says what work she has been working on and the reason why she is doing that particular task. The response is 33 words long and it gives more detail than is requested. In other words, open-ended wh-word questions elicit longer or more detailed responses than closed wh-word questions.

Although Stenström (1984: 152) states that the <Q: identify> function is realized by wh-questions, she also observes that it can also be realized by an alternative question. As Stenström argues there is no “alternative function” in her framework as alternative questions either serve to elicit the <Q: identify> function or the <Q: polar> function depending on the alternatives given in the question itself (ibid: 152).

Example 10.3 is an alternative question which realizes <Q: identify>. In this excerpt, a passenger is checking-in at the airport. The airline information desk staff is asking the passenger’s seating preference.

Example 10.3

B: passenger b: airline information desk staff

→	64	b: { \ prefer [SMOking] or non < _ SMOking > }
	65	B: { \ [< SMOking >] }
	66	b: { \ [< oKAY >] }
	67	((pause))
B011: 64-67		

The airline staff asks the passenger whether he wants a smoking or non-smoking seat. The airline staff gives two alternatives in the question and invites the passenger to identify his choice from the two alternatives. In the Corpus, 11% of the <Q: identify> is realized by an alternative question and all alternative questions identified realize this function.

As Tsui (1992) argues, the <Q: identify> function is not solely realized by wh- or alternative questions. In her review of Quirk et al's (1985) framework for question categorization, she observes that in many of the cases, a "yes" or "no" answer does fulfil the requirements of answering a yes-no question. She argues that such questions are indeed information-seeking questions. And that a mere "yes" or "no" response from the addressee would be odd or interpreted as unwillingness to interact with the speaker (ibid: 91).

Example 10.4 is a yes-no question which realizes the <Q: identify> function. In this management meeting at the hotel, the managers are discussing a company which is going to host a conference in Hong Kong. This company is taking up a large number of hotel rooms and occupying the conference facilities.

Example 10.4

a1: hotel manager a4: hotel manager

→	642	a1: { = [DO] you have any < iDEA > on } { = [< ^ WHAT >] other } { = [< _ UM >] }
	643	{ = [< hoTELS >] } { = [THEY'LL] < conSIder > }
	644	a4: { = [< UM >] } { = [< I >] } { = just [KNOW] that they < HAVE > er } { \
	645	[ASKED] < CENtury > } { \ to [subMIT] the < proPOsal > } { = [< ^ beCAUSE
	646	>] } { = [< ERM >] } …
B017: 642-646		

In the meeting, one of the managers, Speaker a4, has reported to the team that a number of companies are either organizing training or conferences in Hong Kong. Some have shown their intention to stay in their hotel and rent their facilities, some have even committed to organizing the event in their hotel. The company under discussion has not committed yet and is potentially organizing the event at their hotel. Speaker a1 then asks Speaker a4 if she knows whether that company is considering other hotels. In line 642 and 643, Speaker a1asks a yes-no question "do you have any idea on what other hotels um they'll consider". Although the question appears to expect a "yes" or "no" response, it functions as an information question to "what are the other hotels they that are considering". If the response is "yes", it would be expected that Speaker a4 gives details of "what other hotels the company is considering". In other words, the "yes" or "no" is only a preface to the giving of the information. A response consisting of only a "yes" or "no" without the information is self-evidently incomplete. In the Corpus, 10% of the <Q: identify> functions are realized in the form of a yes-no question.

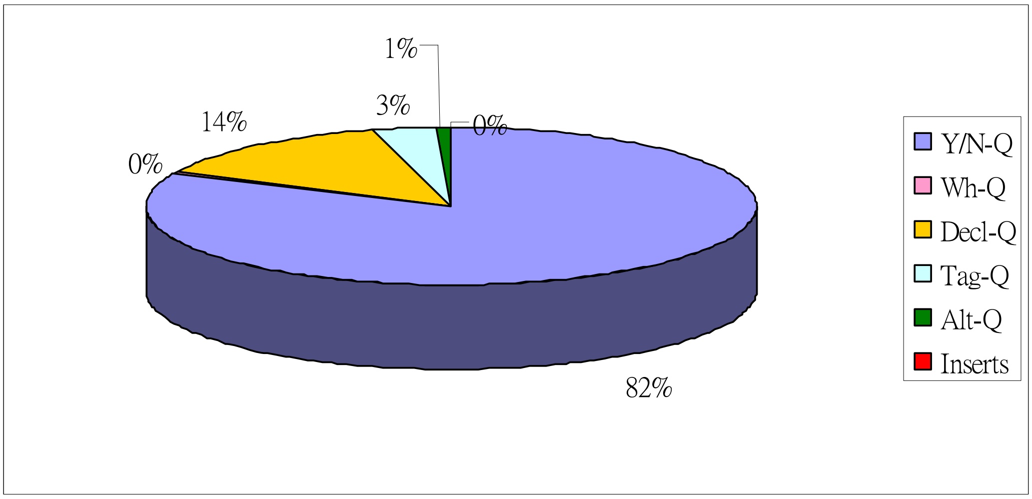
In Example 10.4, Speaker a1 is a Hong Kong Chinese. It might also be possible that she has formulated the question "do you have any idea …", due to pragmatic transfer from the first language. In Cantonese, the most neutral form of yes-no question is the A-not-A question (Matthews and Yip, 1994: 311). This form involves repeating the verb or adjective with the negative marker. Her yes-no question here might be a transfer from "you know-not-know + what other hotels they'll consider". It is found this use of yes-no question + wh-question is common in Q&A Sessions. This use of a yes-no question is termed by Brown and Levinson (1987: 173) as "be pessimistic". This strategy gives redress to the respondent's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt as to whether the respondent has information on the question. The use of politeness strategy here might be explained by the Chinese face systems which centers on self-denigration and other elevation (Gu, 1990). It serves to build the questioner's "polite appearance", which Gu (1990: 238) has translated word-for-word from the Chinese word for "politeness". Although this use might be a pragmatic transfer , results show that this form of yes-no question + wh-questions are both used by the HKC and NNS. Since the focus of the discussion is on influence of institution roles of participants, future studies could examine whether this form of yes-no question is more common among Hong Kong Chinese than NS and whether the two speaker groups use this form of yes-no question similarly or differently.

10.3 Polar

Tsui (1992: 104), in analyzing the functions of questions which expect a "yes" or "no" response, does not have a category of a <Q: polar> function in her framework. Instead she categorizes any elicitations which "invite the addressee to confirm the speaker's assumption" as a "confirm function", and elicitations which "invite the addressee to agree with the speaker's assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true" as an "agree function" (ibid: 107). It is found that there is a missing category of functions in which the speaker has no assumption and no bias towards a particular response. These questions indeed realize a <Q: polar> function which Stenström categorizes in her framework.

Questions which realize a <Q: polar> function take a “yes” or “no” for their direct response (Stenström, 1984, 1994). According to Stenström (1984, 1994), this function is often realized by yes-no or alternative questions. These expected “yes” or “no” responses are sometimes biased, and this is the result of the assertive lexical items, negation, and contextual features (Stenström, 1984: 156). Stenström states that it is generally accepted that a negative yes-no question is biased, the controversy is instead on whether a response which agrees should be expressed by a “yes” or “no” (ibid: 156).

Figure 10.3 Distribution of question forms that realize the <Q: polar> function



As Figure 10.3 shows, the majority of the <Q: polar> function is realized by yes-no questions (82%). The second most common form of realizing a <Q: polar> function is with declarative questions (14%). There is a small percentage realized by tag questions (3%) and a very small number by alterative questions (1%). No instances are realized with a wh-question and again none by an insert questions. These different realizations are illustrated with the following examples.

In the hotel meeting below, the managers of the different departments are discussing the details for the arrangement of the export meeting which will be organized in the hotel.

Example 10.5

a1: hotel manager (chairman of the meeting)   a2, b2: hotel managers

→	413	a1: { = is [< ^ THERE >] anyone from } { = [< SALES >] office } { = [< COming >] } { \
	414	[< BACK >] } { = [< _ FOR >] } { = [BEfore] they < CHECK > in } { \ to [< CHECK
	415	>] } { \ it if it’s [< oKAY >] } { \ [SINCE] this is a < BIG > } { \ [< GROUP >] }
	416	b2: { \ [< WHEN >] is it }
	417	a2: { \ [< SUN * day >] }
	418	a1: ** { \ [< SUNday >] }
	419	b2: { = this [< SUNday >] } { \ [< _ OH >] } { = [< I >] will } { \ [I] will be < HERE > }
	420	{ \ i’m on [DUty] this < SUNday > }
	421	a1: { = [< THANK >] you } { / [< Anything >] else } { = [< ER >] } { = for [<
	422	comMERcial >] and corporate } { \ [< B__ >] } { = [< PLEASE >] }
B017: 413-422		

In Example 10.5, the chairman of the meeting is asking the manager of the sales office for staff arrangement. Since it is a big group of people who are attending the export meeting, he wants to know if there is anyone coming in on the day when the people check-in at the hotel. In line 413, the yes-no question produced by the chairman of the meeting requests a “yes” or “no” response. Although the yes-no question is not structured with a bias towards either of the two possible responses, the chairman might have a preference for the positive one. If the question is responded to positively, that means no other arrangement needs to be made. But if the question is responded negatively, he might want the sales office manager to arrange some people to come in “to check” if procedures are followed correctly. In the example, after the sales office manager has reported the staff on-duty schedule to the chairman in lines 419-420. The chairman has nothing to add and moves on to another topic in line 421.

Stenström (1942, 1994) observes that the <Q: polar> function is realized by either a yes-no question or an alternative question. In the Corpus, there are occurrences when the <Q: polar> function is realized by a declarative question. According to Brazil (1997), a declarative question can realize a <Q: confirm> function or a <Q: polar> function depending on the choice of discourse intonation by the speaker (see Chapter 12 for discussion of discourse intonation).

Example 10.6 takes place during a check-in encounter at the hotel. The front desk staff is finding out the guest's room preference which is a very routine part of the check-in procedure.

Example 10.6

B1: hotel guest b1: hotel front desk staff

→	21	b1: { = you [preFER] the room with no < ^ SMOking > }
	22	B1: { \ [< YEAH >] } { \ [NO] < SMOking > }
	23	((pause))
B015: 21-23		

In line 21, the hotel front desk staff is trying to find out the guest's room preference. He produces a declarative "you prefer the room with no smoking". Although the front desk staff does not choose rising tone on the declarative, it is still interpreted as a question. As Brazil states (1997: 100), "(t)he discourse function of the utterance depends crucially on the state of understanding existing between speaker and hearer". In other words, whether a declarative functions as a statement or interrogative depends on who holds the information. The front desk staff also chooses high termination on "smoking" in line 21. This use of high termination invites the guest to adjudicate with respect to "prefer the room with no smoking" in Example 10.6 (ibid: 55). The guest is expected to tell the front desk staff whether he is "right or not" (ibid: 104). If the front desk staff chooses mid termination on smoking, he then invites the guest to confirm that he is right about his assumption (ibid: 104). It is not common to find a <Q: polar> function realized by a declarative question (14%), though it is the second most frequent question form found.

In the Corpus, it is interesting that none of the <Q: polar> functions are realized by an alternative question. There is a case in which an alternative question is produced in indirect speech, i.e., in the form of a declarative.

In a large scale organization, it is very often the case that employees of different departments have to deal with staff of the finance, accounts, and human resources offices. Employees often have to report to these different administrative offices. The following interaction takes place when a human resources staff of a university wants to confirm and check some information with a professor regarding his employment of a research assistant.

Example 10.7

A: research project leader   b: human resources staff

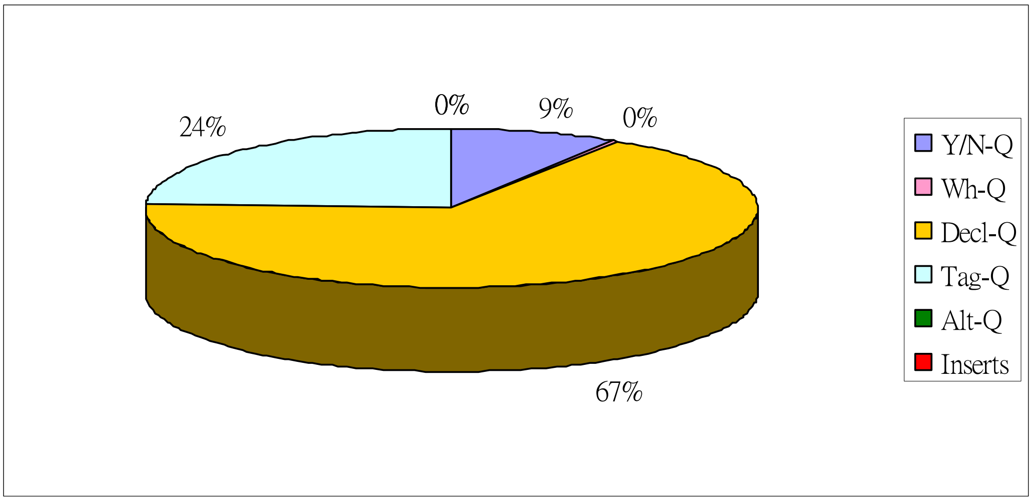
	22	b: { / [< Uhuh >] } { = [< AND >] } { / your [R] < A > } { = [< MM >] }
	23	A: { / her [NAME] is < v__ > } { \ [< J__ >] } { / [< J__ >] }
→	24	b: { \ [< ^ OH >] } (.) { = [< I >] } { \ i [< SEE >] } (.) { = [< ER >] } { = we
	25	[JUST] want to conFIRM < ER > } { = [< ER >] } { = your [< dePARTment >] }
	26	{ = [< ER >] } { = will [< exTEND >] } { \ her [CONtract] or < NOT > }
	27	A: { = [< ER >] } { \ [AS] far as i < KNOW > } { / we [< WON'T >] } { = [< BE
	28	>] } { \ extending her [< CONtract >] } { = that [< UM >] } { / the [PROject] <
	29	ENDS > } { = [< ON >] } { = [< UM >] } { \ the [SEvenTEENTH] of < JUNE
	30	> } { \ and [THAT] will be her LAST < DAY > }
B074: 22-30		

In Example 10.7, the alternative question is produced in indirect speech, that is in the form of a declarative. Different from the alternative questions realizing the <Q: identify> function, this alternative question carries two alternatives which are presented by the two polar choices. Thus the addressee in responding to this alternative question, is expected to choose from either "yes" or "no". There is only one occurrence of a question presenting the two polar choices as alternatives linked by the coordinator "or". This question with alternatives is however produced in indirect speech, that is in declarative form. Thus this question is categorized instead as a declarative realizing a <Q: polar> function.

10.4 Confirm

Although Stenström (1984) concludes that the two functions <Q: polar> and <Q: confirm> are very similar because both the functions expect a "yes" or "no" for their direct response. She distinguishes these two functions by whether there is bias towards one response or the other. She argues that "the bias of *confirm* is a direct consequence of their grammatical form and … by lexical and contextual features" (ibid: 156). As Stenström states, this function is realized by declarative and tag questions.

Figure 10.4 Distribution of question forms that realize the <Q: confirm> function



Two thirds of the <Q: confirm> functions are realized by declarative questions (67%), and a quarter by tag questions (24%) and 9% by yes-no questions. This means, <Q: confirm> is only realized by a question form which expects a “yes” or “no” response. There are no instances found for the other three question forms, wh-, alternative and insert questions. The example below contains a tag question which realizes the <Q: confirm> function. In this meeting regarding the performance of a project, the two project leaders and the research assistant are discussing the performance of a task in the project.

Example 10.8

B: research project leader a1: research project leader

a2: research assistant

	274	a1:	{ / [DO] < ^ WE > } { = [< STILL >] want } { = [< MORE >] } { / [acaDEmic]
	275		ENglish < DAta > } * { = [YOU] < KNOW > i }
	276	B:	** { \ how [MUCH] have we < GOT > now }
	277	a1:	{ \ i [WENT] to the WORKshop < YESterday > } { = [< SOME >] } { = [<
	278		SOME >] } * { \ [HONG] kong CHIinese < GUY > }
→	279	a2:	** { \ but we [GOT] LOTS of < presenTAtions > } { = and you
	280		[SAID] we < DON’T > want } * { \ [< TOO >] much } { / [< RIGHT >] }
	281	a1:	** { \ [< NO >] } { \ we [DON’T] want < that > much }
B059: 274-281			

In the performance meeting, the two project leaders are discussing how the task of data collection is going. After they have figured out the amount of data that they have obtained, the research assistant then asks a tag question. The research assistant "but you said we don't want too much right" in line 278. She chooses rise tone, and mid termination so as to indicate that "this is what I infer, think I heard (before). Please confirm that I am right" (Brazil, 1997: 104). The research assistant's choice of mid termination suggests that she expects the project leader to concur with her (Brazil, 1997: 54). Thus this use of tag question realizes a <Q: confirm> function rather than a <Q: polar>, even though the question form expects a "yes" or "no" response.

Another form of question which also expects a "yes" or "no" question is a declarative question. It is found that 67% of the function <Q: confirm> is realized by this question form. As discussed earlier in Chapter 10, a declarative question also realizes the <Q: polar> function, this depends on the choice of termination used in the question. This is illustrated in the following example.

In this business meeting, the two co-workers are having a discussion regarding the distribution of work. There is some overlapping of the tasks that the co-workers have carried out and one purpose of this meeting is to have different tasks clearly assigned to different co-workers.

Example 10.9

B2: co-worker a: co-worker

	23	B2:	{ / [< YEAH >] } { = and you should [^ NOT] < BE > } { = [< LIAIsing >] with }
	24		{ \ [Agents] or < CUStomers > } { = [< THAT >] is } { / [< MINE >] } { \ and
	25		[W__'s] < job > } (.) * { = [< _ oKAY >] }
→	26	a:	** { / [THAT] means < I > } { = [I'VE] no NEED to CONtact the <
	27		Agent > } { / [< OR >] } { \ [CUStomer] < anyMORE > } * { = [JUST] the
	28	B2:	** { / [< THEY >] }
	29		< CHIna > } * { / [JUST] the CHIna < SIDE > }
	30	B2:	** { \ [< YEAH >]}
B56: 23-30			

In lines 23-25, Speaker B2 is telling Speaker a that she "should not be liaising with agents or customers" and explaining that it is his and W__'s job. Speaker a then wants to ensure that what she infers is what Speaker B2 means.

There is a need for Speaker a to confirm this with Speaker B2, if she has misunderstood what has been said, Speaker B2 might doubt why Speaker a is not doing her job. So Speaker a produces a declarative in lines 26-27 which rephrases what Speaker B2 has just said. Her choice of rise tone suggests that what she has presented is “what (she) infer(s), or think (she) heard” and she invites Speaker B2 to “confirm that (she is) right” (Brazil, 1997: 104). In other words, she invites Speaker B2 to confirm that she does not need to deal with agents or customers anymore. Her choice of mid termination also shows that she expects Speaker B2 to concur with her inference (ibid: 54).

Tsui (1992) agrees with Stenström that the <Q: confirm> function can be realized by tag and declarative questions, she also states that this function can be realized by positive and negative yes-no questions. In the Corpus, 9% of the <Q: confirm> function is realized by a yes-no question. Below is a yes-no question realizing a <Q: confirm> function. The hotel guest is checking himself out at the front desk; the front desk staff is establishing how the guest intends to settle the bill.

Example 10.10

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

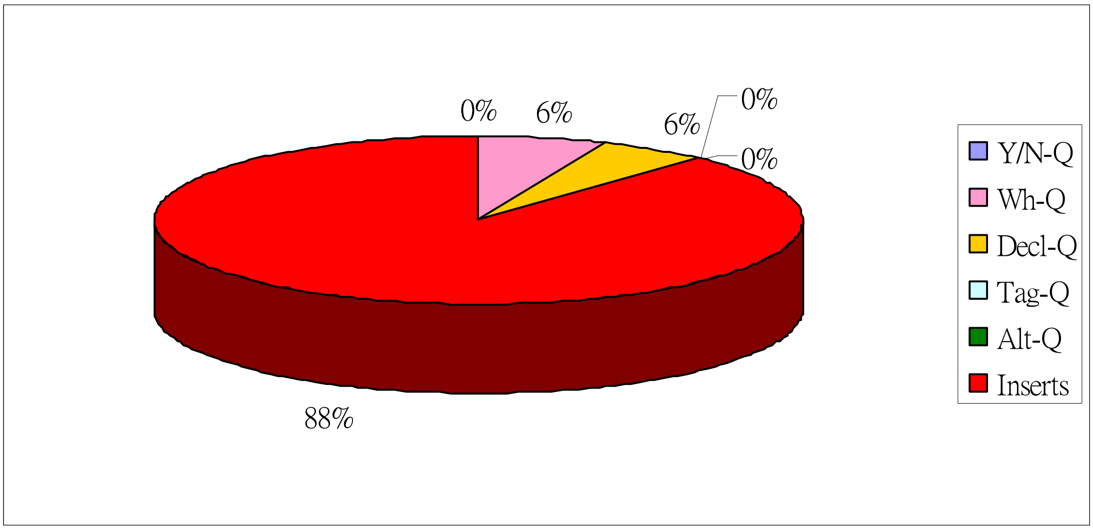
→	46	b: { \ and [^ BY] the way are you GOing to < HANdle > } { = the [acCOUNT] < BY
	47	> } { ? < YOUR > } * { / visa < CARD > }
	48	B: ** { \ < YEAH > } { = < CREdit > } { / < YEAH > }
B001: 46-48		

After the front desk staff has confirmed that the guest has not consumed anything from the mini-bar in the hotel room. He asks a yes-no question to check how the guest is going to settle his bill. From the front desk staff experience, most of the hotel guests settle their bill by credit card. Thus he asks “are you going to handle the account by your visa card” in lines 46 and 47. This yes-no question invites the guest to respond to it with either a “yes” or “no” answer. In the question, the front desk staff expresses that what is said is assumed to be true and he is inviting the guest to confirm that his assumption is true (Tsui, 1992: 105). The fact that the front desk staff expects the guest to settle the bill by visa card is indicated in his choice of rise tone in the tone unit "visa card" and mid termination on "card" in line 47 (Brazil, 1997: 54, 104). He expects the guest to concur with him and his assumption and expectation is confirmed in line 48 by the guest's response "yeah credit yeah".

10.5 Repeat

According to Tsui (1992: 109), the function <Q: repeat> is meta-discoursal which means it refers to the discourse itself. It prospects a repetition of the utterance preceding the question. This function can be realized by "wh-interrogatives such as who/when/where/what did you say?", or "Say that again", or words like "Sorry?", "Pardon?" or "Huh?" (ibid: 109). This function which is not found in Stenström's framework, however, is found in the Corpus.

Figure 10.5 Distribution of question forms that realize the <Q: repeat> function



As Figure 10.5 shows, the majority of the function <Q: repeat> is realized by insert questions (88%), 6% are realized by declarative questions and 6% are realized by wh-questions (one occurrence for the latter two question forms). In this section, examples from the same presentation are discussed. This presentation, *Training professionals in intercultural awareness*, is given by the managing director of company providing executive training services to companies and universities, aiming at "developing Asia managers to be global leaders, managers and communicators in a multi-national environment" (http://asiaexec.com/prog.html). At the beginning, the host has indicated that there is a Q&A session at the end of the presentation. Since the speaker has invited the audience to stop him and ask questions at any time during his presentation, a lot of the questions are asked throughout. In Example 10.11 below, the speaker is sharing his experience of getting oneself prepared for a difficult communication context.

Example 10.11

B: speaker A: host

b10: audience

	1500	b10:{ ? is that what you mean with preparation }
→	1501	B: { = [< SORry >] }
	1502	b10:{ \ [THAT'S] what you MEAN is < prepaRAtion > yeah }
	1503	B: { \ [AND] it's LIKE any new < SKILL > } { \ the [MORE] you USE it the EAsier
	1504	it < beCOMES > } { = i [KNOW] that this ALL sounds < inCREdibly > } { ?
	1505	[COMplex] do you < REALly > need } { = do you [REALly] need it < THAT > }
	1506	{ \ [< comPLEX >] }
B123: 1477-1506		

After the speaker has shared his experience of getting oneself prepared, a member of the audience wants to confirm whether his conclusion drawn from what he has heard is correct or not. The member of the audience then asks a yes-no question "is that what you mean with preparation" in line 1500. And in line 1501, the speaker indicates that he does not catch what the member of the audience has said and produces an insert question, "sorry", for a repetition. The member of the audience then rephrases his question in the form of a declarative "that's what you mean is preparation yeah" in line 1502. The member of the audience expects the speaker to give a positive response by choosing mid termination on "preparation" in line 1502. Although the speaker in responding to the question does not give a "yes" or "no" response, he further describes how "preparing one self" is a new and complex skill indicating that he confirms what the member of the audience has inferred.

Stenström (1984: 175) also studies the different realizations of <Q: repeat> in her study of questions and responses which examines the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English. She finds that <Q: repeat> is realized by a small set of items, such as wh-word, and inserts like "pardon" and "sorry" although she does not compare which of the two groups is more common for the speakers in the corpus. In the present study, it is found that <Q: repeat> is mainly realized by insert questions. Figure 10.5 shows that it is very rare for a <Q: repeat> function to be realized by other forms of questions in the Corpus.

Figure 10.5 shows that it is very rare for a <Q: repeat> function to be realized by other forms of questions in the Corpus. There is however an occurrence of a <Q: repeat> function realized by a declarative question and a wh-question. Examples 10.12 and 10.13 are both taken from the same presentation discussed earlier. During the presentation, another person from the audience is responding to what the speaker has asked. It is suggested that future studies compare the use of insert questions and the different realizations of the <Q: repeat> function of other native-speaker/specialized corpora.

Example 10.12

B: speaker b10: audience

	1584	B: { = [< ER >] } { = [< A__ >] } { ? you er } { = [< ER >] } { = [< YOU >] } { =
	1185	[ASK] me a QUEStion and i'll give you SOME < eXAMples > } ((laugh)) { ? can
	1586	you [GIVE] me < SOME > ex } * { \ just [< SAY >] that }
	1587	b10: ** { = [< ER >] } { = [< YOU >] mean }
→	1588	B: { = [< CAN >] } { \ just [^ SAY] to me CAN you < GIVE > me some example }
B123: 1584-1588		

To create a more interactive setting for the business seminar, the speaker involves the members of the audience in discussion throughout. He asks a member of the audience to say "can you give me some ex" in lines 1185-1186. However, audience b10 either does not hear or understand what he means, says "er you mean" in line 1587. The declarative produced is identified as a question in this context. Audience b10 by producing this declarative indicates that he does not know what the speaker means. He then asks this declarative question to invite the speaker to produce a repetition of what has been said. This declarative question seeking repetition is perceived by the speaker without any problems. This is confirmed by the repetition produced by the speaker in line 1588 in response.

Example 10.13

B: speaker b3: audience

→	647	B: { = [HIGH] < ^ indiVIdual > } { ? is or } { / [< YEAH >] } { = [< WHAT >] do you } { =
	648	[WHAT] do you < THINK > er } { = [< ER >] } { \ [< CHIna >] } ((inaudible))
	649	b3: ((inaudible))
	650	B: { / [< SORry >] }
	651	b3: ((inaudible))
	652	B: { \ [< WHAT >] }
	653	b3: ((inaudible))
	654	B: { \ [< YES >] } { \ very [< _ MUCH >] } ((laugh)) { \ there's the [< NUMbers >] } { \ look
	655	at [HOW] < LOW > is ((inaudible)) } (.) * { = [< VEry >] } { \ [< GROUP >] }
B123: 647-655		

The speaker asks for the audience's opinion and idea after introducing the concept of "high individual" in line 647. A member from the audience responds to the question almost immediately. The response he has given is however is not loud enough and is inaudible to the speaker. The speaker then produces his first insert question in line 650, in the form of "sorry", to request the audience to repeat what he has just said. Unfortunately, what the member of the audience says in line 651 is still inaudible to the speaker, urging him to request the audience to repeat what has been said again. In line 652, the speaker does not produce an insert question, he produces a wh-question instead. This wh-question with a single "what" realizes the <Q: repeat> function requesting the member of the audience to give a repetition. Since the recording device is located near where the speaker is, some of the utterances produced by the audience might not be clear enough for transcription. Although the utterance is marked inaudible in line 653, it is audible to the speaker as indicated by the response given in line 654 (compare this response to the other ones which trigger a question realizing a <Q: repeat> function). In lines 654 to 655, the speaker indicates that he agrees with what the member of the audience says in "yes, very much" and then he goes on to initiate a new topic.

As discussed earlier, a <Q: repeat> function realized by a wh-question is very rare in the Corpus. Indeed more than 90% of the <Q: repeat> function is realized by an insert question. Biber et al (1999: 1093) term this group of inserts, "polite speech-act formulae". These "polite expressions" are used "as more polite equivalents of “what?” in seeking repetition of a previous speaker’s message” (Biber et al, 1999: 1094).

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the question functions identified in the Corpus. It also discusses how these question functions are realized in different question forms. The distribution of these question functions across different question forms is also presented and discussed. Although some question functions are more commonly realized by certain question forms, it is shown from the possibility of realizing question functions in different forms that there is no one-to-one function-form relationship. The function of the questions is largely determined by the here-and-now situation enhanced by the communicative value of discourse intonation choices made at moment-by-moment situation. This is supported by the discussion on discourse intonation across different question forms (see Chapter 12).

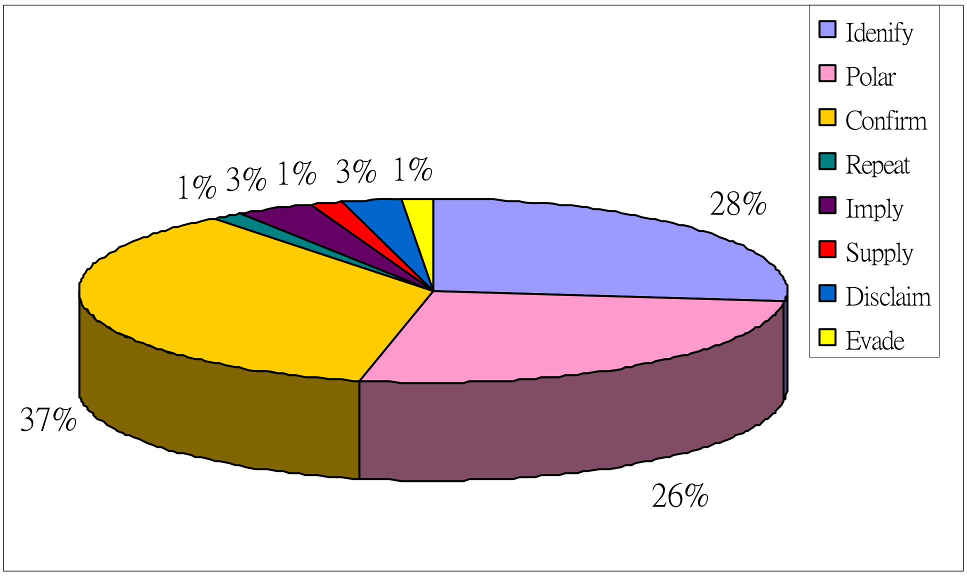
Chapter 11 Response functions

11.1 Introduction

This study adopts Stenström's (1984) eight response functions that correspond to different question functions. They are <R: comply> (<Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, <Q: confirm>, and <Q: repeat>), <R: imply>, <R: supply>, <R: evade> and <R: disclaim> (see Table 6.7 in the Methodology Chapter). Stenström indicates that it is difficult to distinguish between <R: supplies> from <R: evades>, and <R: evades> from <R: disclaims> because there is no reliable way to decide whether or not the speaker who is responding is sincere (1984: 179). She "take(s) it for granted that the speakers are both honest and cooperative unless there are obvious signs to the contrary" (ibid: 179). In the analysis of response functions, this study takes the same stance as Stenström, and so it is premised on the speakers being honest and cooperative in responding to the previous speaker's questions. The eight response functions in the framework are discussed in this section illustrated by examples from the Corpus.

In the examination of question-response sequences, it is found that the number of responses (N=5158) does not match that of the questions (N=5776). There are three main reasons for the discrepancy identified. In the discussion of exchange structure of question-response sequences (see Chapter 8), questions are sometimes "challenged". In these cases, these questions are responded to by another question instead of a response. When there are challenges in a question-response sequence, there is then a greater number of questions than responses, resulting in a mismatch in the frequency counts of the two. Another reason is the number of questions asked in a sequence. For example, it is common for an audience from the floor to ask a series of questions to the presenter or announcer in a Q&A Session while the presenter or announcer give a response to all the questions (see Chapter 9). Finally, although not common, there are cases in which the response is not audible. The end result is a lower frequency count for the responses identified in the Corpus compared to that of questions. The frequency counts of each response category are presented in Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1 Normalized percentages of response functions



In business and professional discourses, the majority of the questions (95%) are not only responded to but also answered. It is shown in Figure 11.1 that only 5% of the responses do not answer the question either explicitly or inexplicitly (with 1% <R: supply>, 3% <R: disclaim> and 1% <R: evade>). And 92% of the responses answer the questions directly (28% <R: identify>, 26% <R: confirm>, 37% <R: polar> and 1% <R: repeat>). The following section discusses and illustrates different response functions with examples from the Corpus.

11.2 Comply

Stenström (1984: 181) uses <R: comply> "as an umbrella category for appropriate answer to question functions (<Q: identify>, <Q: polar>, and <Q: confirm>)". This category is further classified as <R: identify>, <R: polar>, and <R: confirm>, and what constitutes a <R: comply> type depends on the nature of the preceding question and its function. Put simply, a question with a <Q: identify> function is responded to with an <R: identify> function; and a question with a <Q: polar> function is responded to with an <R: polar> function etc. It is found that the majority of the responses (91%) give appropriate information explicitly. The response functions: <R: identify>, <R: polar>, and <R: confirm> are discussed in this section.

11.2.1 Confirm

More than one third (37%) of the responses are categorized as <R: confirm>. This means it is the most commonly identified response function in the business and professional discourses examined. Questions asking for confirmation are generally realized by “declarative and tag questions which put forward a proposal, a belief, or a subjective evaluation that the (respondent) is expected to accept, consent to, or share” (Stenström, 1984: 213). (see Example 11.1). Although this response function is termed <R: confirm>, a respondent can choose either to confirm or disconfirm the assumption posited by the previous speaker. Example 11.1 below shows a response confirming the speaker’s assumption in a Q&A Session.

Example 11.1

B: presenter b10: audience

	1507	b10:{ \ one [< QUEStion >] } { = is [< THAT >] } { = [beCAUSE] you STARted your <
	1508	CAreer > } (.) * { \ so [< THAT >] } { = [< THAT >] } { = [MEANS] that < YOU
→	1509	B: ** { \ [< _ YEAH >] } { / [< Mhm >] }
	1510	> have } { \ you [< LEARN >] } { = [< WHEN >] } { = when [< YOU >] } { = [<
	1511	WERE >] } { = [< A >] } { = [< SALESman >] }
→	1512	B: { ? i think so }
	1513	b10:{ = but you [< HAVE >] been } { = you have [< DIFferent >] } { \ [< COMpanies >] }
→	1514	B: { = [< YEAH >] }
	1515	b10:{ = and you [< HAVE >] you } { = [< BEEN >] } { \ in your [< WAYS >] }
→	1516	B: { \ yeah it’s [< TRUE >] } { = [< ^ BEing >] } { = [< BEing >] a } { \ a [< GOOD
	1517	>] } { \ [BEing] a good < SALES > person } { \ you [HAVE] to be a treMENdous <
	1518	communiCAtor > }
B123: 1507-1518		

In the business seminar about “Training professional in intercultural awareness”, the presenter has introduced the notion of getting oneself prepared. After hearing about the new notions and theories, and the past experience from the presenter, a member of the audience takes the opportunity to put forward his assumptions and invites the presenter to confirm or disconfirm these assumptions. He asks if the presenter has learnt the importance of preparation when he worked as a salesman. The presenter responds by giving a variant of “yes” in line 1511. He answers the member of the audience’s question by providing an explicit confirmation. The member of the audience then puts forward a few more assumptions (lines 1513-1515) and invites the presenter to confirm them.

11.2.2 Identify

Among all the responses to questions, 28% are responses to questions with the <Q: identify> function. Stenström states that a request for identification is generally realized by wh-questions and alternative questions. In the case of wh-questions, the respondent is expected "to provide information that identifies the referent of the wh-element by replacing the wh-item" (1984: 185). And in the case of an alternative question, the respondent is then expected to identify one of the alternatives that are presented in the question. These <R: identify> responses "provide the information that is asked for". They differ from the <R: polar> responses in that they are not as readily applicable to the "no more/no less" distinction (p. 190). Below are two examples illustrating <R: identify> responses – one is a response to a wh-question and the other to an alternative question.

Example 11.2

a1: interviewer a2: interviewee

	95	a2: ** { = [SO] that < ER > } { = i [^ enJOY] very < MUCH > }
	96	a1: { \ [< ^ MM >] } { = [< SO >] } { = [< ER >] } { = you've [< MENtioned >] about
	97	you } { \ [TRAvel] many COUNtries with your < PArents > }
	98	a2: { = [< YES >] }
	99	a1: { \ [WHAT] are these < COUNtries > }
→	100	a2: { = [ER] it is < inCLUDES > us } { = [< UM >] } { \/ [SOUTH] east asian <
	101	COUNtries > } * { = [SUCH] as er < jaPAN > } { = [< ER >] } { = [< indoNEsia >] }
	102	a1: ** { / [< Uhuh >] }
	103	* { = [< AND >] } { = [< ALso >] } { = [< UM >] } { = [< FOR >] } …
B063: 95-103		

The interview in Example 11.2 is an interview for the post of hotel trainee. The interviewer asks where the interviewee has travelled by a wh-question in line 99. She chooses a closed wh-item "what" which invites the interviewee to provide information which identifies "what countries". The interviewee responds with an <R: identify> listing the different countries that she has travelled to. The interviewee answers the interviewer's question by directly providing the information.

Example 11.3

A: hotel front desk staff a: hotel guest

→	372	a:	{ / you [PAID] < CASH > } { = or [< CREdit >] card }
	373	A:	{ \ by [< CREdit >] card please }
	374	a:	{ \ [< _ YEAH >] }
B003: 372-374			

In line 372, the hotel front desk staff asks, by an alternative question, how the hotel guest wants to settle her bill. With her knowledge of the discourse context, she puts the possible means of payment, that is by credit card or cash, as alternatives. The guest responds by identifying one of the two alternatives presented in the question, that is to pay "by credit card" in line 373. Her response functions to <R: identify> the information as requested by the hotel front desk staff explicitly. The guest also answers the question produced by the hotel front desk staff. As Stenström (1984: 190-1) observes, these response types are more likely to fulfil the "no more/no less" distinction than those responding to wh-questions. This is due to the closed nature of the expected response as shaped by the alternatives presented in the question. Wh-questions are found to prospect more open-ended responses when the items invite inexhaustive accounts.

This study confirms the findings of Stenström (1984) that the <R: identify> function of responses can be realized by wh- (74%) and alternative questions (12%), adding up to a total of 86%. However, as Tsui (1992) argues, yes-no questions do not only carry a <Q: polar> function, they can also request the respondent to identify information in answering the question completely (see Chapter 4). Example 11.4 below presents an <R: identify> responding to a yes-no question.

Example 11.4

B4: financial analyst b1: presenter (CEO of leading local bank)

	B4:	{ / [E__] s__ from m__ < L__ > } { \ just a quick [QUEStion] with regard to your < FUND > sales } { = [HAVE] you been able to < QUANtify > } { = what [FLOW] < CAME > from } { = [dePLOying] < dePOsits > } { ? into } { = < ^ MUtual > funds } { = as [< opPOSED >] to } { \ [< NEW >] growth } (.) { \ and [< SEcondly >] } { = in [< reGARD >] to } { = your [< INterest >] rate } { \ [< poSItioning >] } { = [^ WHAT] is your < BEST > case } { \ [< sceNArio >] } { = in your own [inTERnal] < FOREcast > } { = as to [< WHERE >] you see } { = [< INterest >] rates } { \ [< GLObally >] }
→	b1:	{ = i [THINK] we < SEE > interest rate } { \ [COming] < ^ DOWN > a little bit } (.) { = [FOR] < THE > er } { ? f } { = [< FOR >] } { = [< FOR >] the th } { = [< _ ER >] } { \ the [< ^ TIming >] } { \ i mean who can [< TELL >] } { \ but we [< ^ expect >] } { ? sort of } { \ [FURther] lowering e of interest < RATE > before } { = [< IT >] } { = come back up [< BUT >] } { \ it's [^ NOT] going to be < sigNIficant > } { \ how [LOW] can it < GO > } { = so i think [< THAT >] answers your } { \ your [SEcond] < QUEStion > } { = the [< ^ FIRST >] question as } { = [< HOW >] much }{ = of our [< FUND >] sales } { = [< _ ER >] } { = [< SHIFT >] of } { \ [MOney] from our [< dePOsits >] } { = [< ER >] } { \ [^ QUITE] a < BIT > } { = but at the [SAME] time we have been < Able > to er } { \ [mainTAIN] our MARket < SHARE > } { \ and even [INcrease] our market < SHARE > } (.) { / [< oKAY >] }
	B4:	{ \ [< THANK >] you }
B108: 615-634		

It is very often that a member of the audience asks a series of questions when being nominated (see Chapter 9). From lines 615 to 622, the financial analyst asks two questions when he is nominated. The first one is a yes-no question (lines 616-618) and the second one is a wh-question (lines 618-622). The presenter responds by answering the wh-question in lines 623-629, and then goes back to the first question in lines 629-633. In lines 616-618, the analyst asks "have you been able to quantify what flow came from deploying deposits into mutual funds as opposed to new growth" after the presenter has announced that there is an increase in their mutual funds sales. His yes-no question does not merely ask whether the presenter is able to identify the quantity of the flow from their deposit which increases the sales of the mutual funds, but is also inviting him to justify whether or not the increase in mutual funds sales is an overall growth of the bank or just a flow of funds from the deposit section. Put simply, this yes-no question does not only invite the presenter to provide a “yes” or “no” answer (which is <R: polar>), but it also invites him to provide an <R: identify> response. In lines 630-633, the presenter confesses that part of the increase of the mutual funds sales is due to the shift of funds from their deposit section. He justifies this by identifying the fact that they have been maintaining and even increasing their market share of deposits despite the funds transfer to mutual funds.   His response answers the yes-no question in that it identifies the fact that the amount transferred to mutual funds sales does not affect the deposit section and that it is “new growth” in the bank overall.

11.2.3 Polar

A respondent answers a <Q: polar> by <R: polar> when he or she is able and willing to make a polar decision (Stenström, 1984: 195). A similar percentage, 26% of the responses, is found to respond to the <Q: polar>. A <R: polar> is considered as direct when it fits the “no more and no less” than yes or no criterion (ibid: 195), and such responses should contain an explicit “yes” or “no” (or their variants, such as “I have”, “it did”, etc). Example 11.5 illustrates an <R: polar> in a meeting in a hotel.

Example 11.5
a1: hotel manager (chairman of the meeting)
b6: hotel manager (rooms division)

	541	a1: { = is it in [< ENglish >] } { \ [< _ VERsion >] }
→	542	b6: { \ [< _ YEAH >] } { = [< BOTH >] is in } { = [< CHInese >] and english } { \ [<
	543	VERsion >] } { = and the [THIRD] < POINT > } { = [< ER >] } { = [< reGARding
	544	>] to the } { \ [< TRAIning >] } { = [< _ ER >] } { = we [< STILL >] } { = [<
	545	aWAIT >] } { \ for [THEIR] < _ rePLY > } { \ [COME] to the new < POINT > }
	546	{ = [< _ ER >] } { \ a [< ^ proPOsal >] was } { = [< subMITted >] to } { \ er [<
		meTROnics >] } …
B017: 541-546		

The rooms division manager is providing the latest sales report to the management team and the chairman of the meeting. He informs the management team that the hotel has advertised their special package in the staff magazine. In line 541, the chairman asks the rooms division manager whether the staff magazine is “in English version”. She choose fall tone on the yes-no question to indicate that the response will enlarge her world view. Her question invites the manager to make a polar decision by responding with either a “yes” or “no”. The rooms division manager gives a direct response in line 542 by “yeah” (a variant of “yes”) and adds that the magazine is in English and Chinese. He answers the chairman by making a polar decision and giving an explicit variant of “yes”.

11.3 Repeat

The three categories (<R: identify>, <R: polar> and <R: confirm>) discussed so far are answers to questions which are grouped under <R: comply>. The categorization of these different comply types depends on the function of the questions itself. In the Corpus, when <Q: repeat> is responded to by providing the appropriate information, such as a repetition or a rephrase of what has been said previously, the response is categorized as <R: repeat> in this study. As shown in Figure 11.1, only 1% of responses is categorized as <R: repeat>. Example 11.6 below shows an <R: repeat> function.

Example 11.6

B: presenter b10: audience

	1500	b10:{ ? is that what you mean with preparation }
	1501	B: { = [< SORry >] }
→	1502	b10:{ \ [THAT’S] what you MEAN is < prepaRAtion > yeah }
	1503	B: { \ [AND] it’s LIKE any new < SKILL > } { \ the [MORE] you USE it the
	1504	EAsier it < beCOMES > } { = i [KNOW] that this ALL sounds < inCREdibly > } {
	1505	? [COMplex] do you < REALly > need } { = do you [REALly] need it <
	1506	THAT > } { \ < comPLEX > }
B123: 1500-1506		

In the business seminar, the presenter has introduced the notion of getting oneself prepared for intercultural communication in the workplace and has given his own experience of how to get himself prepared. After he has shared his experience with the audience, a member of the audience asks a yes-no question, “is that what you mean with preparation” in line 1500. The member of the audience invites the presenter to confirm the assumption that he has made. However, the presenter produces an insert question instead of responding by providing a confirmation. He invites the member of the audience to repeat what he has said by saying “sorry” in line 1501 (see Section 9.3.6 for use of insert questions and Section 10.6.3 for its use in Q&A Sessions in particular). In response to the presenter’s insert question, the member of the audience produces an <R: repeat>, “that’s what you mean is preparation yeah” in line 1502. The member of the audience then rephrases his question in the form of a declarative question. His request for confirmation is emphasized with his use of “yeah”, it prompts the presenter to confirm rather than disconfirm his assumption.

11.4 Imply

When a respondent chooses <R: imply> in responding to a question, he or she is answering the question by giving the information implicitly. It then requires the speaker who asks the question to arrive at the direct answer through deduction. It is found that 3% of the responses are <R: imply>. This means that the responses identified in the business and professional discourses are direct, only a very small proportion requires the questioner to infer the answer. As Stenström (1984: 191) observes, it is easier to arrive at the direct answer by means of a polarity decision, but it becomes a harder job for the hearer to arrive at the direct answer in the case of an <R: identify> response. Below are two examples illustrating an <R: imply> responding to a <Q: polar> and an <R: imply> responding to a <Q: identify>.

Example 11.7

b1: hotel manager b4: hotel manager

	146	b1: ** { = [< THE >] erm } { = [< ER >] } { = i [< LOOK >] at the er } { \ [SPEcial]
	147	BACK of the < DOOR > } { = what they [< HAVE >] the } { = [< THE >] } { = [<
	148	THE >] } { = wood [PADdle] get < SCRATCH > by the } { \ [< HANdle >] }{ = [< _
	149	ER >] } { = the [< HANdle >] of the } { \ [< WARdrobe >] } { = i [< THINK >] er }
	150	{ = did you [< GET >] the er } { = the [< HANdle >] of the } { \ new < HANdles > }
→	151	b4: { = i [< MEAN >] } { \ the [< HANdles >] } { \ [P] l has been < ISsued > } { = [< BUT
	152	>] } { \ there’s [LONG] manufacturing < _ TIME > } { = [< SO >] er } { = we should
	153	[< GET >] it in about } { \ [< ^ THREE >] weeks } { = [< BUT >] } { = we [^ HAVE]
	154	to go < BACK > } { \ and redo [< _ THOSE >] }
B016: 146-154		

A refurbishment project is in progress in this hotel. One of the hotel managers is reporting to the management team on the cause of the damage to the back of the door. The department finds out that the handle of the wardrobe has been scratching on the back of the door. It is suggested that the handles of the wardrobes be changed before renewing the new doors. The reporting manager, Speaker b1, asks the other manager, Speaker b4, who is responsible for the ordering of the handles whether the handles have arrived. Speaker b4 does not respond with a direct "yes" or "no", instead he tells the team that the purchase letter has been issued and explains that it takes time for the manufacturing of the handles. He then informs the team that the handles will arrive in three weeks – which suggests that the handles have not yet arrived. The deduction from "the handles will arrive in three weeks" to "no, the handles have not arrived yet" can be easily done (as compared to that of an <R: imply> responding to <Q: identify>.

In Example 11.8, the research project supervisor has asked the research assistant to carry out some data collection for a research project.

Example 11.8

A: research project supervisor b: research assistant

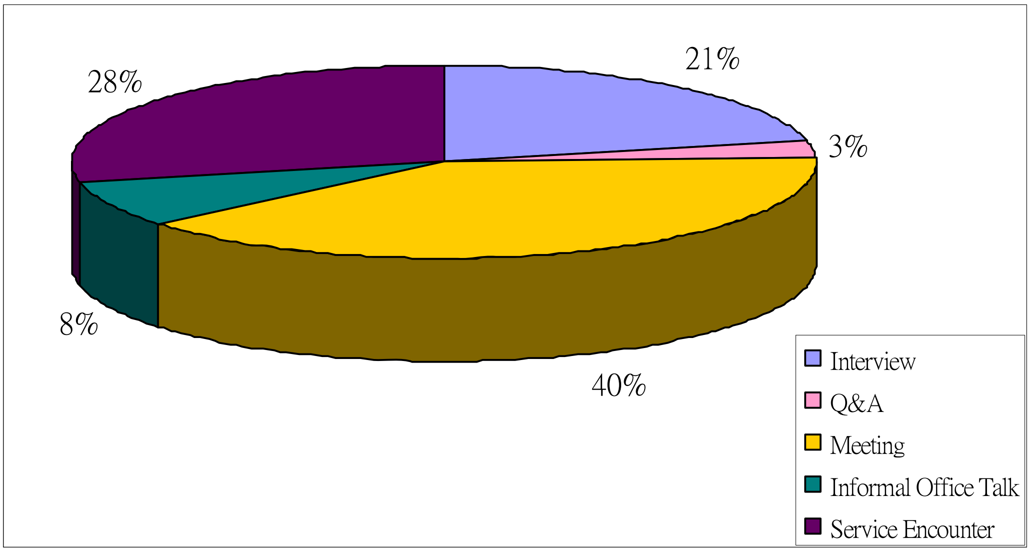
	123	b:	{ = so you have [ALL] the < eQUIPments > }
→	124	A:	{ \ [< WELL >] it's } { \ i [THINK] it's ALL in the < CILL > } (.) { = [< ERM
	125		>] } { = but you could [< arRANGE >] } { \ to [GET] it < OUT > }
B058: 123-125			

The assistant then asks a declarative question "so you have all the equipments" in line 123 to invite the supervisor to confirm his assumption. The research supervisor then responds in lines 124-5, telling the assistant that the equipment is available at "CILL", the place where the data collection is going to take place. She is implying that she does not have the equipment that is needed for the data collection process but it is available at "CILL". She does not provide a direct "no" but instead produces a response which requires the questioner to <R: infer> the answer from the information that she has provided.

11.5 Disclaim

When a respondent is unable to produce an adequate response even if he or she is willing to, he or she may choose to respond with a <R: disclaim> (Stenström, 1984). It is found that 3% of the responses in the Corpus belong to this group. The fact that the respondents are overtly expressing the inability to produce an adequate response might explain a lower frequency in <R: supply> (1%) and <R: evade> (1%) (see later section for discussions of these two items). It is also found that this response function is most common in Meetings (40%). Figure 11.2 shows the distribution of <R: disclaim> in the Corpus.

Figure 11.2 Distribution of <R: disclaim>



In Meetings, there is often an agenda of the items to be discussed. These meetings often involve both the reporting and discussion of future plans. It is always the case that different participants in the meetings ask questions when details need to be clarified or elaborated. The respondents are expected to provide sufficient information that he or she possesses for the sake of future planning. Thus it might be more common for a participant to explicitly admit and express that he or she is not able to provide an adequate response by producing an <R: disclaim> (Example 11.9).

Example 11.9

B: co-worker a: co-worker

	504	B: { \ do you know [WHERE] you'll < ^ STAY > }
→	505	a: { = [< DON'T >] know yet }
	506	B: * { = [< oKAY >] }
B075: 504-506		

The two co-workers are discussing Speaker a's trip to Cambodia. Speaker B asks Speaker a a yes-no question "do you know where you'll stay" in line 504. This yes-no question invites Speaker a to <Q: identify> where Speaker a will stay if she knows, instead of merely a polar decision. Thus the response Speaker a gives, "don't know yet" in line 505, is not an <R: imply> which can be deduced as "no", but rather an <R: disclaim> in response to Speaker B's <Q: identify> of where.

11.6 Evade

It is found that 1% of the responses are <R: evade>, this means the respondent is not able to produce an adequate answer either due to an inability or unwillingness to do so. A respondent chooses to <R: evade> instead of <R: disclaim> when he or she is unable to produce an adequate answer but chooses not to admit that he or she does not know the answer explicitly. It can be difficult to distinguish between an <R: evade> and an <R: supply>. Their difference lies in a respondent's "willingness to cooperate" (Stenström, 1984: 221). When the respondent is willing to give an appropriate response, he or she may produce an <R: supply>. Below is an example of an <R: evade> from Q&A Sessions.

Example 11.10

a3: financial analyst b1: presenter (CEO of a leading local bank)

	964	a3: { = [< oKAY >]} { = er [< THANK >] you very much } { = [< ER >] } { \ [^ ARE] there
	965	any HURdle < RATES > } { = for [< reTURN >] } { = for your [< BANK >] } { \ to [<
	966	MAKE >] } { = erm [Any] < acquiSItion > } { = or [STRAtegic] < inVESTment > } { / in
	967	[< CHIna >] } { = [< ERM >] } { = the [SEcond] < QUEStion > is } { ? it [< HAS >]
	968	been } { \ [WIDEly] < rePORT > } { = by the [LOcal] < PRESS > that } { = the [P] doc
	969	has reCEIVED application < FROM > } { / a [SHAREholding] BANK called m_ < BANK
	970	> } { = [< THAT >] er } { \ [HANG] seng will BUY an eight PERcent < STAKE > } { = er
	971	for a [PRICE] of one point four BILlion r m < ^ B > } { = could you [< CLArify >] er } { =
	972	[< ER >] } { = [< ER >] } { = this [< PIECE >] of news } { / [< FOR >] us }
	973	* { = [< THANK >] you }
→	974	b1: ** { = [< ER >] } { \ we don't [COMment] on MARket < specuLAtions > } (.) { = [<
	975	THAT'S >] * er }
	976	a3: ** { = [< BUT >] } { = [HOW] about the < FIRST > } { \/ [< QUEStion
	978	>] } …
B108: 964-978		

After the CEO of the leading local bank has announced the annual report for the company, he invites the audience to ask questions related to the current annual report and future plans for the company. A financial analyst asks the presenter two questions. One is about returns on investment in China and the other one is about a future purchase. The presenter states clearly that he is not willing to produce an adequate answer to the second question (lines 974-975), and he explicitly declares that he is not going to provide such answer regardless of whether he knows the answer or not by saying "we don't comment on market speculations".

The respondent sometimes chooses not to produce an adequate response for other reasons. Below is an example found in Service Encounters.

Example 11.11

A: hotel guest a: hotel front desk representative (ambassador)

b: hotel front desk representative

	50	A: { \/ er we went [< SHOPping >] } { = [AND] then we WENT to < THE > } {
	51	\ regent [< hoTEL >] } { \ for a [< DRINK >] }
	52	a: { \ [REgent] < hoTEL > }
	53	A: { \ [< ^ YEAH >] }
	54	a: { \ [< ^ WHY >] you no } { \ [CHOICE] OUR < ^ hoTEL > }
→	55	A: ((laugh))
	56	a: { \ [THIS] is a GOOD one * < ^ ALso > }
B003: 50-56		

In Example 11.11, the hotel staff is asking the hotel guest questions to find out how she feels about the stay at the hotel. They are discussing where the guest went to the day before. After the guest has told the hotel staff that she went to another hotel for afternoon tea, the hotel staff asks why she did not choose to have afternoon tea in her hotel. The guest laughs but does not give an answer at all. Instead she produces an <R: evade> and avoids identifying the reason as to why she did not choose the same hotel. Although the guest does not produce a verbal response, it is clear that the guest is evading in answering the hotel staff question. She laughs in order to minimize the tension and the face-threatening act that might arise if she gives an <R: identify>.

11.7 Conclusion

This chapter discusses different response types identified in the Corpus in relation to the question functions that they are linked to. The distribution of these response types and their functions are presented and illustrated by examples from the Corpus.

Chapter 12 Discourse intonation

12.1 Introduction

Although Brazil (1985, 1995, and 1997) does not aim to present how all the paralinguistic features employed by speakers carry meaning or have interactional meaning, he provides the most comprehensive description of discourse intonation (Coulthard, 1992: 37). Brazil stresses that the aim of studying discourse intonation is not to outline the absolute value of different choices, but how they are contrastive to one another (Coulthard, 1992: 37). As Hewings and Cauldwell (1997: vii) state, "the description … contrasts with others which view intonation as conveying a very large number of attitudinal meanings, or different meanings depending on the grammatical system in which it occurs. Such approaches result in far greater complexity and a potentially open-ended list of meanings attributed to intonation". In Brazil's approach, the description recognizes significant intonation choices as being made within a small number of systems. There are four systems in all: prominence, tone, key and termination, containing a total of thirteen choices (Hewings and Cauldwell, 1997: vi) (see Chapter 5).

In this chapter, the uses of different tone choices and termination choices are examined. The phenomena of "pitch concord" (Brazil, 1997: 54) and "pitch discord" (Cheng et al, forthcoming) are addressed. Their impact on the function of questions and the prospected responses are also explored. The discussion is organized according to each of the question forms with suggested interpretations.

12.2 Tones

According to some grammar references (see Chapter 3), some question forms are more likely to be uttered with a particular intonation, for example, a yes-no question or a declarative question is produced with rising intonation and a wh-question with falling intonation (see Batliner and Oppenrieder, 1988; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Quirk et al, 1985). It is very common to find intonation manuals describing fixed "questioning intonation" (Brazil, 1997: 99). In this study, it is found that no intonation choice is restricted to a particular question form. As Brazil (1997: 100) states, the discourse function of the utterance depends crucially on the state of understanding that exists between the speaker and the hearer. Also, "intonational meaning is freestanding … it can be explicated without reference to such other features of the utterance as syntactic descriptions seek to identify" (Brazil, 1997: xii). In this study, the last tone choice of the last tone unit of the question is studied. Table 12.1 shows the distribution of tone choices on different syntactic forms of questions.

Table 12.1 Distribution of tone choices across different question forms

	Y/N-Q	Wh-Q	Decl-Q	Tag-Q	Alt-Q	Inserts	Totals
Fall-rise	20	11	27	54	4	1	117
Rise	161	52	110	49	11	11	394
Fall	173	335	227	25	35	3	798
Rise-fall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Level	212	112	109	19	24	2	478
Unclassified	12	10	8	6	4	0	40
Totals	578	520	481	153	78	17	1827

As shown in Table 12.1, none of the syntactic forms of question is restricted to a single intonation choice. Although it is more common to find a wh-question with fall tone, one-fifth of this form is also produced with level tone (see also Cheng, 2004c). Similarly, despite the slightly larger number of yes-no questions produced with rise tone (31%; including rise and fall-rise tones), an even larger number is produced with level tone (37%). Further, a declarative does not have to be produced with rising tone to be interpreted as a question. Indeed almost half of the declarative questions are produced with fall tone (see also Beun, 1986; Cheng, 2004c; Cheng and Warren, 2003).

None of the questions is produced with rise-fall tone in the Corpus. Cheng et al (forthcoming) state that the rise-fall tone is indeed a very rare tone, there are only 53 occurrences in the whole HKCSE and there are only 3 occurrences in the business sub-corpus. As Brazil (1997: 97) observes, a rise-fall tone is usually used in "exclamatory" contexts and that the speaker indicates that he or she expects no feedback of either an adjudicating or a concurring kind. By choosing a rise-fall tone, the speaker is signaling that he or she "is registering (his or her) surprise in a way which assumes (the addressee) will not participate in it" (ibid: 97-98). Thus it may explain why it is not common to use such a tone choice on questions in which a response is expected.

Brazil (1997: 97) suggests that rise-fall tone is the dominant version of fall tone. With simple fall tone, the utterance “proclaims news that the speaker had known for some time, or whether it is something that has only just been noticed. With the rise-fall tone, the speaker is heard as proclaiming the fact that at the very moment of discovering it for himself/herself”. Brazil provides an example of the use of rise-fall tone in decontextualized sentences. This example is uttered as the speaker looks out through the window and says:

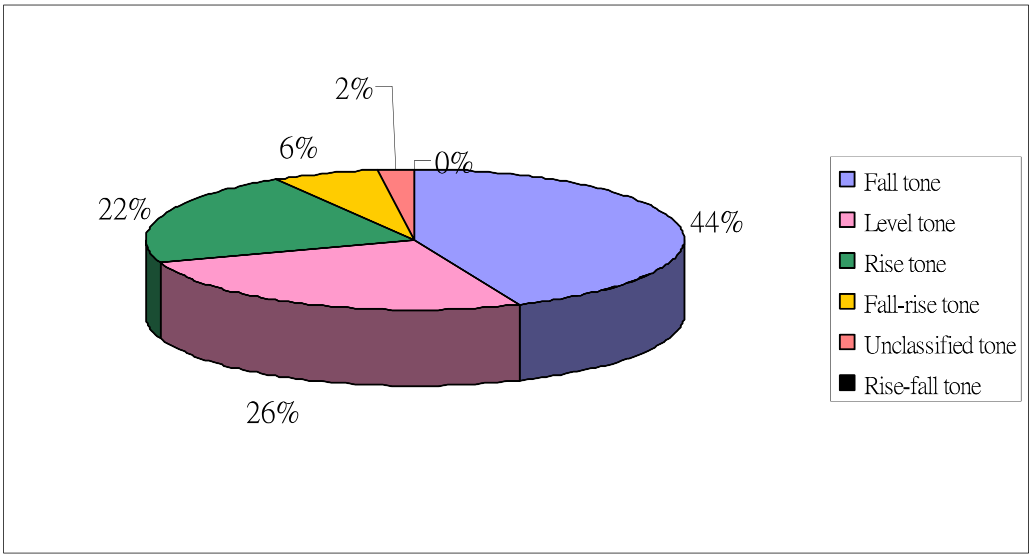
Example 12.1 { /\ its [< RAINing >] }
(adapted from Brazil, 1997: 97, using Cheng et al’s (2005) computer-friendly notation)

In Example 12.1, the speaker chooses “the dominant speaker’s prerogative to change the state of his or her world and the map that accommodates the worlds of both speaker and hearer, giving the utterance its particular local meaning”. The use of rise-fall tone explains the speaker’s spontaneous reaction to something that is not expected.

According to Brazil and others (Brazil et al, 1980: 106; Brazil, 1997: 97-8), rise-fall tone signals surprise and dawning awareness and does not assume the addressee will respond to it; it also overtly assumes dominant-speaker status and it is most likely to be apparent in the decontextualized sentence. This tone is used with rare and unexpected events and; it is even less common to find questions expressing these rare events. Given the usage of the rise-fall tone, results from the Corpus confirm that this tone is rare and not used in the questions studied.

While there are no occurrences of rise-fall tone identified in the questions, fall tone (fall tone) is a very common tone choice in questions. Almost half of the questions (44%) are produced with fall tone. The second most common tone is level tone (26%). The third most frequent one is rise tone. This tone is commonly referred to as “question intonation”; however, only 22% of the questions produced are in this form. There are relatively fewer questions produced with fall-rise tone (6%). In the Corpus, there are cases when the tone choice is not clear or inaudible (2%). Figure 12.1 shows the distribution of different tone choices across the six question forms.

Figure 12.1 Distribution of tone choices across all question forms



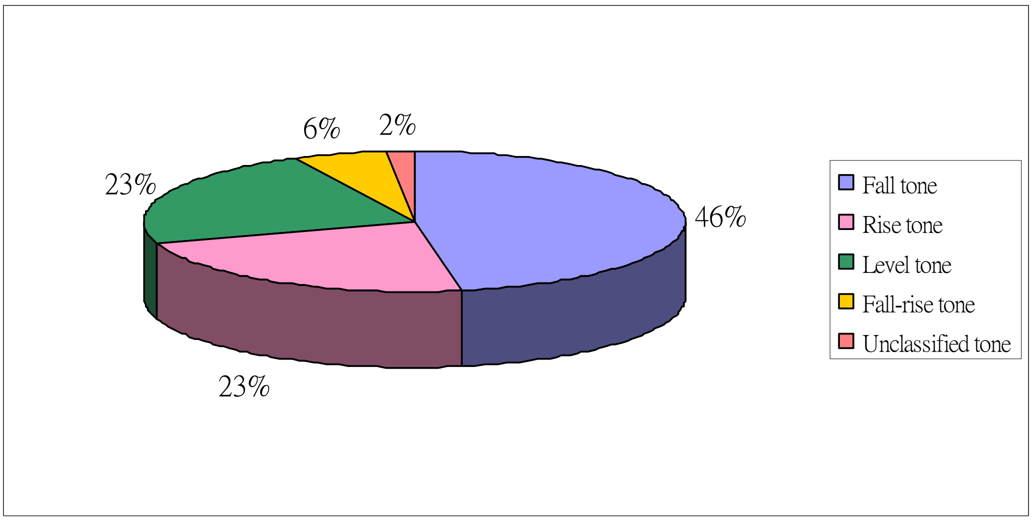
12.3 Discourse intonation choices on different question forms

The tone and termination choices on questions play an important role in the analysis of the functions of questions. Their role is particularly crucial when determining the function of declarative, yes-no and tag questions. The termination choice does not only have an influence in determining the function of the question, but also seeks to constrain what the speaker prospects in the corresponding response. This is discussed with examples from the Corpus later in the chapter. Cheng (2004c) finds that a question with mid termination expects the addressee to concur when asked for confirmation. Brazil (1997) terms this phenomenon as “pitch concord” in which the second speaker chooses to match the key choice of his or her response with the termination choice of the first speaker (ibid: 54). As Cheng et al (forthcoming) suggest, the higher frequency of mid termination when asking for confirmation “is possibly linked to the inherent difference between seeking adjudication and seeking concurrence, in which the latter is more likely to be in line with the first speaker’s assessment of the context of interaction” (ibid: 281). The key choice of the prospected response is also influenced by the termination choice of questions, when the addressee observes the conventions of pitch concord. Cheng et al (forthcoming) emphasize that the phenomenon of pitch concord is not a rule. However, it is possible that a speaker may choose to begin a turn without matching the termination choice of the previous speaker. These instances are termed “concord-breaking” in Brazil’s model (1997: 55-56). However, Cheng et al argue that since the term “concord-breaking” suggests that a rule has been broken and hence indicates a mistake of some kind. So, they term these instances “pitch discord”, and emphasize that these instances carry an important communicative value in the local context. The phenomenon of “pitch discord” is a result of the “discrepancy between the ways the two parties assess the context of interaction” (Brazil, 1997: 54).

12.3.1 Declarative questions

Both Quirk et al (1985: 814) and Biber et al (1999: 203) state that questions in declarative clauses can be understood by the intonation choice of the question. Although Biber et al (1999) do not state which intonation choice in particular, they suggest that declarative questions can only be produced with “appropriate speech intonation” (ibid: 203). Quirk et al (1985: 814), however, restrict the intonation choice to a rising one. Brazil (1997: 99-100) disagrees with the above observations of intonation choice on declarative questions, and suggests that whether a declarative is a question depends on whether it is the speaker or the hearer who is privy to knowledge in the utterance which changes the world view of the speaker. The “discourse function of the utterance depends crucially on the state of understanding existing between speaker and hearer” (ibid: 100). Figure 12.2 shows the tone choices for the declarative questions identified in the Corpus.

Figure 12.2 Distribution of tone choices on declarative questions



There is an interesting distribution of tone choices on declarative questions in the Corpus. According to some received wisdom (see Quirk et al, 1985), declaratives are only interpreted as questions when they are produced with rising intonation. Contrary to this stereotypical characterization of declarative questions, most of the declarative questions identified in the Corpus are produced with non-rising tones. Altogether, 69% of declarative questions are produced with either fall (46%) or level tone (23%). Less than one-third (29%) of these questions are produced with either rise tone (23%) or fall-rise tone (6%). This confirms Beun's (1986) findings that less than half (48%) of declarative questions have rising intonation. Geluykens (1989) finds an even lower percentage of declarative questions ending in rising tone, only 32% in her study and the rest end in non-rising tone. Cheng (2004c) also finds declarative questions are mainly said with fall tones.

Example 12.2 below takes place in a management meeting in a hotel. The sales manager, Speaker a1, is reporting to the management team about a potential client. The sales manager has reported that an airline is thinking of booking rooms and conference facilities in their hotel. The general manager, Speaker b2, wants to find out more about the airline.

Example 12.2

b2: hotel general manager a1: hotel sales manager

→	294	b2: { = [< THIS >] } { = ((inaudible)) [< airLINE >] is } { = [< IS >] } { \ [^
	295	NOT] the SAME as the euro < AIRline> }
	296	a1: { \ [NOT] the < SAME > } { = [< THIS >] is } { = a [< ERM >] } { = a [<
	297	CARgo >] airway } { = [< ER >] } (.) * { = [< ER >] }
	298	b2: ** { \ [< OH >] }
B017: 294-298		

The general manager produces a declarative after the sales manager has reported about an airline as a potential client. The declarative in lines 294-295 functions as a question because of the prevailing state of speaker/hearer understanding. This declarative question serves to elicit a response which removes some kind of uncertainty from the mind of the general manager. The general manager chooses high key on "not" in line 294 to signal surprise, and present contrastive implications (Brazil, 1997: 41). This key choice, however, does not have an effect on the key choice of the following response. It is the termination choice which is echoed in cases of pitch concord. The general manager chooses mid termination on the declarative question signaling “can I infer, or did you mean (this airline is not the same as the Euro Airline?) Please confirm that it was this” (Brazil, 1997: 104). In other words, the general manager believes that the airline in discussion is not the same as “the Euro Airline” and he expects the sales manager to confirm his inference. The general manager also chooses to use fall tone on the declarative question. His choice of fall tone suggests that the message presented in the question has not yet been negotiated. When the question is responded to, the response changes the world view of the general manager and in turn enlarges the convergence of “common knowledge” of the managers. A referring tone on this declarative question would have signaled that he is surprised that “the airline is not the same as Euro Airline”. His choice of mid termination indicates that he expects a concurrence of “the airline is not the same as Euro Airline”, his choice of fall tone on the declarative question serves “to ask for greater precision” (Brazil, 1997: 104). In lines 296-297, the sales manager concurs with the general manager’s inference that “the airline is not the same as Euro Airline” and she further gives information that “the airline is a cargo airline” instead. As Example 12.2 shows, a fall tone choice on a declarative question indicates that the speaker wants the hearer to remove the uncertainty of the proposition of the question that is produced, and expects the hearer to provide more specific information in addition to the “yes” or “no” answer.

Examples such as Example 12.2 confirm the findings of Cheng and Warren (2003) regarding the use of fall tone on declarative questions. By choosing fall tone on declarative questions, the speaker indicates that “(he or she does not know) whether (the addressee) means this or not – please tell me” (ibid: 162).

In the meeting below, after the reporting and discussing of different departments, the co-workers are discussing an event organized by the company.

Example 12.3

B1, B5, b1, b2, a2: hotel managers (co-workers)

	360	B1: { = [< GREAT >] } { \ should be a big [< eVENT >] } { = [< WHAT’S >] } { \
	361	the [< DRESS >] code }
	362	b1: { \ [< haWAIian > } }
	363	b2: { \ [< _ HAWAIian >] }
	364	B5: { = [< SHORTS >] }
→	365	B1: { \ [< OH >] } { \ [< HAwaiian >] } { = [< NO >] } { \ [NOthing] <
	366	supPLIED > } { = [NO] uniforms < supPLIED > }
	367	b1: { \ your [< ^ WIFE >] }
	368	a2: ((laugh))
B022: 360-368		

In the meeting, the hotel managers are discussing the costumes for a special event that the hotel is organizing. After they have found out that the theme for the event is “Hawaiian”, one of the hotel managers, Speaker B1, asks a declarative question “no nothing supplied no uniforms supplied” in lines 365-366. By choosing level tone, “he lifts the whole business out of the area which, up to now, has been assumed to be negotiable” (Brazil, 1997: 138). He produces a declarative question to elicit a response from the other co-workers, inviting them to co-construct such a status for the information under discussion. The choice of level tone represents a selection of elements which the speaker assumes can be assembled on the basis of whatever input has just been provided. Speaker B1 also says in line 365 “nothing supplied” with fall tone indicating that this is new information enlarging the hearer’s world view. By choosing level tone on the question, Speaker B1 might suggest that the response being elicited is implicitly available in the context, so that information can be jointly put together by the speaker and the hearer (Brazil, 1997: 139). Cauldwell (2002: 29, 107) also outlines the use of level tone by a speaker to give himself/herself time to decide what to say next or encountering an encoding problem. In lines 365-366, Speaker B1 says “no nothing supplied no uniform supplied” while formulating what he is to say. He might choose level tone to give himself time to decide what to say next or to ask for more specific information.

Speaker B1 also chooses mid termination to invite concurrence from his co-workers. Although Speaker b1 does not give a “yes” or “no” response, his response implies that there is no uniform supplied as he says “your wife” in line 367, suggesting that the supply will be from “your wife”.

In the service encounter that follows, the passenger wants to cancel his flight and to arrange a refund at the same time. The airline boarding gate staff at the airport is asking for his boarding pass before proceeding with the cancellation and refunding procedures.

Example 12.4

B: the passenger a: airline boarding gate staff

	5	a: ** { \ do you [STILL] have the BOARding <
	6	PASS > }
	7	B: { = [< ER >] } { = [< ER >] } { = [< LET >] me } { \ [LET] me < SEE > } { \ the [^
	8	BOARding] < PASS > } { \ no i am [< NOT >] } (.) { \ i am not [< TAking >] }
→	9	a: { \ oh you [< MEAN >] } { \/ the [CHECK] in STAFF collect the boarding CARD <
	10	alREAdy > }
	11	B: { \ [< YEAH >] } * { \ [< _ YEAH >] }
B026: 5-11		

After the passenger, Speaker B, has indicated that he does not have the boarding pass with him, the airline boarding gate staff asks a declarative question, “oh you mean the check in staff collect the boarding card already” in lines 9-10. The airline staff has the knowledge of what procedures have taken place when a passenger arrives from another city to their station, and she realizes that these procedures become “common ground” knowledge when the passenger has just gone through them when arriving at the destination. So when the airline staff asks the passenger for the boarding pass which the passenger signals that he does not possess, she then chooses fall-rise tone for the declarative question. She infers from what the passenger has said, and her knowledge about the procedures, that the passenger does not have the boarding pass as the check-in staff have already collected it when the passenger boarded the flight. By choosing fall-rise tone, the airline staff could mean “this is what I infer, or think I heard. Please confirm that I am right”. The choice of this fall-rise tone signals that what is presented in the question either has been negotiated or is “common ground” knowledge. The function of this fall-rise declarative question is to seek confirmation from the passenger. The airline staff also chooses mid termination to seek confirmation from the passenger that what she infers is correct. The use of referring tone on a declarative question signals that the proposition presented in the utterance is interpreted as common ground which has yet to be confirmed or refuted.

Figure 12.3 shows the percentage of termination choices on declarative questions. The distribution spreads over the three termination choices, high, mid and low, and those that are not identifiable.

Figure 12.3 Distribution of termination choices on declarative questions

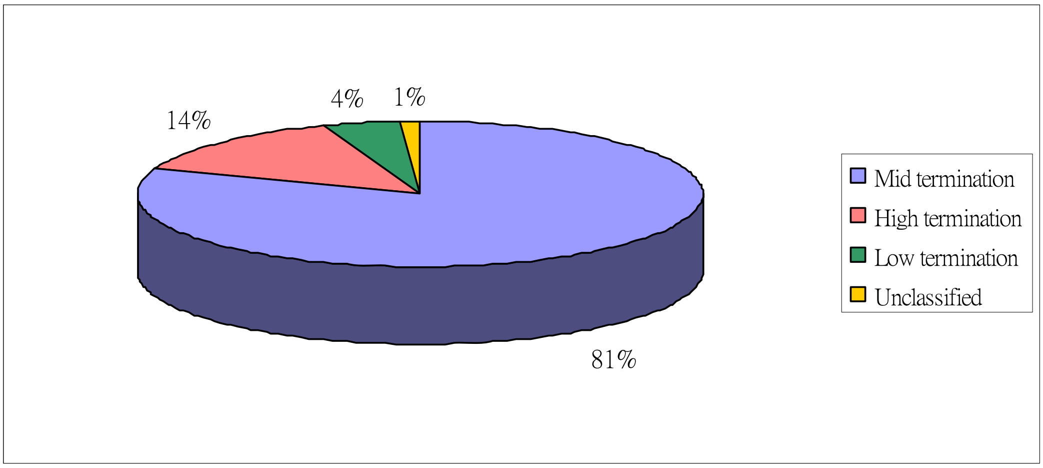


Figure 12.3 shows that the majority of the declarative questions are produced with mid termination (81%). In the Corpus, 14% of the declarative questions are said with high termination and less than 5% carry a low termination choice. Brazil (1995, 1997) states that the use of high and mid termination in declarative questions depends on whether the speaker is asking the hearer to adjudicate or concur with what has been presented in the question, respectively. As discussed in Examples 12.3 and 12.4, by choosing mid termination, the speaker signals that he or she requests the hearer to confirm that he or she is right about what has been inferred. In other words, the speaker expects the hearer to concur with what he or she has presented in the declarative question. This shows that the vast majority (81%) of the declarative questions in the Corpus serves to seek confirmation from the hearer.

Confirming Cheng's (2004c) findings, the high frequency in the use of mid termination eliciting mid key response may suggest that the participants in these business and professional settings are observing the conditions of communication with regards to preference organization in the discourses. "The term 'preference' refers to the structural disposition, to the fact that conversational organization conspires to make it easier to use the preferred type of turn, not to participants' wishes" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 38). Some of the "preferred responses" include agreement (vs. disagreement); acceptances (vs. rejection); and answers (vs. non-answers) to questions (see other preferred responses in Brown and Levinson, 1987: 38). In other words, the notion of "preferred response" is defined in the structural sense rather than according to the participants' wish of what to get in the response. The use of mid termination invites the hearer to concur or agree with what has been presented in the previous utterances. This means this termination choice is often made when the speaker seeks agreement, acceptances and answers to questions. The phenomenon of eliciting a "preferred response" through choosing mid termination could indicate that the speakers are observing the conditions of "preference organization". Also, the speakers' observation of conditions of "preference organization" might explain the higher frequency of the use of mid termination. Speakers can choose mid termination to seek confirmation and agreement, while a high termination choice carries a different communicative value. The use of a high termination choice identified in declarative question is illustrated in Example 12.5

In the service encounter in Example 12.5, a hotel guest is using the swimming pool at the hotel. The information desk staff at the swimming pool is recording the guest's information and offering services to the guest when using the swimming pool.

Example 12.5

B: hotel guest　　　　a: hotel information desk staff

	10	A: { = [< SO >] er } { = would you need a [< ^ LOCker >] }
	11	B: { = [< ^ NO >] thank you }
	12	a: { \ the [< TOWELS >] for you } { ? that's the }
	13	B: { = the [< ^ TIME >] }
	14	a: { = the time [< ^ NOW >] is } { \ [FORty] < FIFty > }
→	15	B: { \ [FORty] < FIFty > } { \ [< ^ FORty >] }
	16	a: { \ [< ^ fourTEEN >] }
	17	((pause))
B020: 10-17		

After the hotel information desk staff, a, has offered guest services for the swimming pool. The hotel guest, Speaker B, asks the hotel staff for the time. The hotel guest repeats the time that he thinks has been given, “forty fifty”, and then the hotel guest realizes that it is not the correct time, but that is what he has heard. So he asks the hotel staff a declarative question “forty fifty, forty” in line 15. As discussed in Example 12.1, a speaker asks for more precise information when he or she chooses fall tone on a declarative question. Here, the hotel guest chooses fall tone so as to elicit a precise time from the hotel staff as it is obvious that “forty fifty” is not the correct time. However, this is what he has heard and so he chooses high termination meaning “did you say forty-fifty or something else? Please tell me whether this is right or not”. By choosing high termination, the hotel guest does not expect the hotel staff to confirm or concur with what is presented in the declarative question, but asks the hotel staff to tell him whether he is right or not. This combination of high termination and fall tone asks the hotel staff to give the correct time. By choosing high termination, the hotel guest also signals surprise in repeating the time given by the hotel staff. He indicates that “forty” is not what he is expecting and prompts the hotel staff to adjudicate and provide information to remove his uncertainty. His use of high termination also seeks to constrain the hotel staff to choose high key in her response, which is an example of pitch concord.

Pitch concord occurs when the second speaker selects high key in his or her response which matches the termination of the question from the first speaker. A high-key response has an adjudicating function, which opposes “yes” to an existentially relevant and a mid-key response has a concurring function, which associates the speaker with the polarity choice of the previous utterance (Brazil, 1997: 53).

Brazil (1997: 54) reminds his readers that “the constraints inherent in one speaker’s termination choice may be overridden”, and that there is no “absolute requirement” to obey a “concord rule”. When there is a discrepancy between the ways the two parties assess the context of interaction, “concord-breaking” might occur. Example 12.6 illustrates an example of a declarative question and response where “concord-breaking” is observed (Brazil, 1997: 54). This example takes place in a business meeting at a university. The research project leader and the research assistant are discussing the progress and plans regarding arrangements for data collection, data analysis and sending off results.

Example 12.6

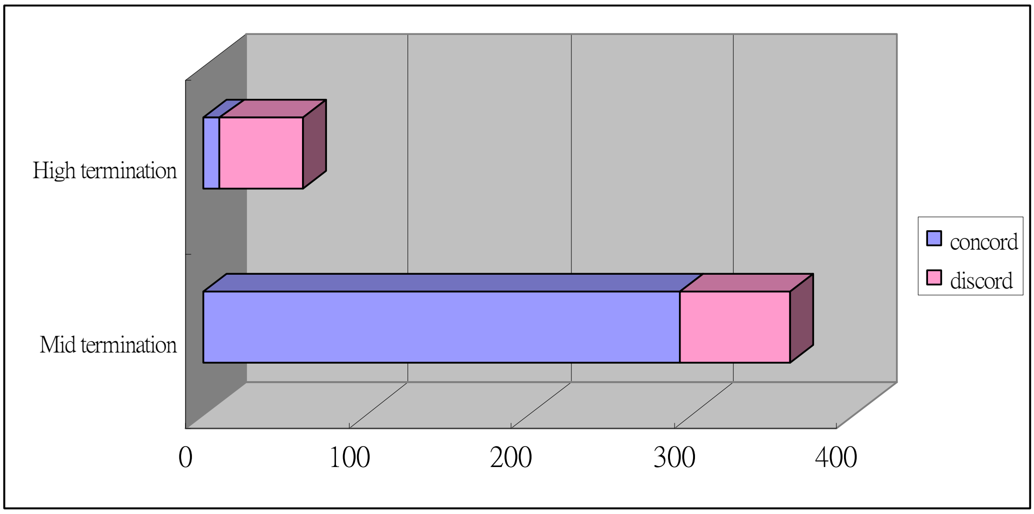
A: research project leader b: research assistant

→	278	b: { = so he [< alREAdy >] gave you the } { = [< TAPE >] to } { \ [< TRANScribe >] }
→	279	A: { \ [< ^ NO >] } { \ he [< HAsn’t >] given me any data } { \ i think i haven’t [< GOT
	280	>] any } (.) { \ i don’t know } * ((laugh)) { ? but i’m } { \ but i’m [< ^ SURE
	281	b: ** { \ < YEAH > }
	282	>] he would have } { = [< PASSED >] it on me if } { = he [THOUGHT] it was <
	283	RElevant > } (.) { = [< ERM >] } (.) { \ [< oKAY >] then } { = [< SO >] i’ll let } { =
	284	[< I’LL >] } { \ leave you a [< NOTE >] } { \ when i [HEAR] from the < Others > }
	285	b: { = [< oKAY >] }
B058: 278-285		

After the research project leader, Speaker A, and the research assistant, Speaker b, have made arrangements for data collection, they discuss whether they have already obtained some more data from other sources. The research assistant asks the research project leader a declarative question, “so he already gave you the tape to transcribe” in line 278. He chooses fall tone to signal that the requested information in the declarative question will enlarge the convergence between him and the research assistant. What he expects in the response has not been negotiated and can only become common ground when the research project leader has told him what he implies is true. Simultaneously, he chooses mid termination to signal that he expects a concurrence from the research project leader on the one hand and expects the research project leader to choose a matching mid key in her response As discussed in Example 12.4. This expectation can be explained by the speaker and hearer observing the conditions of preference organization of the discourse. However, in line 279, Speaker A chooses high key in her response which Brazil terms “concord-breaking” (1997: 54). By making a key choice which does not match the termination choice of the previous question, the research project leader shows that there is a discrepancy in her world view compared with the research assistant’s. The research project leader’s choice of high key also signals in her response is contrary to expectations, indicating that she has chosen one polarity choice while the research assistant has expected the other. This high-key “no” has the communicative value of “not yes” (Brazil, 1997: 48). In other words, high key emphasizes the contrast in the response to the expected one. In addition to the high key choice, the research project leader chooses fall tone in her response in line 279. By choosing fall tone, the research project leader is projecting a context where new information is being presented. She signals that the presentation of information enlarges the speaker-hearer convergence of the common ground.

In Cheng’s (2004c) study which examines the extent of the use of pitch concord in the HKCSE (prosodic), the phenomenon of “concord-breaking” is termed “pitch-discord”. Cheng’s (2004c) focus is on one of the five sub-genres in HKCSE that the present study has examined, which is the Q&A Sessions and 112 minutes of the Q&A Sessions are studied. She finds that when a speaker chooses high key in a responding move in cases of “pitch-discord”, the speaker signals that the information is presented as unexpected from the hearer’s perspective. She hypothesizes that “pitch-discord” is more likely to occur with high termination in the eliciting move as it constrains the hearer to “adjudicate” while mid termination invites the hearer to “concur”. Cheng’s hypothesis is confirmed when “pitch concord” and “pitch discord” in declarative questions are examined in the present study. Figure 12.4 shows the percentages of “pitch concord” and “pitch discord” in declarative questions with mid and high termination.

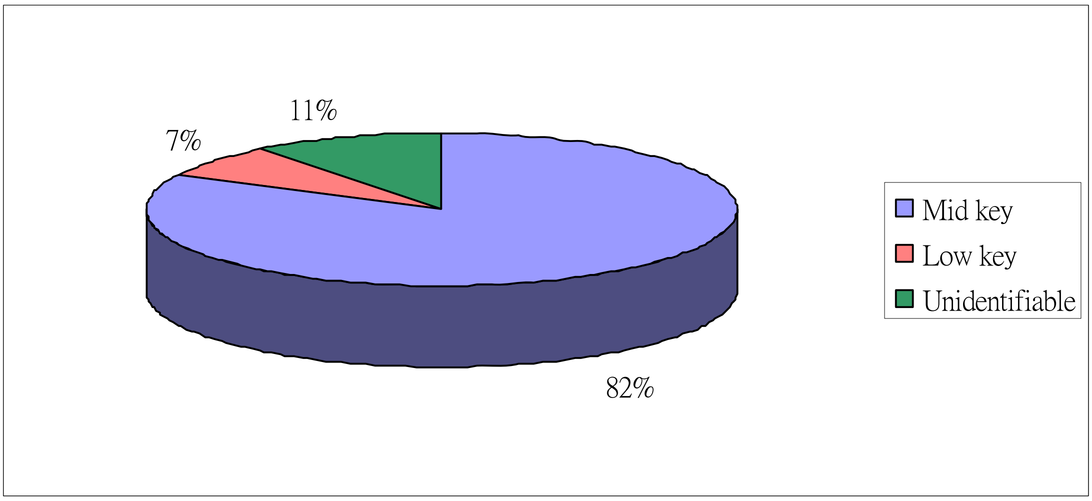
Figure 12.4 Distribution of "pitch concord" and "pitch discord" in responses to declarative questions with mid and high termination



The above results confirm Cheng's (2004c) findings that "pitch discord" is more likely to occur with high termination than in mid termination when examining the "pitch concord" phenomenon in declarative questions. For declarative questions with mid termination, "pitch concord" occurs in 81% of the instances and "pitch discord" occurs in 19% of the total. For declarative questions with high termination, "pitch concord" occurs in 16% of the instances and "pitch discord" occurs in 84% of the total. Put simply, when the declarative question has mid termination, it is very likely that "pitch concord" will occur (i.e. getting a response with the same key choice as the questioner's termination choice); whereas when the declarative question has high termination, it is very likely that "pitch discord" will occur (i.e. getting a response with a different key choice to the termination choice of the questioner). As Cheng (2004c) explains, the hearer is invited to "adjudicate" when the speaker chooses high termination in the elicitation move; while the hearer is invited to "concur" when the speaker chooses mid termination. In the case of high termination choices, the hearer is invited to adjudicate. If the hearer refutes what has been said, it is possible that the hearer chooses a different key to signal contrast, resulting in "pitch-discord". In other words, by choosing mid key in response to the questioner's mid termination, the hearer constructs a cooperative context by concurring with the questioner. The speakers in these business and professional settings are in favour of co-constructing "preferred organization" of the discourses as evident by the significantly higher frequency of mid termination-mid key sequences. Figure

12.5 shows the distribution of key choice used to signal contrast identified in the Corpus.

Figure 12.5 Distribution of key choice of responses to high termination declarative questions in the case of "pitch discord"



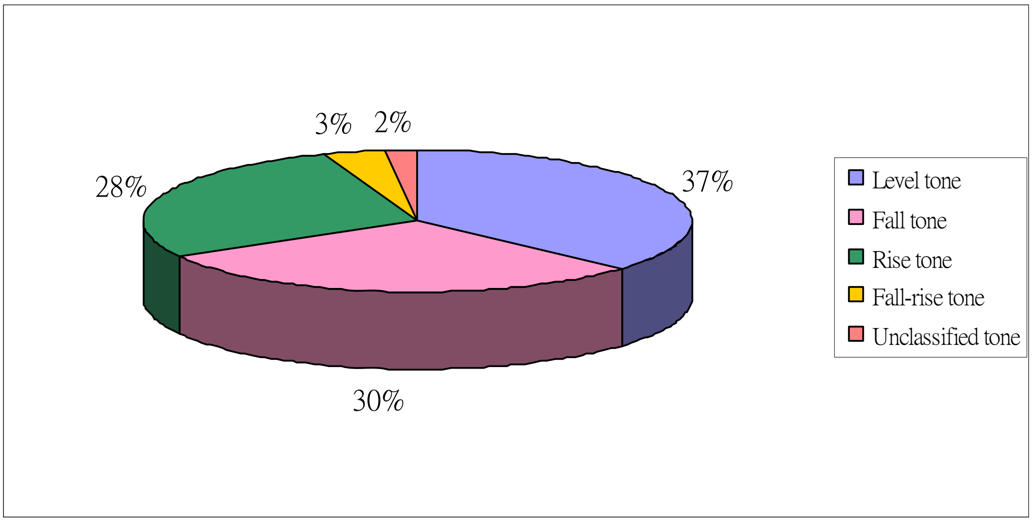
As discussed earlier, it is more likely that "pitch discord" occurs with high termination declarative questions. Among these "pitch discord" cases, 82% of the high termination declarative questions are responded to with a mid key utterance. And only 7% are responded to with a low key utterance. When a mid key utterance is produced in response to a high termination declarative question in which the speaker is requested "to adjudicate", he or she perceives the response to be unsurprising and possible to anticipate which information has been added to the shared knowledge of the participants (Cheng et al, forthcoming: 276). Its unsurprising and expected characteristics might explain the reason that this mid key choice is used as a default. Whereas with equative low key, it has the communicative meaning of "self-evident", suggesting that what previous speaker has just said might be unnecessary (Cheng et al, forthcoming: 278). It might be interesting to examine in future research as to why "high-to-mid pitch discord" is more common than that of "high-to-low pitch discord" in business and professional settings.

For declarative questions, there is a higher frequency count of fall tone use than rise tone and this refutes received wisdom. Speakers choose fall tone when more precise information is requested. The speakers choose referring tone to show that common ground has been understood. A declarative is not restricted to rising tone in order to be interpreted as a question. As Beun (1990) points out, 50% of declarative questions can be identified by contextual features. The findings of the present study also confirm that the choice of intonation on declarative questions does not serve as the sole means of determining whether a declarative is a question, the speakers make these intonation choices to serve different communicative purposes. Rather the termination of the question serves to determine the function of the declarative question when it has been identified with other factors such as the situational context. By the use of different termination choices, a speaker indicates the kind of response he or she is expecting. He or she invites the hearer to concur with what has been presented in the question by choosing mid termination; and invites the hearer to adjudicate by choosing high termination. The use of high termination may also indicate surprise which prompts the hearer to respond "actively", that is implying to the hearer "What do you think of that?" (Brazil, 1997: 165). The occurrences of "pitch concord" in these business and professional settings, through choosing mid termination on the speakers' part and choosing mid key on the hearers' part, indicate that they are observing the conventions of preference organization in the discourses. In addition, "pitch concord" is more likely to occur in contexts with mid termination while "pitch discord" is more likely to occur in contexts with high termination. The high frequency of mid termination-mid key sequences reinforces that the participants are constructing preferred responses in meeting the conventions of preference organization in the discourses.

12.3.2 Yes-no questions

It has long been stated that yes-no questions are more likely to be spoken with rising intonation (see Huddleston et al, 2002 and Quirk et al, 1985). As Brazil argues (1997: xii), intonation is not syntactic-dependent, but rather context-dependent. This study finds that there are more yes-no questions with level tone than rising tone. Figure 12.5 shows the distribution of tone choices for yes-no questions in the Corpus.

Figure 12.5 Distribution of tone choices on yes-no questions.



As Figure 12.5 shows, the most common tone choice on yes-no questions is level tone (37%) and 30% of the yes-no questions are produced with fall tone, which is the second most common tone. These findings are similar to Cheng's (2004c) study in which a total of 61 questions are identified. Among all yes-no questions, 33.3% are said with level tone and indeed half of the yes-no questions are said with fall tone. Both Cheng (2004c) and the present study confirm Cauldwell's (2002) observations when identifying the tone choice made by the speakers in general. He finds that 34% of the total tone choices are level tone (which is only 1% less than the most common tone choice). He argues that although the high frequency of level tone use is surprising, it is natural for spontaneous speech. The high frequency counts on level tone contradicts received wisdom (see Quirk et al, 1985; Huddleston et al, 2002) that there are more rising tones for yes-no questions. Indeed, only 28% of the total is produced with rise tone. Cheng (2004c) obtains similar results, finding only 20% of the yes-no questions in her data are said with rising tones.

As Cauldwell (2002: 107) observes, some textbooks regard level tone as a type of rising tone, grouping the two tones into a single category. However, he argues that it is important to have each of the tones analyzed as a separate category. The phenomenon observed by Cauldwell (2002: 107) that level tone has been regarded as a sub-category of rise tone in some textbooks might possibly obscure the frequency counts of rise tones on yes-no questions in other studies when they are uttered with level tone. Then the stereotyping of yes-no questions being produced more often with rise tone might possibly be a result of the fact that a lot of them are indeed uttered with level tone (as found in the present study). There are 31% of yes-no questions with fall-rise and rise tone (as compared to 37% level tone and 30% fall tone). In this section, the different communicative values realized by different tone choices on yes-no questions are examined and illustrated by examples with suggested interpretations, and possible reasons for the perception of a higher frequency of rise tone with this question form are proposed.

In the following business presentation, questions are asked throughout. The speaker answers these questions as they are asked by members of the audience.

Example 12.7

b1: speaker b3: audience

	780	b1: { \ [< YEAH >] } (.) * { = [< BUT >] } { \ [< _ YEAH >] }
	781	b3: ** { \ for [< eXAMple >] } { / [< ALright >] } { = there's a
	782	[< ^ LOT >] of things } { = [< ACtually >] } { = [< THINking >] about } { \
	783	from the [< indiRECT >] } { \ [< persPECtive >] } { \/ for [< eXAMple >] }
	784	{ = there's [< SOMEthing >] that you } { = [< YOU >] } { \ you [MAY] not <
	785	THINK > of } { \ [< ^ Uniform >] } { \ [seCUrity] < SERvices > } { \ [<
	786	CLEAning >] services } { \ [< PRINting >] }
	787	b1: { \ [VEry] < comPRESsible > } { / [< YOU >] know }
	788	b3: { \ [< CAtaglogue >] printing }
	789	b1: { = catalogue * [< PRINting >] }
	790	b3: ** { \ [CAtalogue] < PRINting > } { \ [^ THOSE] are the
	791	comPRESsible < SPEC > } { \ [THAT] you can < TARget > }
→	792	b1: { = [Any] other < QUEStions > }
B094: 780-792		

The presenter is giving a presentation on "How to Control Operating Costs without Damaging your Brand and Company Moral". A question is asked from the audience during the presentation, and a short discussion takes place. After listing the examples of different areas that a company can work on to cut operating costs, the speaker asks a yes-no question "any other questions" in line 792. It is common that the speaker or the presenter of a presentation invites questions from the audience by asking "any questions". This use of this particular yes-no question has become formulaic, the presenter therefore chooses level tone with these formulae. This use of level tone usually occurs when “routine categorizations have become ritualistic” (Cauldwell and Hewings, 1996: 330; Brazil, 1997: 138). These “routine performance(s)” are appropriate to the current situation of the interaction in which both the speaker and the hearer recognize their function in the discourse (Brazil, 1997: 136).

In the following hotel management meeting, the managers of the different departments are reporting the progress and achievements of their departments. These managers also bring up issues for discussion when decisions are to be made. In this particular part of the meeting, one of the managers brings up the renovation project of the rooms for discussion. They are discussing the progress of the renovation project of a hotel room in Example 12.12.

Example 12.8

b1: hotel general manager b4: hotel rooms manager

	146	b1: ** { = [< THE >] erm } { = [< ER >] } { = i [< LOOK >] at the er } { \ [SPEcial]
	147	BACK of the < DOOR > } { = what they [< HAVE >] the } { = [< THE >] } { = [<
	148	THE >] } { = wood [PADdle] get < SCRATCH > by the } { \ [< HANdle >] } { = [< _
→	149	ER >] } { = the [< HANdle >] of the } { \ [< WARdrobe >] } { = i [< THINK >] er }
	150	{ = did you [< GET >] the er } { = the [< HANdle >] of the } { \ new [< HANdles >] }
	151	b4:{ = i [< MEAN >] } { \ the [< HANdles >] } { \ [P] l has been < ISsued > } { = [< BUT
	152	>] } { \ there’s [LONG] manufacturing < _ TIME > } { = [< SO >] er } { = we should [<
	153	GET >] it in about } { \ [< ^ THREE >] weeks } { = [< BUT >] } { = we [^ HAVE] to
	154	go < BACK > } { \ and redo [< _ THOSE >] }
B016: 146-154		

One of the tasks of the room renovation project is to have the wardrobe door handles replaced. The general manager, Speaker b1, is asked for the reason as to why the doors are so worn out. He reports that the handles of the wardrobes are making scratch marks on the back of the door, and that it is not a wise decision to renew the room doors until the handles of the wardrobe have been changed. He then asks his colleague, the rooms manager, Speaker b4, who is in charge of purchasing new handles about the arrival time of the new door handles. The general manager asks “did you get the er the handle of the new handles” in lines 149-150. He chooses fall tone on the yes-no question instead of rise. It can be rephrased as “I don’t know whether you have got the handles or not – please tell me”. By choosing fall tone, the general manager requests the rooms manager to tell him whether or not the handles have arrived. He declares his uncertainty on when the handles will arrive by choosing this tone. If the general manager chooses rise tone, this question could be interpreted as: “Am I right in assuming you have got the new handles?” (Brazil, 1997: 106) which asks the rooms manager to confirm his assumption that the new handles have arrived. Although the rooms manager does not give a direct yes-no response in lines 151-154, he implies that the new handles have not arrived yet by telling the general manager that the manufacturing time is long, and that the manufacturer needs three weeks more to have the handles made. He chooses fall tone in presenting this new information, enlarging the general manager’s speaker-hearer convergence of common ground. The rooms manager then signals that when the new handles arrive, they will need to change the wardrobe handles to these new ones before the general manager can start renewing the doors. He chooses fall tone on “and redo those” in line 154 to signal that it is also new information to the general manager.

In the Corpus, just under one-third of the yes-no questions are produced with rising tone. Although Cheng (2004c) studies a small data set, she finds that only 16.7% of the yes-no questions are said with rise tones. In Example 12.9 below, a yes-no question is identified with a rise tone choice, it takes place during a job placement interview. This example is taken from the beginning of the interview. One of the interviewers is trying to start with some “warm-up” questions so that the interviewee will not get too nervous.

Example 12.9

a1: interviewee a2: interviewer

→	12	a2: { = well i [^ UNderstand] that you are < A > } (.) { / is it year } { / year [TWO] < STUdent
	13	> }
	14	a1: { / [< YES >] }
	15	a2: { \/ so [ONE] more year to < GO > right }
	16	a1: { \ [< YEAH >] }
B061: 12-16		

The interviewer, Speaker a2, wants to create a more relaxed environment in the interview so that the interviewee, Speaker a1, who is still a student, would not feel intimidated. By doing so, the interviewer hopes that the interview will run smoothly. The interviewer asks a yes-no question, "well I understand that you are a is it year year two student" in lines 12-13. She starts the utterance by saying "well I understand that you are" and then hesitates before by completing the utterance with a yes-no question. This shows that she is not sure of the information that she is going to present thus prompting her to "ask" instead of to "tell" (Brazil, 1995: 41). The interviewer chooses rise tone on this yes-no question to tentatively project a context in which the response has been negotiated. All she asks of the interviewee is to confirm or deny the assumption she makes. In other words, "she modifies her world view in advance and submits the modification for the hearer's approval" (ibid: 108). The use of rise tone in yes-no questions is common in the interviews (see Chapter 13 for discussion on the use of questions in different sub-genres), since the interviewers have normally consulted the candidates' CV or application form beforehand, or have these in front of them in the interviews. In lines 12-13, the interviewer chooses mid termination to invite the interviewee to concur. The interviewer's assumption is confirmed in line 14 when the interviewee responds by saying "yes". In the response, by choosing rise tone with mid key, the interviewee might be suggesting that what is presented is common ground and that it has been negotiated and not new information as she expects the interviewer, either has already consulted her CV, or it is common ground that the placement interviews usually take place when the students are in their second year of study.

As Brazil argues, a speaker may have some reason for producing direct enquiries with a yes/no choice by projecting an assumption that they know the answer. Fall tone in a yes-no question which represents eliciting in unnegotiated situations, such as guessing, is not frequent in most kinds of discourse. Thus it is believed that a yes-no question is more likely to be produced with rising tone. It is, however, found in this study that there is an even spread of fall and rise tones for yes-no questions. Below is another example of a yes-no question with fall tone illustrating why this tone choice is chosen instead of rising tone.

Example 12.10 takes place in the airport at the information desk. A passenger is buying his ticket for his trip. The information desk staff and the passenger are discussing the destination, the class type and the departure date. Once these are settled, they discuss the fare type.

Example 12.10

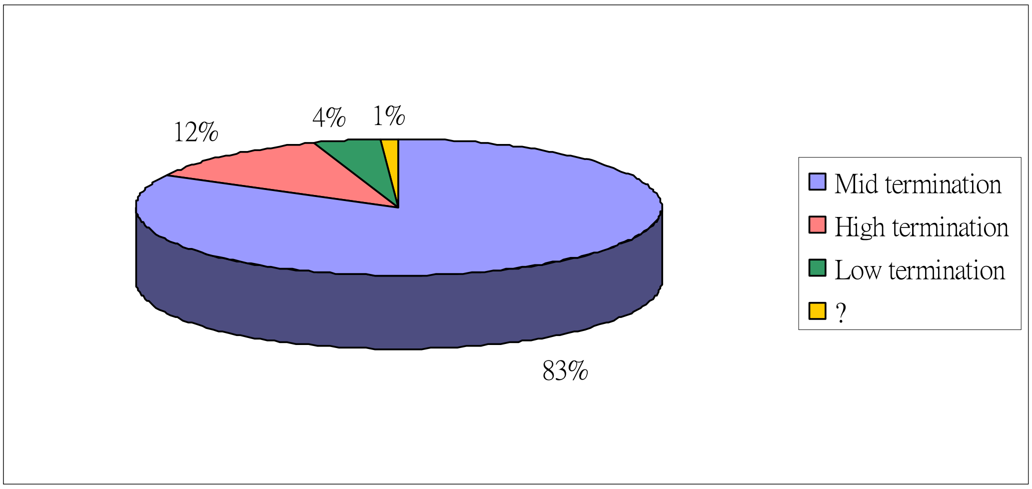
B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

	31	a: { \ [^ SO] for eCOnomy < CLASS > } { = [< WE >] have } { \ two [KIND] of <
	32	FARE > } { = [< ONE >] is } { = [< ER >] } { \ [< ^ ACtually >] } { = [HOW]
→	33	long will you < STAY > there } { = [< WILL >] it be } * { = [< MORE >] than } { \
	34	[reTURning] on < MONday > }
	35	B: ** { \ i’m [reTURning] < MONday > }
	36	((pause))
	37	B: { \ [< MONday >] flight }
	38	((pause))
B026: 31-38		

After the airline information desk staff, Speaker a, and the passenger, Speaker B, have settled on arranging an economy class ticket to Taipei, the information desk staff wants to find out how long the trip will last as there are two different types of fare available according to the length of stay. The information desk staff then asks a wh-question “how long will you stay there” in line 33 and follows it with a yes-no question which is more specific “will it be more than returning on Monday” in lines 33-34. She chooses fall tone on the yes-no question to ask for the removal of uncertainty with respect to one of a number of existentially possible options. She also projects a context in which the response is so far un-negotiated and, trying out one of the options, offers it for the passenger to concur with or reject. Put simply, by choosing fall tone, she projects that the return flight has not been negotiated and this information would alter her world view. She signals that she is trying out one of the options, “Monday”, not “Sunday”, not “Tuesday” and so on, and asks for the removal of uncertainty with respect to whether “more than Monday” is the returning date. By choosing mid termination, she also invites the passenger to concur with it. The passenger responds to the yes-no question with a confirmation “I’m returning on Monday” in line 35. The passenger also chooses fall tone with mid key to confirm that this new information, which has not been negotiated, is what the information desk staff has expected.

Similar to declarative questions, mid termination in yes-no questions invites the hearer to "concur" with what is presented in the question and high termination invites the hearer to "adjudicate". Figure 12.6 shows the distribution of termination choices on yes-no questions.

Figure 12.6 Distribution of termination choices on yes-no questions



There is a similar phenomenon for yes-no and declarative questions. The majority of the yes-no questions are produced with mid termination (83%), and relatively few are produced with high termination (12%) and even fewer with low termination (4%). Only a comparatively smaller number of yes-no questions invite the hearer to give specific information (12%), the remaining majority invites the hearer to give a "yes" or "no" response to either concur or adjudicate with the proposition in the question. Given the nature of yes-no questions, a speaker presents his or her assumptions in the question, it is more likely for the speaker to invite the hearer to concur with the assumption instead of to adjudicate. Thus it is more likely that the speaker will choose mid termination instead of high termination. This might be the reason why there are more instances of mid termination in yes-no questions than for the other question forms.

In the interview below, the interviewer asks the interviewee about the kind of job experience and work skills she wants to acquire. Example 12.11 illustrates high termination yes-no question.

Example 12.11

a: interviewee b: interviewer

	228	b: { \ i < SEE > } { \/ so < ^ MAINly > } { / you’re saying [THAT] you would <
	229	LIKE > } { \ to < GAIN > } { \ the [inDUstrial] < exPErience > } * { / [AS] <
	230	a: ** { / < Mhm> }
	231	WELL > } { = < AS > } { \ kind of [^ POlishing] your interPERsonal < SKILLS
	232	> }
	233	a: { \ < _ YEAH > }
→	234	b: { / is that < ^ corRECT > }
	235	a: { \ < YEAH > } { \ it’s < corRECT > }
B066: 228-235		

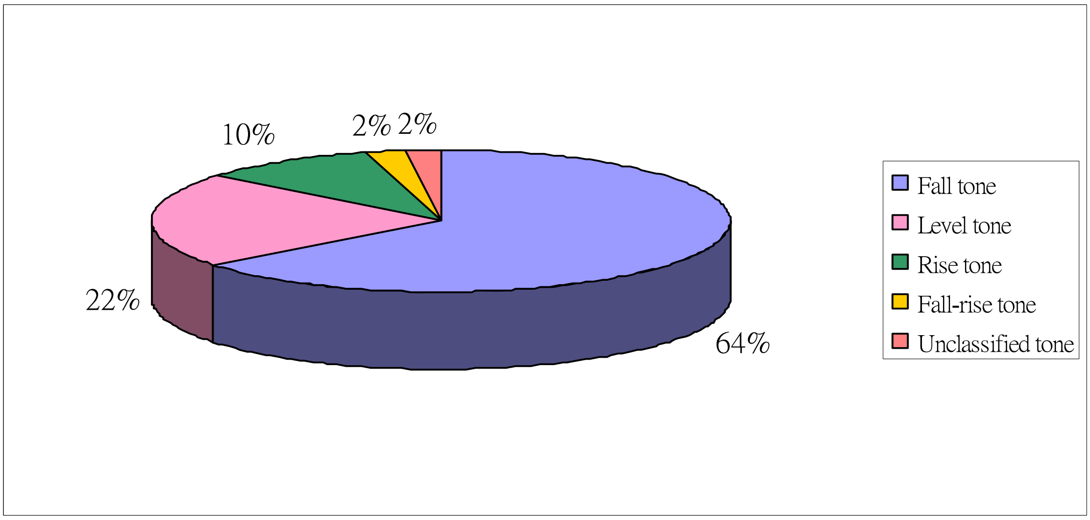
After the interviewee, Speaker a, has expressed her interest in working in different departments in the hotel, the interviewer, Speaker b, rephrases what he has inferred in lines 228-232. He produces it in the form of a declarative question inviting the interviewee to confirm his inference. The interviewee responds to his declarative question with low key acknowledgement in line 233, suggesting that her response adds nothing to the value of the interviewer’s previous assertion by choosing low key. In line 231, the interviewer chooses mid termination to invite the interviewee to concur with his presumption and he also sets the expectation of a mid key response at the same time. His second attempt to seek confirmation for his inference might be explained by an acknowledgement in line 233, instead of confirming of what the interviewer has said earlier. He then asks a yes-no question with rise tone signaling that the information presented has been negotiated but he also signals surprise to the low key response with his choice of high termination inviting the interviewee to adjudicate whether “it is correct or not”.

It is found that it is not always the case that yes-no questions are mainly produced with rise tone. …While the fall tone suggests that the speaker presents the information as so-far not negotiated. Put simply, these might be the two reasons why yes-no questions tend to be associated with rise tones: (1) the fact that level tone has been regarded as a sub-category of rise tone in some textbooks which might have obscured the frequency counts of rise tones on yes-no questions in other studies (Cauldwell, 2002: 107); (2) it is more common that a speaker has a presumption in mind when inviting the hearer(s) to agree or reject the presented information, thus choosing rise tones. These two reasons might result in the higher frequency counts on yes-no questions with rise tones, giving the impression that yes-no questions are more likely to be produced with rise tones in general. This reinforces the probability of pairing between rising tones and the grammatical form reflects nothing more than the kinds of situation in which yes-no questions tend to occur (Brazil, 1997: 110). In other words, the choice of rise or fall tone depends on the notion of common ground based on which of the participants' world views is subject to change instead of depending on the grammatical environment in which the utterance is produced. Thus the choice of rise or fall tone of yes-no questions follows the same perceived sense of common ground on the part of the speaker as it does for any other question form.

12.3.3 Wh-questions

Similar to declarative and yes-no questions, wh-questions are described to being said with fall tone (see Huddleston et al, 2002 and Quirk et al, 1985). As discussed in the previous section (10.2.2), the choice of tone is not bound to the grammatical form of the question, but rather determined by the convergence between the speaker and the hearer in terms of the notion of common ground (Brazil, 1995, 1997). This section discusses examples from the Corpus and attempts to explain the misunderstanding that wh-questions are produced only with fall tones. Figure 12.7 shows the percentages of tone choices of wh-questions in the Corpus.

Figure 12.7 Distribution of tone choices of wh-questions



Although it is more likely that wh-questions are produced with fall tone (64%), results refute the assumption that they are said only with fall tone. 22% are produced with level tone and 12% with rise tone. Similarly, Cheng (2004c) finds that the majority of wh-questions (66.6%) are produced with fall tone, 23% with level tone, and 11% with rise tone. Although Bartels (1999: 172) believes that wh-questions can be said with both fall and rise tones, she claims that fall tone is obligatory on a wh-question when it is an "echo question". Her "echo question" is termed "reference questions" (Rando, 1980) or "referential questions" by other researchers (Banbrook and Skehan, 1989; Brazil, 1995; Farr, 2002, see Chapter 3). As for rise tone, Bartels (1999: 175) argues that there is a loose correlation between the choice of high rise and low rise tone in wh-questions. She distinguishes the two choices of rise tones as being "unheard" in the former and "amazement" in the latter (ibid: 175). However, the present study takes a different stance. As Brazil (1997: 111) suggests, the communicative value for different tone choices for information elicitation (i.e. wh-questions) shares the same rationale as those for yes/no responses. A choice between proclaiming/referring opposition is therefore based on common ground. This section exemplifies the use of wh-questions with different tone choices.

Example 12.12 below contains a wh-question with referring tone identified in Service Encounters. In the example, a passenger who is an airline employee is buying a plane ticket for his trip to Paris.

Example 12.12

B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

	1	B:	{ / the [^ LAdy] from the STANDby [< COUNter >] } { = [< UM >] } { = she
	2		[ASKED] me to come over HERE to < CHECK > um } { \ the [< FARE >] } (.)
	3		* { = [< FROM >] } { = [< LONdon >] to } { / [CHARLES] de gaulle in < PAris > }
	4	a:	** { / [< YES >] }
	5	a:	{ \ [< uHUH >] } { = [JUST] one < ^ WAY > }
	6	B:	{ \ [JUST] the FARE for < ONE > way } { \ [< YES >] }
	7		((pause))
	8	a:	{ \ okay so [^ JUST] < ONE > way } { = from [LONdon] to < CHARLES > de gaulle }
	9		{ \ will be [HONG] kong < DOLlar > } { = [< TWO >] thousand } { \ [TWO]
	10		hundred and * SIXty < NINE > }
→	11	B:	** { \ [< exCUSE >] me } { = [< ^ WHICH >] } { / airline is [< THAT
	12		>] }
	13	a:	{ = [< Any >] } { \ other [< AIRline >] }
	14	B:	{ \ [< _ Any >] airline } ((inaudible)) * { = [CAN] i just get the TICket from here
	15	a:	** { \ [< YES >] }
			< ALso > }
B033: 1-15			

After the passenger, Speaker B, tells the airline information desk staff, Speaker a, the destination for his flight, the information desk staff tells the passenger the price for the one-way ticket. The passenger then asks the information desk staff a wh-question "which airline is that" in line 11. He chooses rise tone to signal that he already has an assumption in mind and wishes the airline staff to confirm that. His question can be paraphrased as "are you offering tickets of the airline that I work for?" It is very common in Service Encounter that the information desk staff tells the passenger the name of the flight service provider, the class, the destination and the price before confirming the purchase. Since the passenger is an airline employee, he may assume that the discount ticket that he is buying is offered by his employer. He then asks the wh-question by choosing rise tone to invite the information desk staff to confirm his assumption. In line 12, the response "any other airline" with fall tone signals that this is new information.

Example 12.13 contains a wh-question with fall tone in a Q&A session. After the CEO of a leading local bank has presented the final results of his bank, financial journalists and analysts ask him questions about his views on the current and the future financial situation and the bank's plans.

Example 12.13

B4: financial research analyst a1: CEO of a leading local bank

	615	B4:	{ / [E__] s__ from m__ < L__ > } { \ just a quick [QUEStion] with regard to your <
	616		FUND > sales } { = [HAVE] you been able to < QUANtify > } { = what [FLOW] <
	617		CAME > from } { = [dePLOying] < dePOsits > } { ? into } { = [< ^ MUtual >]
	618		funds } { = as [< opPOSED >] to } { \ [< NEW >] growth } (.) { \ and [< SEcondly
	619		>] } { = in [< reGARD >] to } { = your [< INterest >] rate } { \ [< poSItioning
→	620		>] } { = [^ WHAT] is your < BEST > case } { \ [< sceNArio >] } { = in your own
	621		[inTERnal] < FOREcast > } { = as to [< WHERE >] you see } { = [< INterest >]
	622		rates } { \ [< GLObally >] }
	623	b1:	{ = i [THINK] we < SEE > interest rate } { \ [COming] < ^ DOWN > a little bit } (.)
	624		{ = [FOR] < THE > er } { ? f } { = [< FOR >] } { = [< FOR >] the th } { = [< _
	625		ER >] } { \ the [< ^ TIming >] } { \ i mean who can [< TELL >] } { \ but we [< ^
	626		exPECT >] } { ? sort of } { \ [FURther] lowering e of interest < RATE > before }
	627		{ = [< IT >] } { = come back up [< BUT >] } { \ it's [^ NOT] going to be <
	628		sigNIficant > } { \ how [LOW] can it < GO > } { = so i think [< THAT >] answers
	629		your } { \ your [SEcond] < QUEStion > } { = the [< ^ FIRST >] question as } { =
	630		[< HOW >] much } { = of our [< FUND >] sales } { = [< _ ER >] } { = [< SHIFT
	631		>] of } { \ [MOney] from our < dePOsits > } { = [< ER >] } { \ [^ QUITE] a <
	632		BIT > } { = but at the [SAME] time we have been < Able > to er } { \ [mainTAIN]
	633		our MARket < SHARE > } { \ and even [INcrease] our market < SHARE > } (.) { /
	634		[< oKAY >] }
		B4:	{ \ [< THANK >] you }
B108: 615-634			

A financial research analyst, Speaker B4, asks two questions in Example 12.13. The wh-question the financial research analyst asks in lines 620-622, "what is your best case scenario in your internal forecast as to where you see interest rates globally", is said with fall tone. The financial research analyst chooses fall tone to project a wish that the journalist should provide a selection from a so-far unnegotiated set (Brazil, 1997: 112). This use of wh-questions with fall tone provides an implication of openness and that the hearer's response will alter the speaker's world view. Request for information by means of wh-questions tend to occur most frequently in situations where the information is so far unnegotiated (ibid: 113), hence the use of fall tone for 64% of wh-questions.

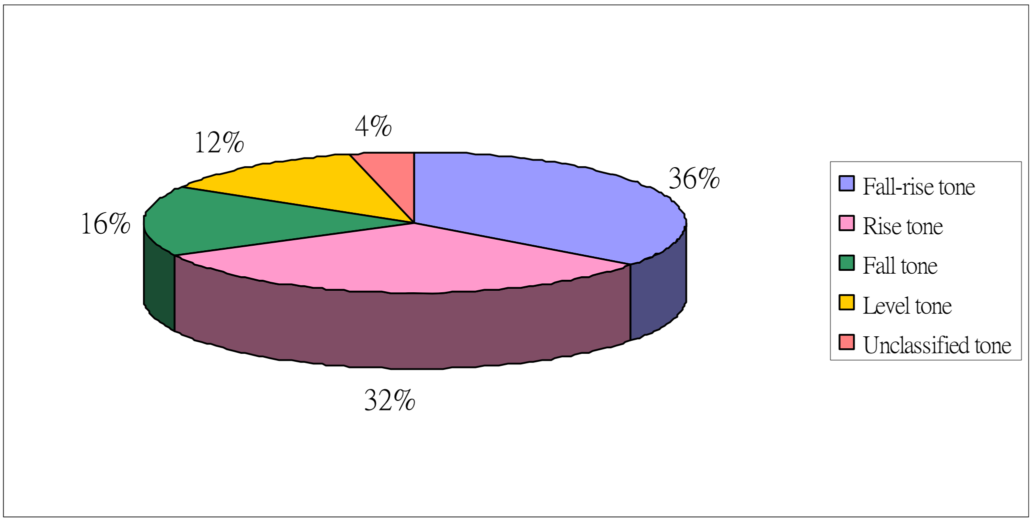
Wh-questions are more likely to be produced with fall tone although it is not a rule that is to be observed. When they are produced with rise tone, the speakers are projecting a situation in which they have a presumption in mind. Thus a speaker uses a wh-question with rise tone to signal that “I think I know the answer; please tell me whether I am right” (ibid: 113); and a fall tone wh-question to signal that “I don’t know the answer: please tell me” (ibid: 113). The fact that speakers make an information elicitation from an unnegotiated set in most cases in the Corpus might explain why it is far more common to have wh-questions produced with fall tone than rise tone.

12.3.4 Tag questions

Similar to declarative and yes-no questions, tag questions expect the hearer to give a “yes” or “no” response. The communicative value of tone choices for tag questions is similar to that of declarative and yes-no questions. Nässlin (1984) also adopts Brazil’s (1980) discourse intonation approach in analyzing tag questions. She states that Brazil’s analysis of “fall-rise and rise tone matches the explanation of (tag questions) that the speaker only reports other people’s views in the proposition”. The only difference is that Brazil discusses the role of the knowledge shared by the speaker and the listener(s) whereas Nässlin (1984) discusses tag questions with reference to the listener’s or other people’s knowledge to which the speaker has not yet taken up a definite position (Nässlin, 1984: 68).

As for the communicative value of intonation choice on tag questions, although in Brazil’s (1984: 42) examination of tag questions, he assumes that there is a separate tone choice for the first (that is the anchor) and the second elements (that is the tag), following the principle used in the study of other question forms in the present study, the focus is on the last tone on the tag questions, whether it is placed on the whole tag question or just on the tag. Figure 12.8 presents the distribution of tone choices of tag questions..

Figure 12.8 Distribution of tone choices of tag questions



As shown in Figure 12.8, 36% of tag questions are produced with fall-rise tone and 32% are produced with rise tones. This shows that more than two-thirds of tag questions are produced with rise tones (68%). Only 16% of the total are produced with fall tone, while half of the declarative questions and one-third of the yes-no questions are produced with fall tone. The use of fall tone is less common for this form of question compared to the other two forms which also expect "yes" or "no" responses. A tag question with fall tone is illustrated in Example 12.14 below.

Two research project supervisors and a research assistant are discussing the progress of the data collection process of a research project. They are discussing what data they already have and how they are dealing with the data.

Example 12.14

B: research project supervisor a1: research project supervisor

	331	B: { \ [< WELL >] er } { \ we [NEED] to discuss whether we want to < ^ USE > it or
	332	not } * { ? i think may }
→	333	a1: ** { \ but we are [< NOT >] } { ? we are not } { \ we are not [alLOWED] to use
	334	the < DAta > are we }
	335	B: { = [< ER >] } { = well [< THAT'S >] not } { = [< THAT'S >] not } { \ that's not [<
	336	CERtain >] } { = i need to [< FOLlow >] that up } { \ that [< UP >] } { = [< ER >] }
	337	{ \ at the [MOment] i've < SAID > to erm } (.) { \ to [A__] to give it < ^ BACK > }
	338	* { ? but to } { = [MAKE] sure we've got < COpies > of it } * { = [< AND >] }
	339	a1: ** { \ [< MM >] } { \ [< ^ YEAH >] } ** { ? no my question }

	340		{ = er i'll [CHECK] the < STAtus > of it }
	341		{ = [< oKAY >] }
B060: 331-341			

After the project leaders have discussed what data they have collected, they start discussing how they are dealing with the data. One of the project leaders, Speaker a1, asks a tag question "but we are not we are not we are not allowed to use the data, are we" in lines 333-334. She chooses fall tone on the tag question to project a context in which the response is so far un-negotiated (see Section 12.3.2 for the discussion of tone choices of yes-no questions). She invites another project leader, B, to remove the uncertainty on the presumption of the question. Her choice of fall tone indicates that the response, which is new information, will enlarge speaker-hearer convergence.

In Example 12.15, a supervisor is briefing a subordinate in an export company about the tasks she is responsible for. The example illustrates a tag question spoken with fall-rise tone in line 415.

Example 12.15

B2: supervisor a: subordinate

	402	B2:	{ / if it's a [CUStomer] reQUIRED < quoTAtion > } { \ it's a [HIGH] < priOrity > }
	403		(.) * { \ [< _ ONE >] } { \/ if it's [^ OUR] quote UP < DATES > } { \ it's a [
	404	a:	** { \ [< Mhm >] }
	405		LOW] priOrity < QUOTE > } { = [< UM >] } { \ [< THREE >] } * { / [< oKAY
	406	a:	** { \ [< MM >] }
	407		>] }{ \/ so [^ AFter] we've < INput > it } { = in [< THEN >] } { = it's [< YOUR >]
	408		job } { / [< R__ >] } { / to [CHECK] the < enQUIry > } { \/ and [DRAW] and
	409		enSURE that ALL the < inforMAtion > } { / [< conTAINED >] } { = [< IN >] the }
	410		{ = [enQUIry] is eNOUGH for our < SIDE > } { \ to be [Able] to < QUOTE > } { \/
	411		[< THEREfore >] } { = we need to [< HAVE >] } { / the [< ROAD >] } { = [<
	412		diAmeter >] } { / [Overall] < LENGTH > } { \/ [< Overall >] length } { \/
	413		[HARDness] < QUAlity > } { \ and [ALso] HARDness < DEPTH > }
→	414	a:	{ = you [MEANS] the POINT two < THINGS > } { \/ is [DONE] by < ME > right }
	415		(.) { / [< IS >] it } { = i [< CHECK >] er er } { \ [ALL] the < DEtails > } { \
	416		whether they are [ALL] < oKAY > }
	417	B1:	{ \/ [< THAT'S >] true }
B056: 402-417			

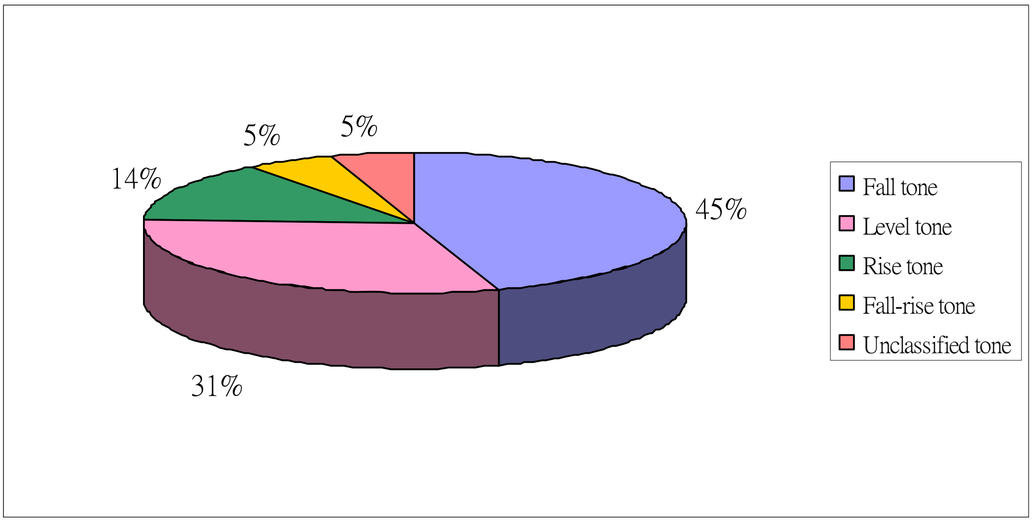
After the supervisor, Speaker B, has listed the tasks that the subordinate is responsible for. The subordinate wants to make sure that she has interpreted the information correctly and asks a tag question "you means the point two things is done by me right" in lines 414-415. She chooses fall-rise tone on the tag question to signal that the information has been negotiated in the context, and tentatively projects a context in which the response has been negotiated. Her asking of the tag question is to invite the supervisor to confirm (by choosing mid termination) that the assumption she is making is common ground and is the proper one. Since the supervisor does not respond to this tag question, after a short pause, the subordinate asks another yes-no question in line 415 to seek confirmation.

Tag questions which expect "yes" or "no" responses are more commonly found to be produced with rise tones (both simple rise and fall-rise tones). There are relative few tag questions with fall tone. As Brazil (1984: 40) suggests, when a speaker chooses rise tone in tag questions, he or she projects that the answer to it has been already negotiated and seeks the other speaker's confirmation that what he or she is thinking is the case. In the Corpus, the higher frequency of tag questions produced with rise tone might suggest that participants might make use of tag questions to seek confirmation when information has been negotiated. This might be explained by the participants' specific use in the Corpus. They might exploit the use of tag questions to present or project information as if it were negotiated by use of rise tones and then elicit the other party to produce a confirmation or agreement. Further research could use questionnaires or interviews to investigate the purpose of using tag questions by the participants and to compare results obtained from other discourse types.

12.3.5 Alternative questions

Bolinger (1957: 115) states that "the intonation of alternative questions is fairly uniform with the first accents B and the last A". This means the first few alternatives in the questions said with rise tones and the last alternative with fall tone. Others who share a similar view state that alternative questions must conclude with a final fall (Quirk et al, 1985; Rando, 1980, Schubiger, 1958). Bartels (1999) argues that this final fall, although not obligatory, distinguishes alternative questions from yes-no questions (ibid: 84). This study works on the assumption that alternative questions serve to elicit information although these information questions differ in their openness from wh-questions. Alternative questions expect responses which are provided as alternatives in the question, yet they follow the same rationale for referring/proclaiming tone opposition. Figure 12.9 shows the distribution of tone choices for alternative questions.

Figure 12.9 Distribution of tone choices of alternative questions



The present study confirms Bartel's (1999) findings that not all alternative questions are produced with fall tone. There is a similar spread of the tone choices on alternative questions to that on wh-questions. Despite the difference in the percentage spread, the different tone choices have the same rank in both question forms: from fall tone with the highest frequency counts to level, rise tone, and fall-rise tone with the lowest frequency counts. Table 12.2 below shows a comparison of the distribution of tone choices for the two question forms.

Table 12.2 Comparison of distribution of tone choices for wh- and alternative questions

Tone choices	Alternative questions	Wh-questions
Fall tone	45%	64%
Level tone	31%	22%
Rise tone	14%	10%
Fall-rise tone	5%	2%
Unclassified tone	5%	0%
Total	100%	100%

As shown in Table 12.2, 64% of wh-questions are produced with fall tone and 12% with rise tones. Although almost half of the alternative questions are produced with fall tone (45%), the percentage produced with rise tones is not low (19%). As shown in the table, the difference in the ratio of fall to rise tone is greater in wh-questions than in alternative questions. The ratio is 2.4: 1 for alternative questions and 5.3: 1 for wh-questions. This means there are twice as many fall tone choices for wh-questions as there are in alternative questions (and a higher frequency of alternative questions with rise tone). An alternative question with rise tone is illustrated in the example that follows.

In the service encounter below, a passenger is purchasing his ticket for his trip. He is trying to obtain tickets for his trip to Taipei.

Example 12.16

B: passenger a: airline information desk staff

→	13	a: { / would you [LIKE] to have one way TICket or < ROUND > trip }
	14	B: { = [< ERM >] } { \ [ROUND] trip i think < PLEASE > }
B029:13-14		

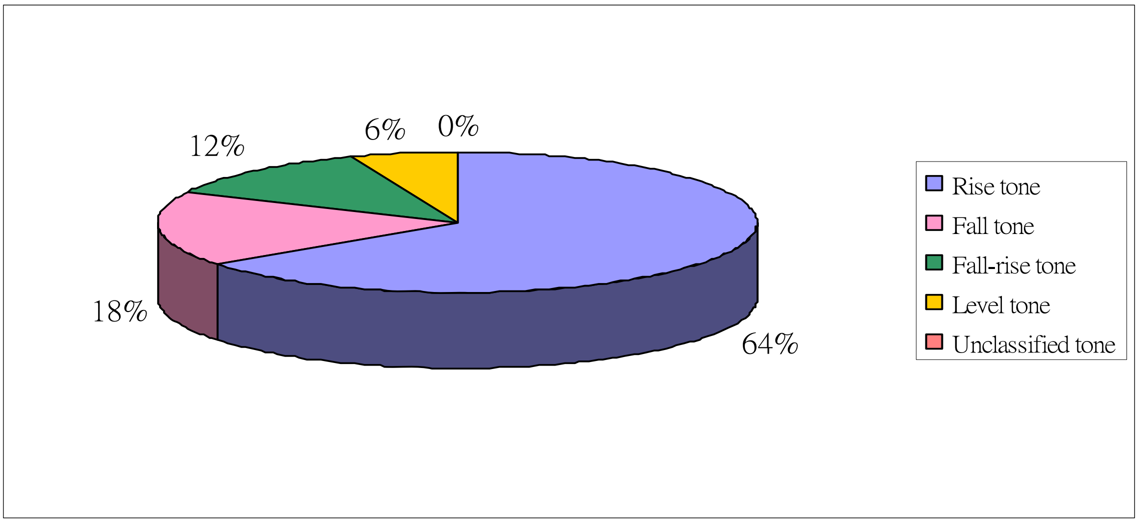
In Example 12.16, after the passenger, Speaker B, and the airline information desk staff, Speaker a, have sorted out the details for the Taipei journey, the airline staff asks the passenger an alternative question, “would you like to have one way ticket or round trip” in line 13. She chooses rise tone on the question to project her wish to have her assumptions confirmed with respect to a fact which she presents as having been negotiated. By choosing rise tone, the airline staff might also wish to sound more whole-heartedly as a warmer offer (Brazil, 1997: 95).

More alternative questions, which are a type of information question, are produced with rise tone as compared to wh-questions. This might suggest that when listing alternatives in an information question, participants in the business and professional settings might usually have an assumption in mind to be confirmed or rejected by the hearer.

12.3.6 Insert questions

As discussed earlier in the Chapters 3 and 6 (see also Chapter 9 for discussion of form of questions), insert questions are phrases uttered to request a repetition of all or part of the previous utterance(s). Figure 12.10 presents the distribution of tone choices for insert questions.

Figure 12.10 Distribution of tone choices of insert questions



The majority of the insert questions (76%) are produced with rise tones, 64% of the total with rise tone and 12% with fall-rise tone. Only 18% have fall tone. The following example contains an insert question in which a speaker selects rise tone. In the service encounter below, a hotel guest is checking out of the hotel. The hotel front desk representative is obtaining some information from the guest for the calculation of the bill.

Example 12.17

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	3	B: { / [HAVE] you GET the mini BAR < KEY > }
	4	B: { \ [I] wasn't GIven < ONE > }
→	5	b: { / [< SORry >] }
	6	B: { \ [I] didn't < ^ HAVE > one }
	7	b: { \ [< OH >] } { \ i'm [< _ SORry >] } { = [< UM >] }
	8	((pause))
B004: 3-8		

The front desk representative wants to find out if the guest has purchased anything from the mini-bar in the room. He wants to find out if the guest still has the mini-bar key. After the guest has responded by saying "I wasn't given one" in line 4, the staff asks an insert question to invite the guest to repeat or clarify what he has said. The representative produces this insert question possibly because he either cannot hear clearly what the guest has uttered, or he does not expect the response to be negative. He chooses rise tone on the insert question to elicit a repetition from the hearer which he can confirm or reject what he has heard or inferred as correct. These insert questions ask for repetitions or clarifications of what has been negotiated in the context already.

The majority of the insert questions (76%) are produced with rise tone. Another possible reason is that these insert questions could be heard as "warmer" request for repetition in rise tone (Brazil, 1997: 95). The higher frequency counts on insert questions with rise tone also confirm the findings of Biber et al (1999) that these formulaic expressions appear less intimidating to the hearer with rise tone and thus they term these expressions as "polite speech act formulae".

Example 12.18 below is an extract illustrating a fall tone insert question.

Example 12.18

A: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	6	b: { = < ER > } { / [HAVE] you got the mini bar < KEY > sir }
	7	A: { / < NO > } { \ i didn't < HAVE > one }
	8	b: { \ < Okay > } { \ you didn't < GOT > it }
	9	A: { / < HUH > }
	10	b: { \ you [DIDN'T] got the < KEY > }

	11	A:	{ \ < _ NO > } { \ i didn’t get a < KEY > }
	12		((pause))
	13	b:	{ \ you’ve [GOT] a room < ^ SERvice > }
	14	A:	{ \ < YEAH > } { \ i had a < ^ COKE > } { \ and a [BOTtle] of < _ WAter > }
→	15	b:	{ \ < PARdon > }
	16	A:	{ \ a [DIET] < _ COKE > } { \ and a bottle of < _ WAter > }
	17	b:	{ = < OH > } { \ [IN] the in the room * < SERvice > }
B007A: 13-17			

Example 12.18 is another extract in which the hotel staff is confirming and checking the guest’s consumption at the hotel before checking the guest out. The staff is confirming with the guest if she has used the room service. After the guest has confirmed with the staff in line 14, she continues with telling the details of what she has for the room service. In reaction to the guest’s response, the staff utters “pardon” with fall tone in line 15. In this checking-out encounter here, the hotel staff is double-checking the services that the guest has used so that he can charge the guest after the confirmation. It might be the case that the staff here does not expect the guest to tell him the details of what is consumed in the room service. Thus what the guest says about what she has consumed, “a coke and a bottle of water”, might have confused the staff.

It might also be possible that the hotel staff has related this to the consumption of the minibar in the guest room. Earlier in the service encounter, the staff has tried to confirm whether the guest has consumed anything from the minibar. Since the guest has said that she has not got the key to the minibar, implying that she has no access to the minibar, the staff did not go into details of the minibar service. However, the guest’s detailing of beverage items might cause the staff to relate them to minibar consumption. This might then leave the staff confused, thus causing him to choose fall tone on the insert question to project that this is not what has been negotiated, and also to locate himself outside the area of convergence (Brazil, 1997: 80), and thus seek repetition for confirmation.

For either interpretation, the response that the staff has produced in line 17 might suggest that he is confused about what the beverage items are about. If this is the case, when he says “oh, in the in the room service”, it is possible that he is signalling that he recognizes those items are from the room service ("but not from the minibar).

12.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the intonation choice of all of the questions is analyzed following Brazil's (1997) discourse intonation model. It is found that none of the syntactic forms of question is restricted to a single intonation choice. Almost half of the declarative questions are produced with fall tone and the most common tone for the yes-no question is level tone.

The main finding is that none of the question forms is restricted to a particular intonation choice and this supports the view that intonation choices do not serve as the sole determinant of whether an utterance has a question-status. Nevertheless, intonation choice plays an important role in the construction of the communicative value and function of the questions. No questions in the Corpus are produced with rise-fall tone. This is not surprising because Cheng et al (forthcoming) find only 53 occurrences of rise-fall tone in the whole corpus of 1 million-word HKCSE when examining all utterances in the corpora, and there are only 3 in this Corpus. Its use in decontexutalised utterances does not entail prospection of a response which contradicts the prospection of an "obligatory" response by a question. Results from the Corpus confirm Brazil's (1997) finding that this tone is rare.

Almost half of the questions (44%) are produced with fall tone. The second most common tone is level tone (26%), followed by rise tone which is commonly referred to as "question intonation", however it accounts for only 22% of the total. Only 6% are identified as being produced with fall-rise tone. In the Corpus, a small number (2%) of the tone choices of the questions are not identifiable.

The tone choices and communicative value of each question form are also discussed. The results confirm to some extent and update the findings of previous studies which have also studied naturally-occurring data.

As discussed earlier, some grammar studies state that declarative questions are produced with rise tone (Quirk et al, 1985: 814) or "appropriate intonation" (Biber et al, 1999: 203) in order to be distinguished from declarative statements. However, as Huddleston et al (2002: 868) argue, this question form is “normally” signaled by rising intonation” meaning that they are also found with falling intonation. This study finds an even spread of fall tone (46%) and rise tone (46%) on declarative questions which supports Huddleston et al’s argument. Further, this study also agrees with Carter and McCarthy (2006: 724-5) that the speaker of the declarative question projects different assumptions by choosing either fall or rise tone. The fall tone is used when the speaker requests more precise information. The rise tone is used when the speaker shows that common ground has been understood (Brazil, 1997). In other words, rise tone is not an automatic question-status determinant of a declarative. The speakers make intonation choices to serve different communicative purposes and the termination choice of the declarative question serves to determine its function, whether it invites the hearer to concur or adjudicate.

The use of different termination choices indicates the kind of response a speaker is expecting: whether it is a concurrence (by mid termination) or adjudication (by high termination). High termination on questions may also serve to indicate surprise prompting the hearer to respond actively. The participants in these business and professional settings observe the conditions of preference organization of discourses: primarily through choosing mid termination on the speakers’ part and choosing mid key on the hearers’ part while creating “pitch concord”. “Pitch concord” is found to occur more often in contexts with mid termination while “pitch discord” is more common in contexts with high termination. The fact that there are significantly more instances of mid termination-mid key sequences reinforces the argument that the participants are observing the conditions of “preference organization” in the discourses. In business and professional, there may be a “strong(er) preference for contiguity between question and answer, and for agreement between question and answer” (Sacks, 1987: 58).

This study also demystifies the assumption that yes-no questions are frequently said with rise tone. It is in fact more common that this question form is said with level tone (37%) or fall tone (30%). Speakers choose level tone when they opt out of assigning the significance of either rising tone or falling tone or when the utterances become routine or “ritualized”. Indeed, there is almost an even spread of tone choices on this form, across level, fall and rise tones. The nature of yes-no questions is that they invite the hearers to confirm or reject the speakers' presumption, and therefore it is still common that these questions are produced with rising tones (simple rise tone and fall-rise tone) to signal whether the information presented is negotiated or common ground. Conversely, the fall tone is chosen when the information presented is so far unnegotiated. This confirms and reinforces Brazil's (1997: 110) hypothesis that the probability of pairing between rising tones and the grammatical form reflects nothing more than the kinds of situation in which yes-no questions tend to occur. Put simply, the choice of referring or fall tone does not depend on the grammatical environment but on the notion of the common ground that is perceived by the participants to exist regarding their world views.

Wh-questions are commonly found to be produced with fall tone although it is not a rule that has to be observed. They may be produced with rise tone when the speakers are projecting a situation in which they have a presumption in mind. The fact that in most cases where speakers make an information elicitation, requesting information from an unnegotiated set might explain why it is far more common to have wh-questions produced with fall tone.

As for tag questions, it is found that they are more commonly found to be produced with rise tone. There are relatively fewer tag questions with fall tone. The higher frequency counts of rise tone use might suggest that in the business and professional settings at least, tag questions are often asked in contexts where the speaker's assumption has been negotiated since the use of rise tone on tag questions indicates that the speakers are projecting a context which the response has been negotiated (Brazil, 1995, 1997).

When comparing the tone choices of the two forms of information questions (wh-questions and alternative questions), it is found that fall tone occurs more often for both types of questions, there is however a difference in the use of rise tone. The difference in the ratio of fall to rise tone is greater in wh-questions than in alternative questions. The ratio is 2.4: 1 for alternative questions and 5.3: 1 for wh-questions, indicating twice as many fall tone choices for wh-questions than in alternative questions, and a higher frequency of alternative questions with rise tone. These findings might suggest that participants in the business and professional settings when listing alternatives in an information question might usually have an assumption in mind to be confirmed or rejected by the hearer.

For the last question form – insert questions, the majority (76%) are produced with rise tones, 64% of the total with rise tone and 12% fall-rise tone. Only 18% are produced with fall tone. The speaker chooses rise tone to elicit a repetition from the hearer which he or she can confirm or reject what he or she has heard or inferred as correct; and what is asked for in the repetition or clarification is in the context already. The speaker may also want to be heard as producing a "warmer" request. Thus insert questions are more likely to be produced with rise tones. However, the speaker may also want to choose fall tone when he or she wants to project that this is not what has been negotiated, and hence requesting the previous speaker to provide a repetition.

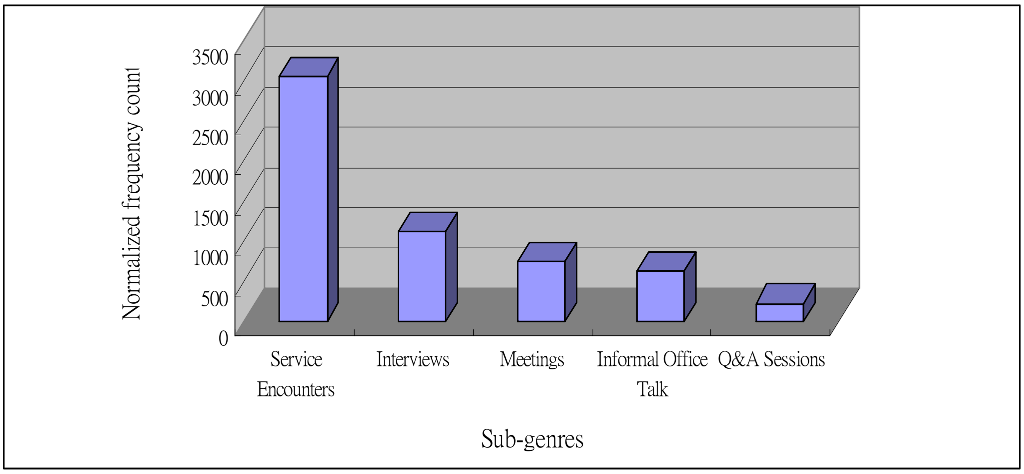
For both yes-no and information elicitations, "the choice of a referring tone projects the speaker's wish to have his or her assumptions confirmed with respect to a truth which he or she presents as having been negotiated. Fall tones used with both types project a wish that the respondent should provide a selection from a so-far unnegotiated set" (Brazil, 1997: 112). Although none of the question forms is found to be produced with a fixed tone choice, it is found that the choice of level tone is prominent across question forms (see earlier discussion of individual question forms). The focus of studies on questions, and intonation of questions in particular, is on the investigation on whether a question form is produced with a fixed intonation or to relate a question form with either the rise or fall tone.   Less attention is paid to the use of level tone in questions. The relatively higher frequency in the use of level tone could reinforce the notion that the choice of tone depends on the context of situation. The choice of tone constructs the communicative value of the questions rather than determine the question form.   It is further found that the choice of tone is not the sole determinant of the kind of response that the question expects, it is also partly determined by the termination choice which tends to seek to constrain the hearer through the respondent's choice of key in providing the preferred response.

Chapter 13 The influence of institutional roles and context of situation

13.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the use of questions is compared across the different sub-genres. It focuses firstly on the number of questions identified across sub-genres and then on the use of different question forms. The influence of the participants' roles and the settings on the use of questions identified in the Corpus is examined. It discusses the findings with regard to question forms and their functions; and how they are used similarly or differently by the participants in a particular sub-genre. In the Corpus, there are significant differences in the number of question-response sequences identified across different sub-genres. There is a considerably larger number of questions in Service Encounters and, interestingly, fewer in Q&A Sessions after presentations and announcements. Figure 13.1 shows the number of questions identified in each of the sub-genres.

Figure 13.1 Normalized frequencies of questions across sub-genres



13.2 Service Encounters

The service encounters in the Corpus are mostly one-to-one interactions, only very few have more than two participants in an encounter. They take place at check-in counters and the airport information counters at Hong Kong International Airport, at the front desk at Hong Kong hotels and retail outlets. In the Corpus, 59% in the service encounters take place at the airport whereas 41% take place at hotels. These service encounters are short and task-oriented (Cheng et al, forthcoming), they are more transaction-oriented instead of interaction-oriented (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1-5). The main purpose of these interactions is the "communication of information" (ibid: 2), they are about the "transmission of factual, or propositional, information" (Lyons, 1977: 32) and "communication is primarily a matter of a speaker's seeking either to inform a hearer of something or to enjoin some action upon him" (Bennett, 1976: 5).

13.2.1 Service encounters at the airport

At the airport, the service encounters typically involve a passenger(s) and a staff(s) representing an airline or the airport authority. In these encounters, the job of the airline staff is to check the passengers into scheduled flights, provide flight and ticket information, check fares, and book or make changes on tickets for the passengers. The passengers have just arrived at the airport either locally or from other flights for transits, and the airline staff are facilitating the procedures that the passengers have gone through or have to go through.

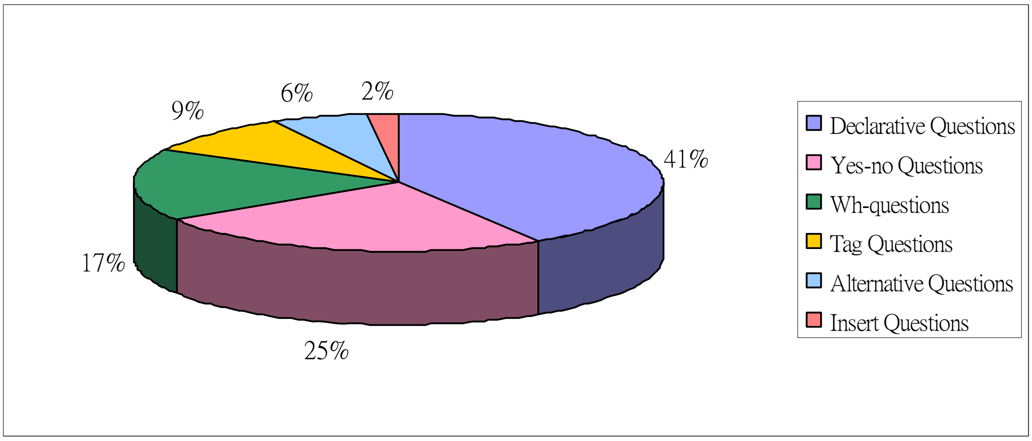
13.2.2 Service encounters at the hotel

In the service encounters at the hotel, a guest(s) and a front desk/concierge staff are engaged in the interaction. In some of these encounters, the job of the staff is to check the guests in or out of the hotel room. This involves validating the guests' identity, double-checking additional bills, and arranging the settlement of the final bills. In some of the encounters, the staff asks the guests questions with regard to the present stay. Sometimes, they are also either filling out for or asking the guests to fill out a questionnaire provided by the hotel. In the Corpus, there is an encounter (B003) in which the hotel has assigned a staff as the "hotel ambassador". The role of the "hotel ambassador" is to talk to the guests to build a friendly image for the hotel and to get feedback about the hotel from the guests. This particular encounter begins as an ordinary service encounter with the female hotel guest buying a stamp with the assistance of a member of the hotel staff. It then changes to a genre which is similar to conversation in terms of collaboration in the development of topic, turn-taking organization, overlapping talk, topical context, and humour (Warren, 2004: 128). It is longer in length (14 minutes as compared to an average of 3 minutes) and involves more interactional talk apart from performing the tasks listed above.

13.2.3 Pattern of use of questions in Service Encounters

A normalized total of 3046 questions per 100,000 words are identified in this sub-genre (see Figure 13.1). Figure 13.2 presents the distribution of question forms.

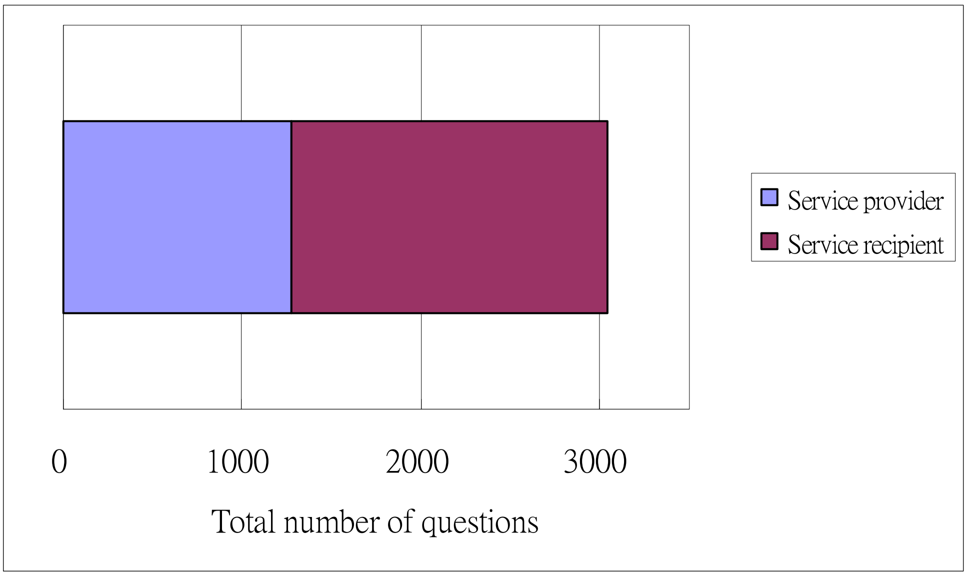
Figure 13.2 Distribution of question forms in Service Encounters



In Service Encounters, the most frequently produced question form is the declarative question (41%), followed by yes-no questions (25%), both of these forms expect a “yes” or “no” response (except for some yes-no questions which perform the <Q: identify> function). As described earlier, these encounters are short in length, and about one-third of the question-response sequences are identified as prospecting a brief response. Questions prospecting a longer response are less common in these short interactions, and only 17% of the questions are in the form of a wh-question.

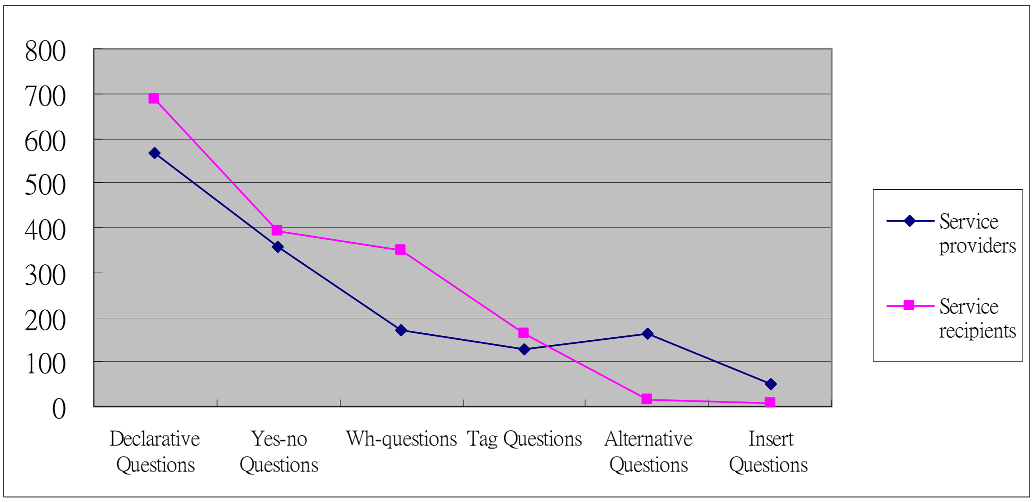
When comparing the number of questions produced by the two sets of speakers, the service providers and the service recipients, it is found that the service recipients produce more questions than the service providers. The distribution of questions produced by the two groups of speakers is presented in Figure 13.3.

Figure 13.3 Distribution of questions produced by the two groups of speakers



When the number of questions produced by the two sets of speakers is compared, a difference of 16% is found. The service recipients produce 58% of the total and the service providers produce 42%. The two sets of speakers also choose question forms in a similar pattern. The frequency counts of the six question forms produced by the two sets of speakers is presented in Figure 13.4.

Figure 13.4 Normalized frequencies of questions in different forms produced by the two sets of speakers in Service Encounters



Both sets of speakers, service providers and service recipients, produce a similar amount of declarative, yes-no and tag questions. However, there are great differences in the use of wh-questions, alternative questions and insert questions by the two sets of speakers. The question now to ask is why the two sets of speakers prefer different question forms? Below are examples from the Corpus illustrating how the speakers use them which might explain their preference for particular question forms.

13.2.3.1 Declarative questions

As shown earlier in Figure 13.4, the most common form of question in Service Encounters is declarative questions (41%). It is also the most common question form for both sets of speakers, with 39% for the service providers and 42% for the recipients. Example 13.1 is a declarative question produced by a service recipient to seek information. In this encounter, the hotel guest is asking the hotel front desk staff about express check-out procedures.

Example 13.1

A: hotel guest a: hotel front desk staff

→	401	A: { = you could [< DO >] the erm } { \ [exPRESS] < CHECKout > } { \ [< ^
	402	TOO >] i guess } { = [< THEY >] have that }
	403	a: { \ [< ^ YES >] }
	404	A: * { \/ [< RIGHT >] }
	405	a: ** { = [THIS] is the express < CHECKout > form } { = er you [< JUST >] }
	406	{ = you [^ USE] this < ER > } { \ [< MEthod >] } { \ you [JUST] reTURN
	407	the < ROOM > key } { \ to our cashier [< COUNter >] }
B003: 401-407		

According to Quirk et al (1985), a declarative would only be recognized as a question if it is produced with rise tone. The arrowed declarative with fall tone in lines 401-2 in Example 13.1, however, functions as a question. The hotel guest produces a declarative in order to check whether or not the hotel has express check-out facilities. The use of fall tone (instead of rise) projects a context in which information presented in the response will enlarge the guest's world view which has not been negotiated yet. She chooses high termination on "too" in line 401, inviting the hotel staff to respond regarding whether her assumption is right or wrong. The hotel staff responds with high key "yes" in line 403 which concords with the termination. And she further provides information on how express checkout could be done.

Example 13.2 shows a hotel front desk staff using a declarative question to ask how the hotel guest is going to settle his bill.

Example 13.2

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	13	b: { ? [< YES >] } { \ [< TOtal >] } { \ is two [THOUsand] FIVE hundreds
→	14	and ninety < EIGHT > } { ∨ and you’ll [< SETtle >] } { = [< BY >] your }
	15	{ ∨ [< ER >] } { / visa [< CARD >] sir }
	16	B: { \ [< _ YEAH >] }
	17	b: { ∨ [CAN] i have your credit card < PLEASE > }
B004: 13-17		

In Example 13.2, after the hotel front desk staff has told the guest how much the bill is, he produces a declarative question, “and you’ll settle by your er visa card sir” in lines 14-15. This function of confirmation seeking is signaled by the use of rise tone with mid termination by the service provider, which means “please confirm that I’m drawing the right conclusions from your actions”.

Line 17 shows an interrogative produced by the hotel staff. This utterance, which does not do questioning, is not analyzed in terms of question form and function. This interrogative form is interpreted as a request for action, asking the guest to give him the credit card; the hotel staff chooses to use an interrogative form to be conventionally indirect. By choosing to use this negative politeness strategy, the hotel staff redresses the face threatening act (FTA) imposed on the guest (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 130-143).

Examples 13.1 and 13.2 show that first a declarative question is not necessarily produced with rise tone. As Brazil (1997) states, the discourse function of the utterance depends crucially on the state of understanding existing between the speaker and the hearer (ibid: 100). Second, the examples illustrate how service recipients use a declarative question to seek information instead of confirmation.

In Service Encounters, 53% of the declarative questions produced by the service recipients function to seek information and 44% to seek confirmation. However, for service providers, only 16% of the declarative questions function to seek information but 84% are used to seek confirmation. In other words, service recipients use declarative questions to seek both information and confirmation, while service providers restrict their use of declarative questions to seek confirmation. Thus there is a larger number of declarative questions identified in the service recipients' production which might be explained by the service recipients' use of this question form for a greater range of functions.

13.2.3.2 Yes-no questions

The two sets of speakers are found to produce a similar number of yes-no questions in Service Encounters, with service recipients producing a slightly larger number (390) than the service providers (365). In this sub-genre, yes-no questions are found to be the second most commonly identified form of question. For every four questions identified in this sub-genre, one is produced in this form. The use of the question form is illustrated in Example 13.3 below.

Example 13.3

B: passenger a: check-in counter staff

→	71	B:	{ = < IS > } { = is < ^ eCOnomy er } { / < FULL > }
	72	a:	{ \ < eCOnomy > } { = you < MEAN > } { / hong kong to [joHANnesburg]
	73		< toNIGHT > } { \ is < NOT > full }
B032: 71-73			

In this service encounter, before proceeding to book his trip, the passenger, Speaker B checks the availability of the flight by asking a yes-no question in line 71, "is is economy er full". Both the parties, the passengers and the airline staff, need information from the other party which can simply be presented by an affirmative or negative response to the questions (as compared to an open response). It is very common for both the parties to check the polarity to seek confirmation of the presented proposition. Table 13.1 provides a list of examples of the yes-no questions identified in Service Encounters.

Table 13.1 Examples of yes-no questions in Service Encounters

b: { = did you < ^ TOOK > } { / from the < MIniBAR > }	B006: 13
B: { \/ do you have a < SHOWer > room there }	B055B: 95
a: { = and would you < ^ LIKE > to have } { \ [ROUND] trip TICket < NOW > }	B032: 23
B: { \ < _ Any > airline } ((inaudible)) * { = [CAN] i just get the TICket from here < ALso > }	B033: 13
B: { \ i < SEE > } { = < WHEN > it } { \ but [WOULD] it show up < THERE > }	B035: 52

13.2.3.3 Tag questions

The number of tag questions produced by the two sets of speakers is similar in Service Encounters. Service recipients produce more tag questions (161) than service providers (127). Cheng and Warren (2001) find that tag questions are used to ask for information, seek confirmation, and emphasize what is being said. In service encounter interactions, service providers possess more information than the customer or the passenger. So when the service provider provides new information throughout the encounter, the service recipient then seeks confirmation from the service provider to ensure that he or she has interpreted the information accurately. So the service recipeints produce more tag questions than the service providers do. Example 13.4 shows an airline front desk staff seeking confirmation from the passenger:

Example 13.4

B: passenger a: airline front desk staff

	63	B: { \ [FLYing] time is THREE to < _ FIVE > hours } { = < AND > } { = [^ HOW] is
	64	the SItuAtion on the THREE forty < FIVE > er } { = < FLIGHT > }
	65	a: { = < QUITE > good }
→	66	B: { \/ it's [QUITE] < GOOD > is it } { = so if i < ^ BOOK > } { = < toMORrow >
	67	morning } { \ it's not a < PROblem > is it }
	68	a: { \ i cannot < GUArantee > for you } * { ? ((inaudible)) on something } (.) { = < OR
	69	B: ** { \ < YEAH > i know i know } { = < oKAY > }
	70	a: > } { ? what is the ((inaudible))
B041: 63-70		

In Example 13.4, the passenger is asking the airline staff about the flight situation that he is going to take. He then produces two tag questions, "it's quite good, is it" and "so if I book tomorrow, it's not a problem, is it?" in lines 66-7. In the first tag question, he chooses fall-rise tone to project a context that information is common ground, and chooses mid termination simultaneously to invite the airline staff to concur with her interpretation that the flight situation is quite good. As for the second tag question, he chooses a fall tone to project that what he is saying has not been negotiated yet. And the response he is eliciting will change his world view.

It should be noted that all the service providers in the Corpus are Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) while the service recipients are native speakers of English (NS). The findings that service recipients produced more tag questions than the service providers might suggest that NS produced more tag questions than HKC. This findings indeed confirms Cheng and Warren's (2001: 1429) findings that NS produced three times as many tag questions than HKC (82 vs. 25). Although the discrepancy identified is considerably greater in their study, their results are based on the analysis of conversations. In other words, the discourses in their corpus are more interactional rather than transactional as in the present study. Further research might compare the use of tag questions or other question forms by the two sets of speakers in interactional and transactional interaction.

13.2.3.4 Wh-questions

In Service Encounters, the two sets of speakers produced a significantly different number of wh-questions. Service recipients tend to produce a series of wh-questions, resulting in a larger number in total. Service recipients use twice as many wh-questions as the service providers, 348 and 170 respectively. Below is a typical example found in Service Encounters, illustrating how service recipients use wh-questions. This exchange involves a passenger trying to get a ticket for his next trip at the ticket counter in the Hong Kong International Airport.

Example 13.5

B: passenger a: check-in counter staff

	15	B: { ? three ((inaudible)) } { = [< TWELVE >] } { = [TWELVE] o’clock
	16	there’s a < FLIGHT > }
	17	a: { \/ [< SORry >] }
	18	B: { \ [< TWELVE >] o’clock } { \ [< TWELVE >] }
	19	a: { ? [TWELVE] o’clock you < DON’T > have to travel ((inaudible)) }
→	20	B: { = [< MM >] } { ? [< HOW >] about }
	21	a: { \ there’s [< ^ NO >] flight } { = [< MORning >] flight } { = [< NINE >]
	22	o’clock } { = [< AFternoon >] flight } { ? ((inaudible)) o’clock }
	23	B: { = [< UM >] } { \ [< Okay >] } { ? and } { \ ma if you [< EIther >] the }
	24	{ = [inforMAtion] of < C > n er } { = [< S >] q }
	25	a: { \ [< SQ >] }
→	26	B: { = [< C x >] } { \/ [< IS >] it } { = er [HOW] about < S > k }
	27	a: { ? [< S >] k make } { \ [MAKE] the booking at < toMORrow > } { \ the
	28	[REservation] is < CLOSED > }
	29	B: { \ [< CLOSED >] }
	30	a: { \ [< _ YES >] } (.) { = and [< HOW >] many }
	31	B: { = [< ER >] } { = [< ER >] } { ? er }
	32	a: { = [< BUT >] er } { \ they have the [FLIGHT] at the eLEven o’ < CLOCK
	33	> } (.) { \ and [TWO] o’ < CLOCK > }
→	34	B:{ \ and [< TWO >] o’clock } * { = [HOW] about < ^ MORning > }
	35	a: ** ((inaudible))
	36	a: { \ morning [EIGHT] o’ < CLOCK > } { \ in the [< _ MORning >] }
B041: 15-36		

In Example 13.5, before getting the passenger ticket, he checks out the flight schedule that matches his own understanding. He produces a series of wh-questions which require the airline staff to identify the flight schedules of the available airlines. In other words, he invites the airline staff to supply a piece of information. To sort out his ticket arrangement, the passenger first asks for information on the airline, then the number of flights available, and finally the flight schedule which might match his. This type of transaction is commonly identified at the beginning of ticket purchase, or checking-in at the airport, where the passenger produces a series of wh-questions requesting the specific information that he needs. Although the airline staff has better knowledge of the context of situation, she is not able to give specific information that the passenger needs, unless the passenger spells it out in an information seeking question. That is why there is a large number of wh-questions identified in the service recipients' (guest/passenger) production, whereas there are only half as many in the service providers' production.

13.2.3.5 Alternative questions

The service providers produce almost 10 times as many alternative questions (161) as the service recipients (17), probably due to the institutional role of the service providers in this sub-genre. In Example 13.6, the passenger is checking information for a flight, and the service provider uses an alternative question.

Example 13.6

B: passenger a: check-in counter staff

	18	B: { ? [< _ YEA >] } { ? [< I >] WILL be } { = [< ERM >] } { = i will be coming [BACK]
	19	by the sunday < NIGHT > } { \ or monday [< MORning >] }
→	20	a: { = [< AND >] } { = would you [LIKE] to have any booking < ^ NOW > } { = < OR > }
	21	{ \ [JUST] * leave it < Open > }
	22	B: **{ = [< ERM >] } { \ [< YEA >] } { ? can you } { = can you [< BOOK >]
	23	me } { = [< FOR >] } { ? sun } { = [< LAST >] flight } { \ on sunday [< NIGHT >] }
	24	a: { = [< ^ oKAY >] }
B029: 18-24		

In Example 13.6, instead of waiting for the instruction from the passenger, the check-in counter staff offers the alternatives to the passenger so that he knows what action he could take and estimates which way is best for him. The airline staff is at the same time seeking to know what the passenger would like the arrangement to be. She chooses fall tone to indicate that the information in the response will enlarge her world view. The airline staff chooses high termination choice on "now" in line 20 to show that the information given at the moment is contrastive. She chooses high termination to highlight that the time to book is "not Sunday night" and "not Monday morning", but now.

In Service Encounters, it is very common for the service provider (either at the airport or hotel), who has better knowledge of the transaction, to list options, alternatives and choices to customers. In the checking-in transaction at the airport, one of the most frequently heard alternative questions is “would you like an aisle seat or window seat?” or back in 2000, “smoking or non-smoking?” Passengers are also often asked whether they are settling their hotel bill by cash or credit card when checking-out.

13.2.3.6 Insert questions

Apart from alternative questions, the insert question is the other question form found to be more frequently used by service providers (86%) than the service recipients (14%). Example 13.7 shows an insert question produced by a service provider in a hotel.

Example 13.7

B: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	17	b:	{ / [CAN] i have your credit card < PLEASE > }
	18	B:	{ = [< ER >] } { / [DIDN’T] you < HAVE > that }
→	19	b:	{ / [< PARdon >] }
	20	B:	{ / you didn’t [< HAVE >] that }
B004: 17-20			

In line 19, the hotel front desk staff asks an insert question “pardon” with rise tone. As discussed earlier in Chapter 12, the use of rise tone on insert questions helps to redress the FTA imposed on the hearer and it is regarded as more polite.

Example 13.8

A: hotel guest b: hotel front desk staff

	6	b:	{ = < ER > } { / [HAVE] you got the mini bar < KEY > sir }
	7	A:	{ / < NO > } { \ i didn’t < HAVE > one }
	8	b:	{ \ < Okay > } { \ you didn’t < GOT > it }
	9	A:	{ / < HUH > }
	10	b:	{ \ you [DIDN’T] got the < KEY > }
	11	A:	{ \ < _ NO > } { \ i didn’t get a < KEY > }
	12		((pause))
	13	b:	{ \ you’ve [GOT] a room < ^ SERvice > }
	14	A:	{ \ < YEAH > } { \ i had a < ^ COKE > } { \ and a [BOTtle] of < _ WAter > }
→	15	b:	{ \ < PARdon > }
	16	A:	{ \ a [DIET] < _ COKE > } { \ and a bottle of < _ WAter > }

	17	b: { = < OH > } { \ [IN] the in the room * < SERvice > }
B007A: 13-17		

Example 13.8 is another extract in which the hotel staff is confirming and checking the guest’s consumption at the hotel before checking the guest out. The staff is confirming with the guest if she has used the room service. After the guest has confirmed with the staff in line 14, she continues by giving the details of what she has for the room service. In reaction to the guest’s response, the staff utters “pardon” with fall tone in line 15. It might be the case that the hotel staff just simply could not hear what the guest has said. But it is also possible that the hotel staff is confused, below are two suggested interpretations.

In this checking-out encounter here, the hotel staff is double-checking the services that the guest has used so that he can charge the guest after the confirmation. It might be the case that the staff here does not expect the guest would tell him the details of what is consumed in the room service. Thus what the guest says about what she has consumed, “a coke and a bottle of water” might have confused the staff.

It might also be possible that the hotel staff has related this to the consumption of the minibar in the guest room. Earlier in the service encounter, the staff has tried to confirm whether the guest has consumed anything from the minibar. Since the guest has said that she has not got the key to the minibar, implying that she has no access to the minibar, the staff did not go into details of the minibar service. However, the guest’s detailing of beverage items might cause the staff to relate them to minibar consumption. This might then leave the staff confused, thus causing him to choose fall tone on the insert question to project that this is not what has been negotiated, and also to locate himself outside the area of convergence (Brazil, 1997: 80), and thus seek repetition for confirmation.

For either interpretation, the response that the staff has produced in line 17 might suggest that he is confused about what the beverage items are about. If this is the case, when he says “oh, in the in the room service”, it is possible that he is signalling that he recognizes those items are from the room service (“but not from the minibar).The hotel staff, in both extracts, ask an insert question to seek repetition of what the guest has said. Although it is uncertain why the hotel staff donot hear what is said, it prompts him or her to seek repetition by means of an insert question. But it is certain that in Service Encounters, the service providers produce four times as many insert questions than the recipients. It might be due the institutional role of the service providers whose responsibility is to serve the service recipients. Their duty requires them, not the recipient, to ensure that information transmitted has been accurate so that the transaction can proceed successfully. Another reason could also be due to the role of the service providers. In Service Encounters, the utterances that the service providers produce are more formulaic and routine. In the case of the checking-out encounter, it often involves the checking of the used minibar items, room service checking and settling of the hotel bill. In short, these service encounters involve certain tasks and perhaps set procedures to be carried out, thus the service providers' contribution to the discourse is more predictable. It is then less likely for the service recipients to not understand what the providers mean. In other words, it is the service recipients' pragmatic accent (Yule, 1996: 88) which allows them to anticipate and help them interpret what the providers have said. According to Scollon and Scollon (1995: 170-171), the pragmatic accent of speakers is determined by his or her cultural schemata, such as the historical, social, and ideological characteristics of the speakers, genre and function of the discourse, and face systems etc. It is the institutional role of the service providers and the institutional context of the encounters that contribute to the service recipients' pragmatic accent. Since it is more like that the service recipients would step out of the routine discourse, it is then more often the case that it is the service providers who are not able to interpret utterances that they have heard, and hence need to ask for repetition. This can be done by producing insert questions which allow them to check that they have got the correct information.

13.2.4 Summary of use of questions in Service Encounters

It is found that service recipients produce a greater number of questions than the service providers (1.35 to 1). This means, service recipients produce 35% more questions than service providers in general. There are also differences found in the number of declarative, wh-, alternative and insert questions in their production. One reason for these differences is the role of the participants in these service encounters. In these discourses, the service provider not only has better knowledge of the context situation but also of the genre. It is not uncommon for the service recipients to produce a series of questions which functions to seek information, and for the service providers to offer choices, alternatives and options for their customers. In other words, a tentative conclusion can be drawn here; the roles of participants in this particular sub-genre affect the pattern of the use of questions. Further studies are suggested to confirm such generalization after comparing the questioning patterns of the two sets of speakers in other sub-genres in the Corpus and service encounters involving speakers of the same language.

13.3 Interviews

There are two main groups of interviews in this Corpus; one is the job interviews for the post of research assistant and the other one is the placement interviews for the hotel training programme. In these interviews, there is a single interviewee being interviewed by a panel of two to three interviewers.

13.3.1 Job interviews for research assistant

There is an interviewee and two (or sometimes three) interviewers in these interviews. The candidates are applying for the post of research assistant, although not for the same post. In these interviews, none of the interviewers is assigned as a chair or as the principal interviewer and they share the same information for the candidates from the application they are given in advance of the interviews. In some of these interviews, the candidates are asked to perform a research project-related task and some are asked to do this afterwards.

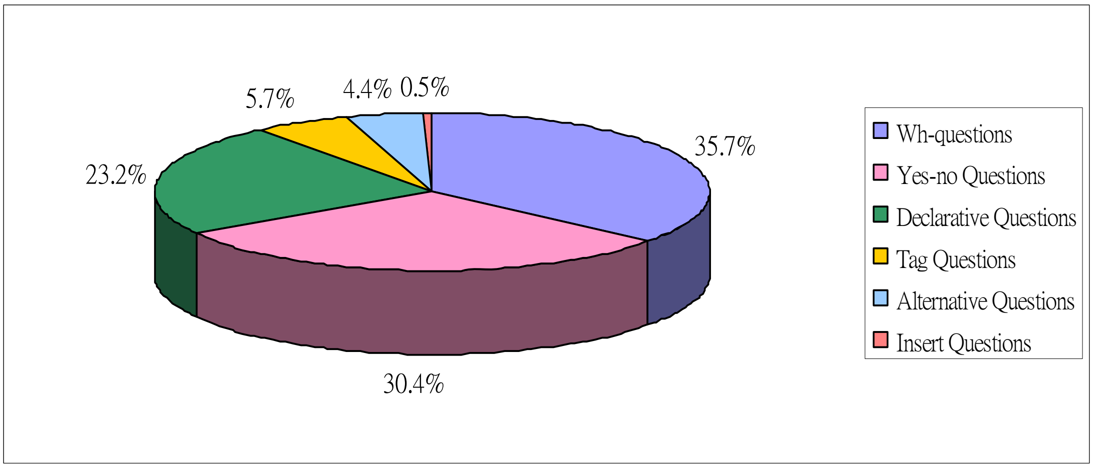
13.3.2 Placement interviews for hotel trainee

In the case of the placement interviews, the candidates are applying for an internship placement in leading hotels in Hong Kong. These candidates are undergraduate students majoring in BA (Hons) Hotel and Tourism Management. There are usually two interviewers from the hotel management and they need information as to which department(s) is /are suitable for the candidates. In other words the purpose of the interviews is find a suitable department for the trainee, thus these are called placement interviews. The job placement interviews are high stakes discourse events because the hotels are not obliged to accept applicants and they have strict acceptance criteria. For the interviewees, their performance in these interviews are important to their CV and future career, as trainees are often offered permanent positions at the same hotel after the internship programme finishes (Warren, 2006: 309).

13.3.3 Pattern of use of questions in Interviews

A normalized total of 1123 questions are identified in Interviews (see Figure 13.1). The distribution of question forms used in this sub-genre is presented in Figure 13.5.

Figure 13.5 Distribution of quesion forms in Interviews



In Interviews, the most frequently produced question form is wh-questions (35.7%), followed by yes-no questions (30.4%) and declarative questions (23.2%). There are proportionately fewer tag and alternative questions in this sub-genre. This section of the chapter presents a comparison of the use of questions of the two parties in this sub-genre and illustrates the use of these questions forms and attempts to suggest explanations for the distribution of the different forms.

It is expected that the interviewers who are found to be in a more powerful interactional position (Thornborrow, 2001: 119) produce more questions. The interviewers, whose institutional status is such that the range of actions they can take is generally much broader than the interviewees, have the role of questioners (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Harris, 1984; Thornborrow, 2001).

It is confirmed that the interviewers produce more questions than the interviewees. The distribution of the number of questions produced is presented in Figure 13.6.

Figure 13.6 Distribution of questions produced by the two groups of speakers in Interviews

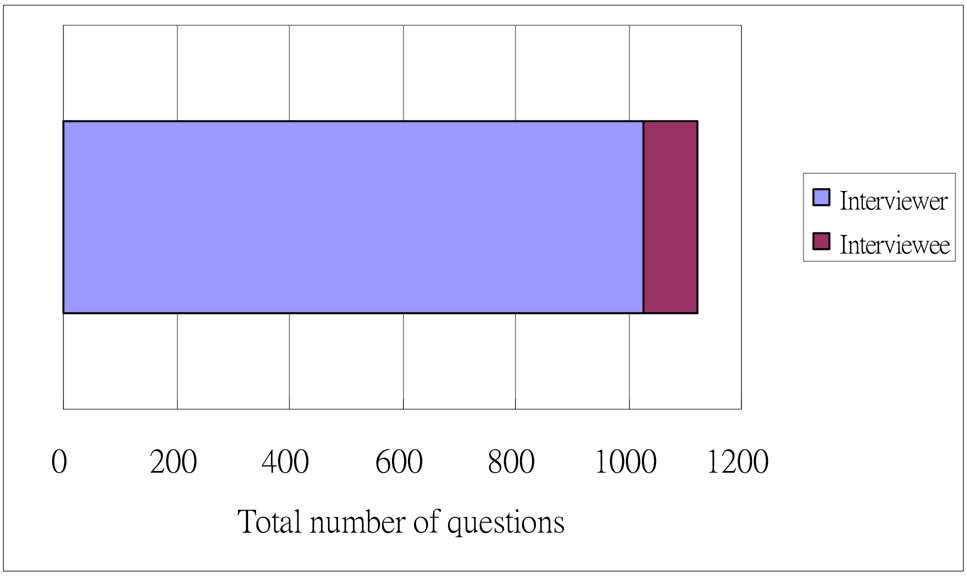
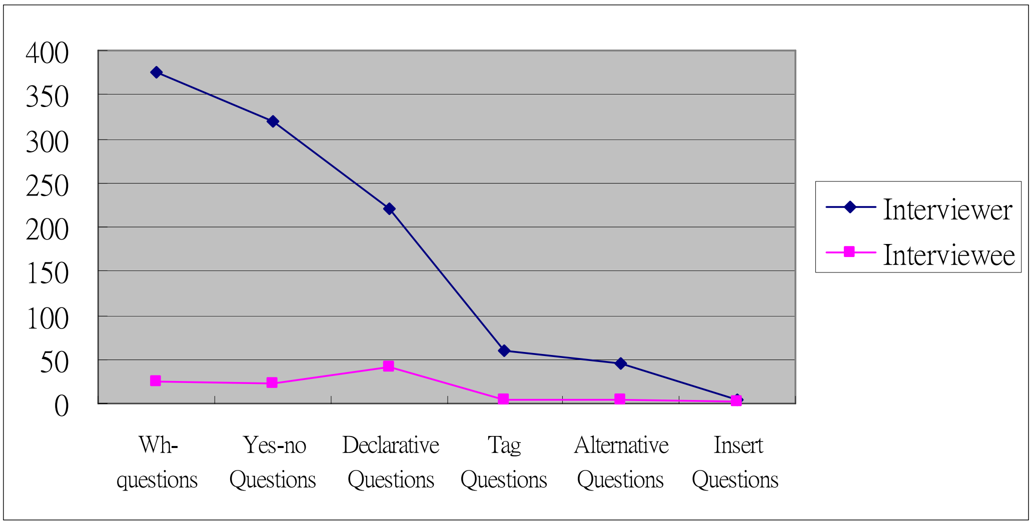


Figure 13.6 shows that 91% of the questions are produced by the interviewers and only 9% by the interviewees. Although the ratio of interviewers to interviewees is 2:1 (sometimes 3:1), the higher ratio of interviewers may not be the crucial factor for the higher number of questions produced by them. The questions asked are indeed spread among the interviewers so that they are sure that they have obtained all the information they need to make the decision (either to recruit or where to place the candidate). These interviewers produce ten times as many questions because they need to obtain information in order to make the corresponding decisions. Their participant role, therefore, requires them to ask more questions in these interactions.

Figure 13.7 The comparison of question forms produced by the two groups of speakers in Interviews



Despite the difference in the total number of questions produced, it is also found that the two groups of speakers prefer different question forms. For the interviewers, the most commonly identified question form is wh-questions, followed by yes-no questions, then declarative questions. Whereas for the interviewees, they tend to produce a question in the form of a declarative, followed by wh- and yes-no questions with similar frequency counts. The use of these different question forms is illustrated in the following.

13.3.3.1 Wh-questions

As Figure 13.5 shows, wh-questions are most frequently found in this sub-genre. More than one-third of the questions are produced in this form. Due to the larger number of questions produced by the interviewers, it is also found that they produce 15 times as many wh-questions as the interviewees. Example 13.8 illustrates the use of wh-questions produced by an interviewer.

Example 13.8

a3: Interviewer a1: interviewee

→	260	a3: { \ er [WHY] do you think you will be SUItable in the rooms < diVIsion > }
	261	a1: { = i [< ^ THINK >] } { = [< UM >] } (.) { = i [< DIDN'T >] } { = have the [TRIAL]
	262	in the < ROOMS > } { \ [FRONT] < OFfice > } { ? but i've } { \ i've [TAken] these <
	263	SUBjects > } { = [< UM >] } { \/ in [IN] year one and year < TWO > }

	264	a3: { / [< Mhm >] }
B061: 260-264		

The interviewer, Speaker a3, asks a wh-question, “er why do you think you will be suitable in the rooms division” in line 260. It functions to ask for specific information regarding the reason for the interviewee to choose to be trained in the rooms division. By means of a wh-question, the interviewee is prompted to give a response in greater detail. It is very often the case that the interviewer produces a wh-question when specific or detailed information is requested. Below are more examples of wh-questions identified in Interviews.

Table 13.2 Examples of wh-questions in Interviews

Examples	Source
a3: { / < ^ Mhm > } { = what did you < STUdy > } { \ in form < SEven > }	B061: 104
B: { = so [WHAT] WHAT < WHAT’S > your } { = [INterest] < IN > } { \ the < INdustry > } { / < WHY > } { = you’re [atTRACted] < TO > } { = a < hoTEL > }	B062: 15-16
a1: { / < Mhm > } { = < _ ER > } { = [^ HOW] much do you KNOW < aBOUT > }{ = < _ UM > } (.) { / food and < BEverage > }	B063: 339-340
B: ** { = [WHY] would you < CHOOSE > } { \ front < OFfice > } { = < Over > } (.) { \ [FOOD] and < BEverage > } { \ what would < BE > } (.) { = < WHY > would you } { \ [preFER] front < OFfice > } { \ more than food and < Beverage > }	B064: 35-37
a2: ** { \ < oKAY > } { \ how < LONG > does that } { \ [WHAT] is the < duration > } { = < OF > } { = < OF > } { = < THAT > } { \ < reCORding > } { = < AND > } { \ what is the < PURpose > } { = < OF > } { \ of [THAT] < asSIGNment > }	B077: 121-123

Table 13.2 shows that these wh-questions serve to elicit information in detail or more specific information as compared to a confirmation, affirmation or negation and so on. These prompt the interviewee to produce a response containing information which has not been negotiated and enlarges the speaker and hearer convergence of common ground. It is also rare for interviewees ask a wh-question in an interview unless they are offered the opportunity or cued to ask a question as in Example 13.9.

Example 13.9

a: interviewee b: interviewer

	319	b:	{ \ [< MM >] } { / [oKAY] do you have any QUEStion to < ASK > }
	320	a:	{ = [< UM >] } { / i would [< LIKE >] } { = to [< ASK >] } { \/ [IN] my < INternship
	321		> } { = [< UM >] } { = [< UM >] } { = [< WE >] } { \ er i [< ^ Usually >] } { = will
→	322		[GO] < TO > } { = [< ER >] } { = [WHAT] < dePARTment > } { \ [WHICH] <
	323		dePARTment > } { ? that i will } { = [reCEIVE] the < TRAIning > }
	324	b:	{ = [< MM >] } { \ [< ^ BAsically >] } { = [< FOR >] } { \ half a year [< TRAIning
	325		>] } { = [< ER >] } { \ we'll [arRANGE] ONE < dePARTment > } (.) …
B065: 319-325			

In line 319, the interviewer asks if the interviewee has any questions. It is often the case that an interviewee asks a question in response to the interviewer's prompt for a question. This situation often occurs towards the end of an interview. The interviewee produces a wh-question in lines 332-333, "what department which department that I will receive the training". After having discussed the possible departments in which the interviewee might receive her training from, she takes the opportunity to ask what the interviewer has decided. But it is doubtful whether the interviewee would initiate a question if the interviewer has not provided such an opportunity.

The interviewers ask more wh-questions to elicit specific and detailed information needed for the decision making with regard to whether to recruit the interviewees or which department to place them. It might be the nature of the response (detailed information) that the interviewers require that results in the higher number of wh-questions produced in this sub-genre.

13.3.3.2 Yes-no questions

In Interviews, 30% of the questions (342 occurrences) are produced in the form of yes-no questions. Similar to wh-questions, the majority is produced by the interviewers. The use of yes-no questions is illustrated in this section.

Example 13.10

a: interviewee b: interviewer

→	79	b:	{ \/ < Mhm > } { \/ < VEry > good } { = < MM > } (.) { \ do you know the < PURpose
	80		> } { \/ of this < INternship > } { ? because if you you } (.) { = if you may < COME
	81		> } (.) { = or you will [COME] to a < hoTEL > } { = < FOR > } { \ for this <
	82		TRAIning > } * { \ < _ ER > }
	83	a:	** { = < UM > } { = < ^ AND > } { = < ^ beCAUSE > in }
	84		{ = < UM > } { \/ in the [PREvious] < YEAR > } { = we < ^ DID > } { \ we didn't
	85		we did not [HAVE] any < exPErience > } { \/ in [hoTEL] < INdustry > } { = < SO
	86		> } (.) { = < AND > } { \ our < KNOWledge > } { = is [ONly] < ER > } { = < THE >
	87		er } { \/ [ON] the < THEory > } { = er < OR > } { \ some < CONcepts > } { = < SO
	88		> } { \/ i [THINK] in this < INternship > } { = i < CAN > } { = [LEARN] < aBOUT
	89		> the } { \/ [PRACtical] < exPErience > }
	90	b:	{ \ < _ MM > }
B065: 79-90			

The interviewer asks a yes-no question in line 79, "do you know the purpose of this internship". Although the question expects a "yes" or "no" response from the hearer, if the interviewee produces either of these responses, it does not answer the question satisfactorily (Tsui, 1992: 91). This yes-no question functions to seek information which is more specific, a mere "yes" (which is expected by the interviewer) would not be regarded as a complete response to such a question (Tsui, 1992: 91). The interviewee is instead expected to present her knowledge of the "purpose of the internship" if the response is "yes".

In Interviews, interviewers use yes-no questions to seek information in addition to eliciting a "yes" or "no" response. Table 13.2 shows more examples of the use of yes-no questions in Interviews.

Table 13.3 Examples of yes-no questions in Interviews

Examples	Source
a2: { = < oKAY > } (.) { \/ [Any] parTIcular < Area > } { \/ you would [LIKE] to go < inTO > } { \/ [DUring] your THREE months < TRAIning > }	B061: 990
b: { = do you [^ HAVE] < ACtually > have } { / it have you ever < ^ THOUGHT > } { = of < UM > } { \ what [KIND] of < IMpact > } { = could < THAT > } { \ handover could < ^ BRING > } { \ to the < INdustry > }	B066:327
a1: { = did you have < TO > } { = < WERE > } { = did you [HAVE] to < DO > } { / [DAta] < aNAlysis > }	B079: 58
B: ** { \ < _ alRIGHT > } { = and [DID] you FIND that a DIFficult thing to < DO > }	B081: 297
B: { \ did you [JUST] use a < QUEStionnaire > }	B082: 207

Examples in Table 13.2 show that yes-no questions are not only used to elicit a simple “yes” or “no” response, the response is regarded as complete only when details of what are been elicited is provided. The examples of yes-no questions above perform the function of <Q: identify> (see Chapter 10) which seeks information instead of affirmation or negation. Although these yes-no questions serve to elicit a longer response, they also expect a “yes” or “no” in many cases such as the last example in Table 13.2.

13.3.3.3 Declarative questions

Figure 13.7 shows that declarative questions are the third most frequently identified question form for interviewers (221), although it is 40% less than the production of wh-questions (which is the most frequently identified form). As for the production of declarative questions by the interviewees, it is indeed the most commonly identified form (> 40%). In Interviews, 261 declarative questions are identified and only 11% of those are produced by the interviewees; this means the interviewers produce 5.5 times as many declarative questions as the interviewees. Example 13.11 below shows a declarative question produced by an interviewer.

Example 13.11

B: interviewer a: interviewee

	11	a:	{ \ the [FIRST] thing is < THAT > } { = i [THINK] < I > } { = i [< MEET >] } { \
	12		[< SOME >] } { \/ of the [< reQUIREments >] } ((laugh)) { = [< SO >] } { =
	13		[AND] < I > would like } { \/ and i [HAVE] < INterest > } { \ in [DOing] <
	14		reSEARCH > } { = [ALthough] i have < NOT > } { / so [< MUCH >] } { \ [<
	15		exPErience >] } { = [< UM >] } { = in [DOing] < reSEARCH > } { = and [<
	16		THAT >] } { = [< UM >] } { \/ to be [< HOnest >] } { = [I'M] < NOT > } { \ [^
	17		VEry] very < GOOD > } { ? at um } { \ [DOing] < reSEARCH > } { \ [beCAUSE]
	18		i JUST do < ONCE > } { = [< IN >] } { \ [uniVERsity] of < SHEffield > }
→	19	B:	{ \ [THAT] was when you were DOing your < MASters > } * { \ in [apPLIED] <
	20	a:	** { \ [< YES >] }
	21		linGUIStics > }
	22		{ \ in [^ MY] MASter < deGREE > }
B071: 11-22			

From lines 11 to 18, the interviewee responds to the interviewer's question on why she is interested in the applied post. The interviewer after hearing the interviewee's experience relevant to the post, asks a declarative question in line 19, "that was when you were doing your masters in applied linguistics" with fall tone. He chooses fall tone to indicate that the information has been negotiated and that he chooses mid termination to invite the interviewee to concur with his presumption about when she has obtained the experience. The interviewer chooses to produce a declarative question here to seek confirmation of the conclusion he makes from the interviewee's previous utterance. The response of the declarative question ensures that he is proceeding without misunderstanding in the interview.

In the Corpus, the interviewees are found to have produced this form of question most frequently. Example 13.12 illustrates the use of a declarative question by an interviewee.

Example 13.12

a1: interviewer   a3: interviewee

	53	a1: … { \ [I'd] just like to START by asking < YOU > } { = [< _ UM >] } { = [< UM >] } { = [< ^
	54	WHAT >] do you } { = [< WHAT >] do you think } { = er [THESE] < PROjects > } { = would
	55	[inVOLVE] YOU < IN > } { / in [< DOing >] }
→	56	a3: { = [< ER >] } { \ you [< ^ MEAN >] } { \ as a [< reSEARCH >] } { \ [< aSSIStant >] } *
	57	a1: ** { \ [<
	58	{ \ [WELL] i < ^ THINK > } { = if [< I >] } { \ have the [< ^ CHANCE >] } { \ to be a
	59	asSIStant >] } { \ [_ YEAH >] }
	60	[< reSEARCH >] } { \ [< asSIStant >] } { = [< FOR >] } { \ [THESE] < PROject > } { ?
	61	[AND] < I > } { = [AND] i GUESS < BY > } { = [< THE >] } { \ [< TRANscript >] } { \ [I]
	62	have < DONE > } { \ [MAYbe] < I > } { \ [< ^ FIRST >] } { = i [HAVE] TO < _ ER > } * { =
	63	[< ER >] } { = [^ DO] the < tranSCRIPtion > } { = [< FOR >] } …
B076: 53-63		

In this part of the interview, the interviewer has been explaining what the projects are, and then asks the interviewee what she thinks the job will involve in line 54. The interviewee, in making sure she is responding correctly, asks a declarative question in line 56 to check her inference, "you mean as a research assistant". She chooses fall tone to indicate that what is presented has been negotiated, and then she chooses mid termination to invite the interviewer to concur with her presumption that her inference of what the interviewer has said is this. She then gives the response to the interviewer's wh-question after she has obtained the confirmation in lines 57 and 59. Table 13.4 provides more examples of declarative questions in Interviews.

Table 13.4 Examples of declarative questions in Interviews

Examples and sources
B063: 407-413
a2: ** { = [< UM >] }
{ = [< IF >] } { = you [< ^ MEAN >] if } { \ the [< GUESTS >] } { = are
[comPLAIning] about < OR > } * { \/ has the [< ^ inQUIries >] } { = [< THAT >] }
a1: ** { / [< Uhuh >] }
{ = [< ^ WHY >] the } { \ [ER] room < PRICE > } { = [< IS >] } (.) * { \ so [<
a1: ** { / [< ^ Mhm
HIGH >] }
>] } { / [< Mhm >] }

B065: 364 b: { = < _ SO >} (.) { = you would < ^ preFER > } { \ at [LEAST] one < MONTH > }
B066: 228-231 b: { \ i [< SEE >] } { \/ so [< ^ MAINly >] } { / you’re saying [THAT] you would < LIKE > } { \ to [< GAIN >] } { \ the [inDUstrial] < exPErience > } * { / [AS] < a: ** { / [< Mhm >] } WELL > } { = [< AS >] } { \ kind of [^ POlishing] your interPERsonal < SKILLS > }
B070A:244 a: { = [< ER >] } { / you mean the [< FUture >] } { / in the [< FUture >] }
B076:172-178 B: ** { \ [WHEN] you were WORking as a < TRANSLAtor > } * { = wh what [KIND] of < DOcu > } { = a3: ** { = [< DOC >] } { \ [< DOcuments >] } { \ [< B: what [KIND] of < DAta > * were } { ? [< OH >] } { ? [< YOU >] } { ? were you were a3: YOU >] mean } ** { \ [< YES >] } { = [< ER >] } { \ [WRITten] < TEXTS > } translating written texts} { = < OR > } { / [SPOken] < TEXTS > }

Declarative questions serve as a means to check whether a participant has concluded or inferred correctly what the previous speaker has said. As the examples show, interviewers use declarative questions to check their presumptions before proceeding and asking another question; whereas interviewees use this question form to check their inference or conclusion before answering a question. In the Corpus, 89.3% of the declarative questions produced by the interviewees function to seek confirmation; only 10.7% function to seek information. The need for the interviewee to ensure that they have understood the questions correctly before providing a response might be the reason for a higher frequency count of declarative questions.

13.3.3.4 Summary of use of questions in Interviews

In Interviews, more than 90% of the questions are produced by the interviewers. Their role in these interactions requires them to ask significantly more questions than the other party. The most frequently identified question forms are wh-questions, followed by yes-no and declarative questions. Interviewers ask distinctly more wh-questions to seek information needed for deciding whether to recruit, or where to place, the candidate. Interviewers also use yes-no questions for seeking detailed information in addition to eliciting a "yes" or "no" response. In the yes-no questions that they produce, they often expect the interviewees to provide information in greater detail, in addition to the response which they expect to be a "yes". Declarative question is the most frequently identified form for interviewees. The need to ensure that they have comprehended the question correctly might prompt interviewees to ask declarative questions to seek confirmation before providing a response. In general, interviewers produce significantly more questions in all of the six forms due to their role in these interactions.

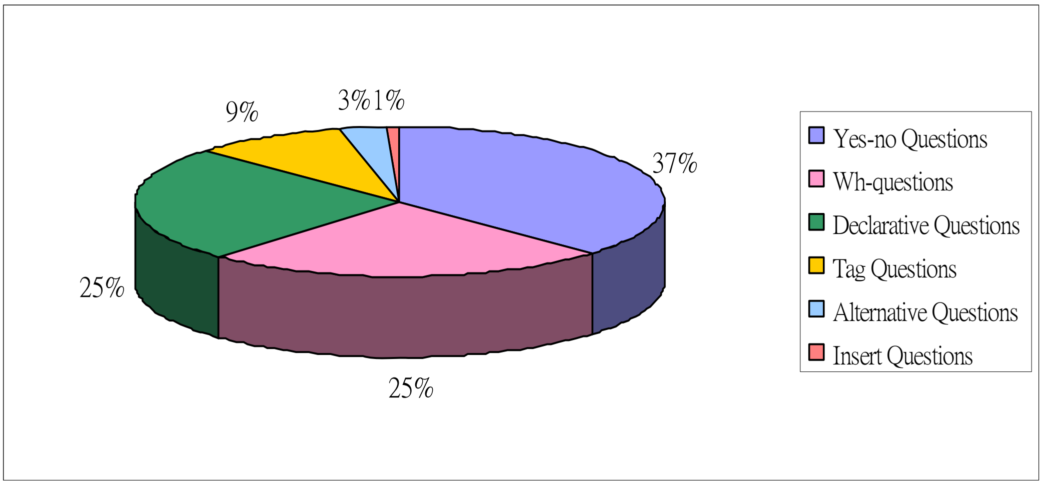
13.4 Meetings

There are three main types of meetings in the Corpus: (1) meetings involving a chairman and other staff, (2) meetings between supervisors and subordinates, and (3) meetings between co-workers in different business and professional settings. The total length of the sub-genre, Meetings, is 199 minutes; 50% belong to the first group, 21.4% to the second, and 28.6% to the third. The description of the three types of meetings is given in the following. Due to the presence of a chairman in the first group of meetings, they are more formal than the other two groups. The formality of the three settings ranks from the (1) meetings involving a chairman and other staff as the most formal type, then (2) meetings between supervisors and subordinates, and the (3) meetings between co-workers as the least formal.

13.4.1 Pattern of use of questions in Meetings

A normalized total of 751 questions (per 100,000 words) are identified in the sub-genre of Meetings (see Figure 13.1). Figure 13.8 shows the distribution of the question forms used in this sub-genre.

Figure 13.8 Distribution of question forms in Meetings



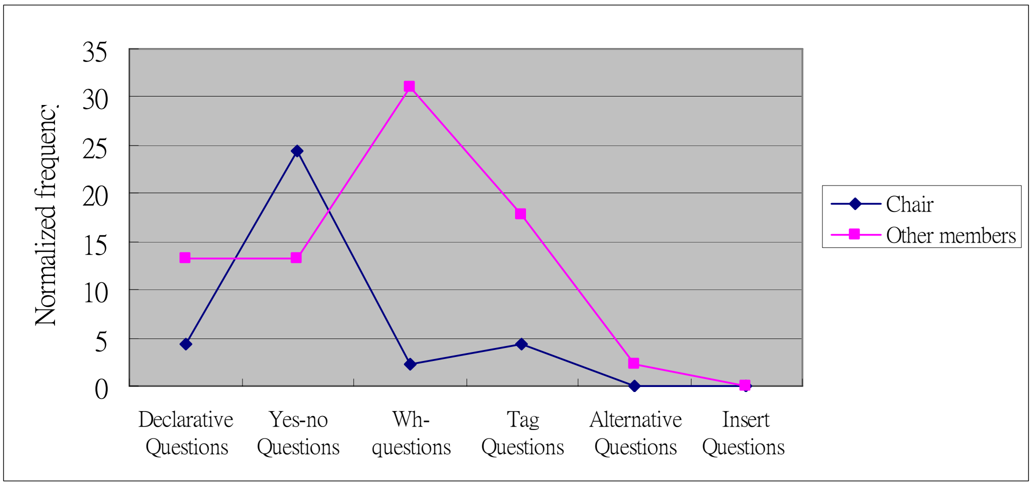
In Meetings, the most frequently produced question form is yes-no questions (37%). The second and third most common question forms are wh-questions and declarative questions, both with the same percentage of 25%. There are significantly fewer questions produced in the form of tag questions and alternative questions.

As introduced earlier, there are three types of meetings in the Corpus. The settings, participants and the distribution of questions produced by different participants in these meetings are discussed in the following sections.

13.4.3 Meetings with a chairman

These meetings are mainly conducted in hotels and sometimes in export companies. These are all management meetings involving the managers of different departments of the business organizations. One of the managers is assigned as the chairman of the meeting and has to make sure that every department reports on its operations. The chairman also makes sure that everything on the agenda has been discussed. He or she often has the power to choose who to speak and when. Figure 13.9 shows the distribution of question forms produced by the two groups of participants in the chaired meetings.

Figure 13.9 Distribution of question forms produced by the chair and other members in Meetings



Since there is only one chair in the meeting and multiple staff attending the meetings, the number of questions produced by the chair is fewer than those produced by the other members even though the chair has more power to initiate an elicitation. Figure 13.9 shows that there are more instances of each of the question forms for the staff except for yes-no questions. Below is an example which is frequently identified in the talk of the chair in the meetings.

Example 13.13

B1: hotel manager (chair of the meeting)

b2, B2: hotel managers

	187	B2: { = [< ^ CHILlier >] than downstairs } { = ((inaudible)) [< _ toMORrow >] } (.) { = [<
	188	ER >] } { = this [WEEK] i've had a < FEW > complaints about } { = [< FOOD >]
	189	temperature today } { \ [< SO >] }
→	190	B1: { = [< D_ >] } { = do you have [< Anything >] }
	191	b2: { = [OH] we will have < ^ THIS > er } { = [STAND] set into < O > p s room } { \ [BY]
	192	< toDAY > } { = with [< OUR >] } { = [< MEMber's >] room } { \ [< MESsage >] }
	193	B1: { = [< Okay >] } { \ [< GOOD >] } { \ [< Okay >] } { = that [< SOUNDS >] good }
	194	{ = thank you [< LET'S >] hope } { \ he gets that ((inaudible)) as [< _ WELL >] }
B023: 187-194		

One of the hotel managers, who is the chairman of the meeting, reports that the room temperature is "chillier" in his restaurant, and that he has a few complaints about the served food being cold. After one of the fellow managers, Speaker B2, has finished reporting about his department to the chair, the chair asks another manager, Speaker b2, in line 190 if there is anything to report. This use of yes-no question is very common in chaired meetings. In these meetings, the chair follows the agenda for all the items to be discussed. He or she also asks the representative of the different departments to give a report. This use of yes-no questions by the chair serves to nominate a participant in the meeting to tell the group the operation of his or her department. This exclusive use of yes-no questions by the chair might explain the higher frequency in these meetings. Similar uses of yes-no questions by the chair are illustrated in the examples below.

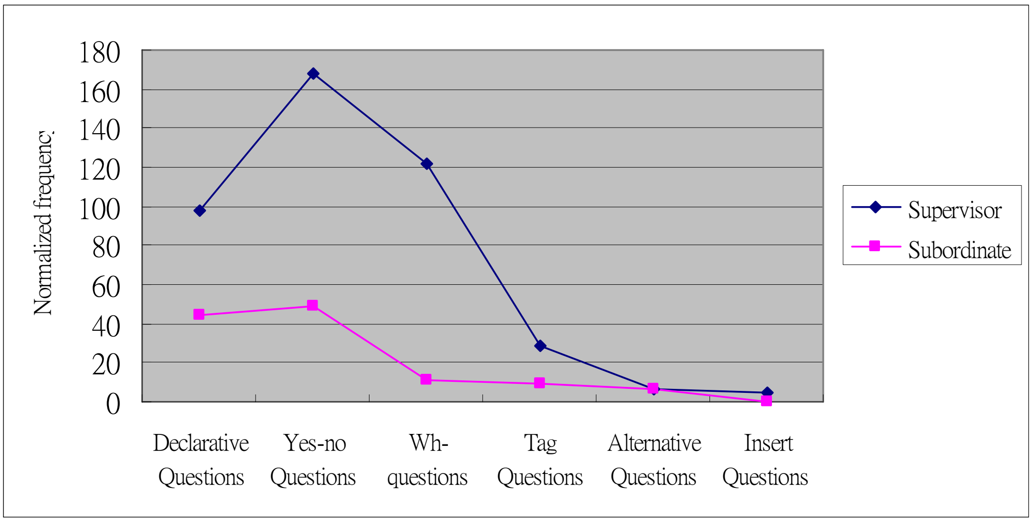
Table 13.5 Examples of yes-no questions produced by the chair of the meetings

Examples	Source
B1: { \ [< _ YEAH >] } { / [< Anything >] else }	B022: 424
a1: { \ [DO] you have Anything < _ ELSE > * ((inaudible)) }	B018: 232
b4: { = [< ERM >] } { = [< Any >] } { / [< NEWS >] } { = on the [< VIdeo >] }	B019:143

13.4.4 Meetings with a supervisor(s)

These meetings take place in a university regarding the progress and administrative work of research projects. In the meetings, there is usually a project leader (sometimes two) and other research staff who work for the project leader. The role of the research project manager is to control the budget, ensuring that the research project is on schedule and progressing; whereas the research assistant has to carry out the tasks assigned (such as collecting data, analyzing data, data entry etc.) and is responsible of other administrative work. Although there is not a formal chairman in these meetings, the assistants report to the project leader, who is the supervisor, the progress for the project and related administrative work. The distribution of question forms produced by the two groups of speakers is presented in Figure 13.10.

Figure 13.10 Distribution of question forms produced by supervisor(s) and subordinate(s) in Meetings



In general, the supervisor(s) of these meetings produces more questions than the subordinate(s). The supervisor(s) produces 3.56 times as many questions as the subordinate(s) in total. Due to the institutional role of the supervisor(s) in these meetings, he or she often asks the subordinate(s) what has been done, and how the project has progressed. Figure 13.10 shows that the supervisor(s) produces more questions than the subordinate in any form. The difference in yes-no (168:49) and wh-questions (122:11) is most significant. This means there are 3.4 times as many yes-no questions than wh-questions. Similar to the meetings with a chair, the supervisor(s) has a higher power status over the subordinates. The supervisor(s) leads and makes sure that items are discussed (although there is no formal agenda, minutes or meeting notes), and thus the supervisor(s) in the meetings uses yes-no questions for similar functions (see Section 13.4.2). Figure 13.10 shows that there are 11 times as many wh-questions in the supervisor(s)' production, its use is illustrated in this section.

Example 13.14

B: research project leader (supervisor)

a2: research assistant (subordinate)

	58	B: { = [< A__'s >] been } { = [REvisiting] the STUdent < presenTAtions > } { = [<
→	59	WHAT >] } { \ [WHAT] was the proportion < LAST > time } { \ [HOW] many
	60	were STUdent < presenTAtions > }
	61	a2: { = [< TWEnty >] three hours }
B060: 58-61		

In Example 13.14, the supervisor of the project asks the subordinate for information about the data collected. He asks the assistant for specific information on the proportions of the data set and for detailed information on the data set for student presentations in lines 59 to 60. It is often the case that the supervisor asks about what tasks, or the details of tasks, that the assistant has done in these meetings. Wh-questions are produced when the supervisor(s) wants to elicit specific or detailed information. The fact that the project leader is the member who manages and ensures that the project is progressing allows him or her to ask wh-questions to seek detailed information of what has been done. The need to obtain specific information might explain why these supervisor(s) produced 10 times more wh-questions than the subordinate(s). Table 13.5 shows more examples of wh-questions produced by supervisor(s) in Meetings.

Table 13.6 Examples of wh-questions produced by supervisor(s) in Meetings

Examples	Source
A: { \ [WHERE] would you PUT the < casSETTE > } (.) { = [JUST] have a < LITtle > } { = and a [< HOLD >] mic } (.) { = [< GOing >] } { = [< INto >] } { = a [< PORtable >] }	B58:139-141
a1: { = [< MM >] } { / [WHO] will SEND this < MEmo > }	B059: 792
a1: { = [HOW] < MAny > } { = [< HOW >] much } { = [how] much < MOney > is }	B059: 845
a1: ** { = [< SO >] } { / [HOW] many < HOURS > } * { = how many [< HOURS >] of } * { \ [< LECture >] }	B060: 141-142
B: { = [< _ oKAY >] } { ? so what } { \ [WHAT] did you want to MENtion about < THOSE > }	B060: 170-171

13.4.4 Meetings between co-workers

These meetings are one-to-one interactions between co-workers (sometimes the participants are from different departments). None of the parties are of a higher rank. Since there is no assignment of a chairman in the meeting and no one is superior to the others, these meetings are less formal compared to the other two groups.

Figure 13.11 Distribution of question forms of co-workers in Meetings

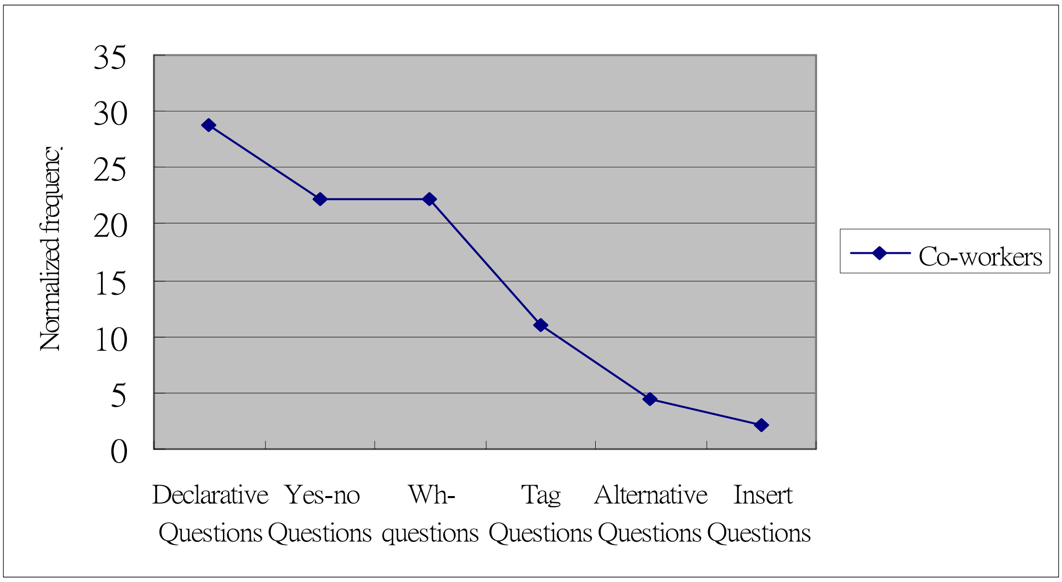
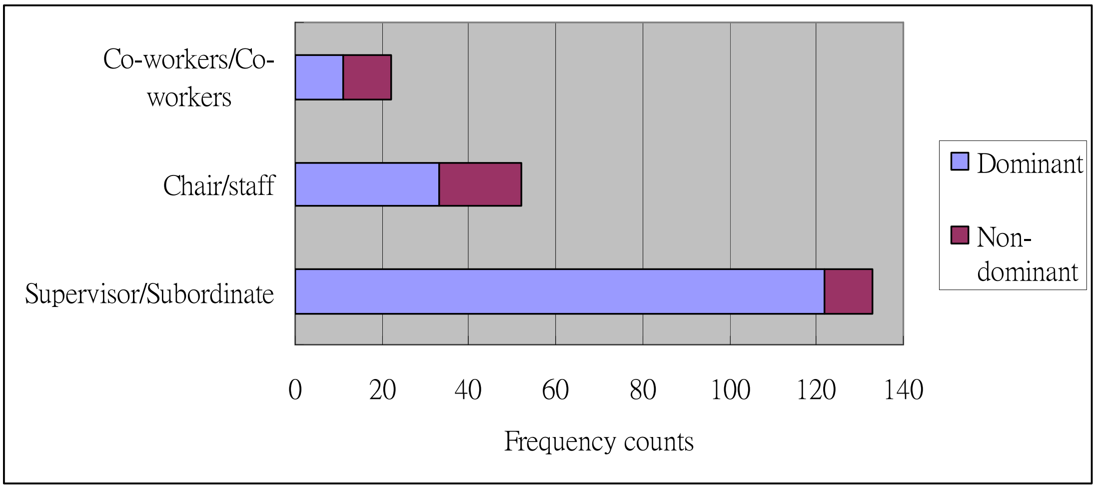


Figure 13.11 shows that there are more declarative questions in the meetings between co-workers. Yes-no questions are not as frequently found as in the meetings with a chair (37 to 22). Since the co-workers are of the same or similar rank, and more importantly with the absence of a chair, it might be possible that fewer yes-no questions are produced in these meetings which might serve to nominate and check whether the other participants have anything to report or add (see 12.3.2). There are fewer wh-questions identified than in the meetings between supervisors and subordinates (133 to 22). As discussed earlier, supervisor(s) produce wh-questions to ask for detailed and specific information on the tasks that the subordinate has carried out. The infrequent use of wh-questions in the meetings between co-workers might be due to their same or similar rank because they might want to avoid certain question forms which are associated with a designated dominant speaker. In the other two types of meetings where there is a chairman or supervisor, it is inherent in their

institutionalized role to elicit new and detailed information from the subordinates. Thus there are more <Q: identify> items to elicit reporting or updating of work progress from the subordinates. This can be performed by wh-questions or sometimes yes-no questions (see discussion on in Sections 13.4.2 and 13.4.3). Figure 13.11b below shows the distribution of wh-questions produced by different participants.

Figure 13.11b Distribution of wh-questions produced by different participants in Meetings



In Figure 13.11b, the number of wh-questions produced by the co-workers is divided into two to allow a relative comparison between the dominant and non-dominant speakers in Meetings. It is found that there are more wh-questions produced by the dominant (80%) than the non-dominant (20%) speakers. The dominant speakers produce more wh-question could be due to their inherent role to find out specific information. And conversely, the institutional role of the non-dominant speakers is more likely to answer than to produce wh-questions, thus resulting in a lower frequency.

Unlike the other two types of meetings discussed earlier, declarative questions are the most common question form in this type of meeting, Meetings between co-workers. A declarative question produced in a meeting between co-workers is illustrated below.

Example 13.15

A: co-worker a: co-worker

	72	A: ** { / ((inaudible)) [< YEAH >] }
	73	sort of LIKE a [< MOdule >] } { = [< AND >] er } { = [< WE >] } { = [< ER >] } { = [< IT
	74	>] } { \ it [< JUST >] } { \/ [HAS] < Everything > } { = [< ON >] } { = [< X >] p } { / [< ^
	75	TEACH >] book } { = [< UM >] } { ? [< WE >] er er } { \ she [^ HAsn't] GOT back to < ME
	76	> } { \ about the [< TIming >] } { = but we [WANT] to get it < DONE > } { / on the [SEcond]
	77	of < JUly > } { = [< ER >] } { = [< THE >] } { \ it's the called [WEB] < IT > } { ? [< THAT
	78	>] it } { = [< IT'S >] } { = [< ^ SOME >] sort like } { \ a [NET] < MEEting > } { / but you
	79	[GO] to a < WEB > } (.) * { = [< ER >]}
	80	A: ** { \ [< OH >] } { \ i [< SEE >] } { = [< OH
→	81	>] } { = [< oKAY >] } { = [< SO >] like } { = you're [< ^ THERE >] and that } { \ [<
	82	PHYsically >] }
	83	a: { \ [< YEAH >] } { = [< AND >] er } { = [< ER >] } { \ [< ^ B__ >] } { = [< I >] don't } { =
	84	have [^ YOU] been to new YORK < ^ beFORE > } { / [< HAven't >] you } …
B147: 72-84		

In Example 13.15, the co-workers are discussing the training that the company is going to provide to its employees. Speaker a, one of the co-workers, is explaining what the training is about and describing how the new "net meeting" works in lines 73-79. Speaker A then asks Speaker a a declarative question in lines 81-82 checking on her understanding of how a "net meeting" works. In these less formal meetings between co-workers (when compared with the other two types of meetings), there is less reporting and asking for reporting. Instead, as illustrated in Example 13.15, the co-workers share information about the progress of their work. This might provide the opportunity for one of the parties to seek confirmation on his or her inference or a summary of what has been said. Table 13.7 shows more examples of the use of declarative questions in meetings between co-workers.

Table 13.7 Examples of declarative questions produced by co-workers in Meetings

Examples	Source
b: { = [< ER >] } { / and [< THEN >] } { \ issue the [< LETter >] } { = [< BUT >] } { = [< ER >] } { = you are [< NOT >] in hon } { / [ER] you are NOT in hong < ^ KONG > } A: { \ [SO] you issued it < Anyway > } { \ [< THAT'S >] fine } * { \ [< THAT'S >] fine }	B074: 43-45
b: { = [< ER >] } { / her [LAST] day will be < JUNE > } { \ [ER] < sevenTEENTH > }	B074: 31
A: { / with the [< WEBsite >] }	B112: 74

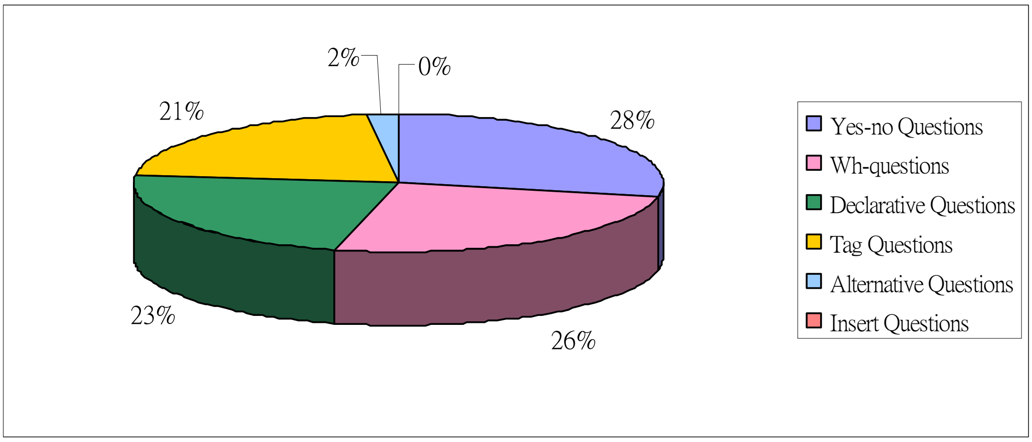
13.4.5 Summary of use of questions in Meetings

Yes-no questions are found to be most common in Meetings (37%), followed by wh- and declarative questions (both 25%). In the three types of meetings that this study has examined, there is a preference for different question forms due to the difference in the roles of the participants. In the meetings where there is a chair, there are more yes-no questions. Most of these questions are produced by the chair of the meetings. The higher frequency in yes-no questions in these meetings could be explained by the chair's role to nominate speakers and the matters to be discussed. In the meetings between supervisor(s) and subordinates, due to the power difference between the two parties, similar results to the chaired meetings are found. There are more yes-no questions in the production of the supervisor(s) who has a higher power status. In addition, the supervisor(s) produces more wh-questions to seek specific information and details of the tasks that the subordinate has carried out. In the meetings between co-workers, the most frequently identified form of question is declarative questions (the most frequently identified form of questions is yes-no questions for both meetings with a chair and supervisor(s)). With one of the co-workers reporting the progress of work, the other co-workers ask declarative questions to seek confirmation on the inference or conclusion drawn. The suggested rationale for the use of different question forms is tentative, further research studies could be carried out with a larger corpus of different types of meetings.

13.5 Informal Office Talk

The Informal Office Talk is one-to-one interactions between co-workers which take place in their workplace. These co-workers are not involved solely in the "business" of their jobs; they are rather discussing with their colleagues in their workplace, job-related things as well as issues related to their private lives and other things outside work. The total length of Informal Office Talk is about 120 minutes. Figure 13.12 shows the distribution of question forms identified in this sub-genre.

Figure 13.12 Distribution of question forms in Informal Office Talk



There is an almost even spread of yes-no questions, wh-questions, declarative questions and tag questions, 28%, 26%, 23%, and 21% respectively. Alternative questions are rarely found and there are no insert questions in Informal Office Talk.

As discussed earlier, these are one-to-one interactions which involved co-workers. The participants in the interactions have longstanding relationships prior to the collection of the data, it can therefore be assumed that they are familiar with the accent of their co-workers. Given that these are interactions between two participants taking place in the workplace, it can therefore be assumed that participants are more easily heard due to the acoustic environment. These two factors might be the reasons for the absence of insert questions in this sub-genre.

When comparing the use of question forms in Informal Office Talk with the other sub-genres, a different pattern is identified. In the other sub-genres, it is common to find higher frequency counts on declarative, yes-no and wh-questions. In Informal Office Talk, it is found that there is a relatively higher frequency of tag questions compared to the other sub-genres. The frequency count of tag questions is indeed similar to those of the other question forms (21%). The use of tag questions is illustrated by Example 13.16.

Example 13.16

a, B: co-workers

	48	a: { = and then before [< ^ CHRISTmas >] } { = we have a [< PART >] time } { / erm
	49	[< GUY >] } { = [< COMing >] in } { = [< HE >] } { = he'll [< STAY >] here for }
	50	{ = [< ^ THREE >] months } { = [< AND >] then } { = [< _ ER >] } { / [^ TWO]
	51	weeks < aGO > } { = we have another [< PART >] time guy } { = [< ^ COMing >] }
	52	{ ? and then } { = er he'll [< ALso >] stay until } { = [< MARCH >] when we } { = [<
	53	FInish >] the } { = [< CAMpaign >] } { = [< AND >] } * { = [< ^ YES >] }
→	54	B: ** { = [< BUT >] they } { \
	55	they're [^ PART] time but they're working < FULL > time } { \ are [< THEY >] }
	56	a: { \ er [< NO >] } { ? er they } { = er they're [< ^ WORking >] full time } { / [<
	57	everyDAY >] }
	58	B: * { \ [< YEAH >] }
B075: 48-58		

The two co-workers are discussing the staff arrangements in their department, in lines 48-53 Speaker a tells Speaker B about the temporary staff that has come to work in her department. Speaker B then asks a tag question "but they they're working part time but they're working full time are they" in lines 54-55. Speaker B chooses fall tone on the tag question to project a context that the information presented has to be negotiated. He invites Speaker a to concur with his conclusion drawn by choosing mid termination. Although Speaker a responded by beginning the utterance with "no" in line 56, she concurs with Speaker B by saying "er they're working full time everyday" in line 57. The table below shows more examples of tag questions in Informal Office Talk.

Table 13.8 Examples of tag questions in Informal Office Talk

Examples	Source
B: { \ you’ve [< ^ BEEN >] there have you } * { \ [< camBOdia >] }	B075: 107
B: { = [< UM >] } (.) { \ [YOU’RE] in charge of your < _ TEAM > now } (.) { / [< RIGHT >] }	B113: 93-94
a: ** { \ [< YEAH >] } { \ [< OH >] } { = [< ALright >] then } { = [< YOU >] know } { = [< YOU >] } { = [YOU] saw < THOSE > er } { = [< reTRENCHment >] things } { = [reSTRUCturing] things going < ON > } { \ you know for the [PAST] two < YEARS > } { = [^ YOU’VE] been HERE for < ALmost > a } { \/ a [YEAR] and a < HALF > right }	B146: 29-33
a: { \ [^ THAT] is a proFESsional < enVIronment > } (.) * { = is that [< RIGHT >] }	B146: 859
a1: { \ i [< KNOW >] } { \ [< YEAH >] } { \/ there’s a [LOT] of < CHANges > right }	B148: 173

The use of tag questions is common in Informal Office Talk. These discourses are characterized as informal, relatively less goal-oriented, and there is no agenda to be followed. As Biber et al (1999: 213) find, 25% of all the questions identified in their Conversation corpus are produced in the form of tag questions. This suggests that Informal Office Talk is comparatively similar to those of conversations. This might explain the higher percentage of tag questions identified in Informal Office Talk. Further studies could compare the discourses of Informal Office Talk and Conversation and examine the use of other question forms in these two genres.

13.6 Q&A Sessions

Presentations and announcements are monologues during which only the presenter talks. But it is a convention that there are question and answer sessions following the monologue. In this Corpus, there are two types of Q&A Sessions: Q&A Sessions after company announcements, and the other one is Q&A Sessions during presentations. And the total length of this sub-genre is 149 mins.

13.6.1 Q&A Sessions after announcements

The announcements in the Corpus are announcements of annual results of banks and listed companies. There is usually a team representing the company, with the chief executive officer (CEO) who is always the presenter. In the audience, there are analysts from investment banks, international financial journalists and local journalists. After the announcements, the CEO or the master of ceremonies, invites the audience when it is time for questions. This means that there is a formal transition from the announcement part to the Q&A Sessions part (see Example 13.17 below). During these Q&A sessions, a member of the audience can produce a question when he or she is nominated. He or she then identifies him or herself (providing own name and affiliation) before asking a question.

Example 13.17

b2: presenter (CEO of a leading local bank)

→	746	b2: { \ [< YEAH >] } { \ i [< ^ GUESS >] this's er } { = the [< TIME >] } { = to
	747	[Open] up for Any < QUEStions > }
B094: 746-747		

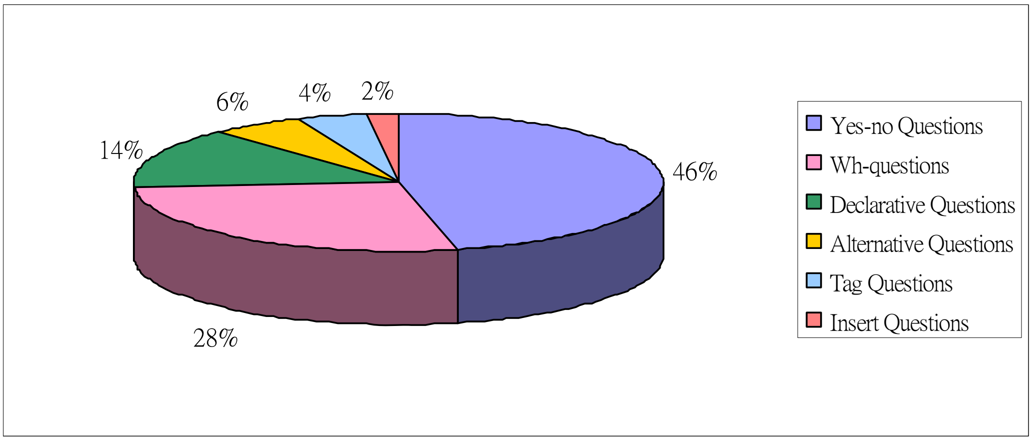
13.6.2 Q&A Sessions during presentations

Another type of Q&A Sessions are incorporated in the presentations. These are presentations given by companies or professional organizations which provide, for example, training for professionals. The presenters are experts in the field and the audience mainly comprises of a variety of professionals who are interested in obtaining information about the professional world. These business seminars with an extended Q&A session are more interactive, as compared to the Q&A sessions after announcements. The presenters invite and welcome questions to be asked at any time during the presentations. A member of the audience does not need to wait to be nominated before asking a question. There is not a formal Q&A session, thus there may be the absence of the formal transition from the presentation to the Q&A Session.

13.6.3 Pattern of use of questions in Q&A Sessions

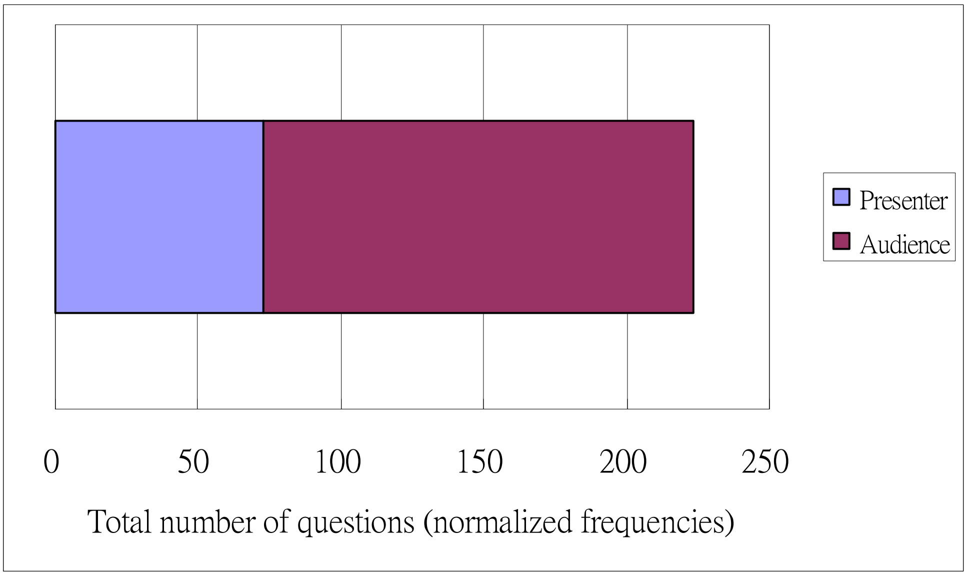
A normalized total of 224 questions per 100,000 words are identified in Q&A Sessions. Figure 13.13 shows the distribution of question forms.

Figure 13.13 Distribution of question forms in Q&A Sessions



In Q&A Sessions, the most frequently produced question form is yes-no questions (46%), followed by wh-questions (28%) and declarative questions (14%). There are more alternative questions than tag questions which is the reverse of all of the other sub-genres. Figure 13.14 shows the distribution of the questions produced by the two groups of speakers.

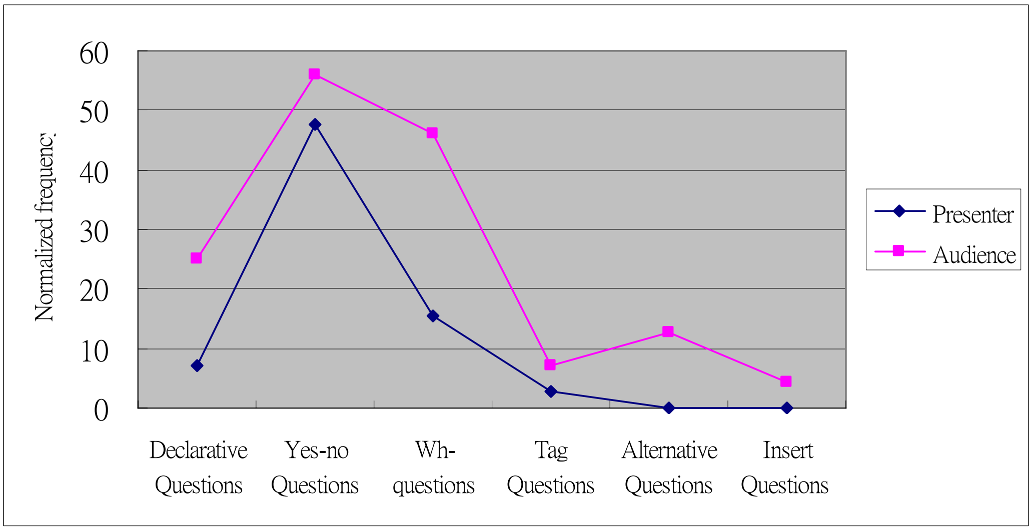
Figure 13.14 Distribution of questions produced by presenter and audience in Q&A Sessions (normalized frequencies)



Of the 224 questions identified, 67.5% are produced by the audience and 32.5% by the presenter. In these Q&A Sessions, the presenter is the participant who is providing information which changes the world view of the audience.

The first communicative goal is for the audience to ask questions to seek new information. In addition, these Q&A Sessions are to allow the audience to ask questions when information presented has not been clear, or when additional or more specific information is required. These two communicative goals of Q&A Sessions explain why the greater number of questions is identified in the audience's talk.

Figure 13.15 Distribution of question forms produced by presenter and audience in Q&A Sessions



As Figure 13.15 shows, a higher frequency count is obtained for each of the question forms in the audience's talk. A similar pattern for the preference for certain question forms is identified for the two groups of speakers. However, all the alternative and insert questions are produced by the audience. Also, there is a slightly higher percentage of wh-questions in the audience's talk.

Focus is on the use of yes-no and alternative questions in this sub-genre. As discussed earlier (see Section 13.1, Figure 13.2), the most common question form is yes-no questions in this sub-genre and there is a relatively higher frequency of alternative questions than in other sub-genres. Illustrations of the use of these question forms are discussed with examples.

In Example 13.18, after the CEO of a leading local bank announces the annual results of the company, the audience is invited to ask questions. A financial analyst from an investment bank is nominated to ask a question.

Example 13.18

a1: financial analyst

	336	a1: { = [< ER >] } { \ [S__] < N__ > } { \ from [D__] < BANK > } { = [< ER >] } { \ i've
	337	[< ^ THREE >] questions erm } { = [< FIRST >] one related to } { \ the [SALE] of
	338	mutual fund < FEES > } { = it [OCCURS] to have < FALlen > off } (.) * { = [< MUtual
	339	b1: ** { = the < ^ SALE > of }
→	340	>] funds } { \ [< _ FEE >] } { = [< AND >] } { \ [THAT] appears to have
	341	FALlen off QUITE a < BIT > in } { \ [SEcond] < HALF > } { \ [COMpared] to
	342	FIRST < HALF > } { = [< ER >] } { = [COULD] you < exPLAIN > } { \ the
	343	[REAson] for the < FALL > and } { = [WHAT'S] the outlook for < ^ THIS >
	344	year } { = [< ERM >] } { = [< SEcondly >] } { = [< ER >] } { \ [LOOking] at the
	345	GROSS new < proVIsion > } { = [< ER >] } { \ [< beFORE >] recoveries } { \ and [<
	346	reLEAses >] } { = er [LOOKS] like it's < ALso > out } { = [< QUITE >] sub } { =
	347	[< subsTANtially >] } { \ in [SEcond] < HALF > } { \ [Over] FIRST < HALF > }
	348	{ = [< ER >] } { = [COULD] you < ^ GUIDE > us as to } { = the [SOURCE] of
	349	< deTErioration > } { = er [< IS >] there any } { \ [ASset] QUAlity in the <
	350	outLOOK > } { = [< FOR >] } { = [< ER >] } { = [GOing] < FORward > } { = [<
	351	AND >] } { = [< LASTly >] } { = [< THE >] } { = [< ^ reSTRUCture >] loans } { \
	352	[ALso] at the < SAME > time } { \ [apPEARS] to have GONE up as < WELL > }
	353	{ = and could you [< ALso >] } { = [GUIDE] us as to < WHERE > } { \ the
	354	[inCREAses] < COME > from } { = [< THANK >] you }
B108: 336-354		

Example 13.18 shows that the financial analyst from the investment bank, after being nominated, gives her name and affiliation and states clearly the number of questions that she is about to ask. One purpose of nominating participants from the audience is to ensure that different participants are allowed the opportunity to ask questions. Thus it is always the case that the same participant is not nominated more than once in the same Q&A Session. As a result, the nominated participant does not produce a single question; he or she would produce a series of questions so as to make the most of the opportunity. This explains why there are multiple questions in one turn and the higher frequency of questions identified in the audience's production. This is shown in the series of questions produced by the financial analyst in Example 13.18. In lines 342-344, the financial analyst asks a yes-no question "could you explain the reason for the fall and what's the outlook for this year". Although this form of question invites a "yes" or "no" response, a mere "yes" or "no" response does

not completely answer the question. This yes-no question functions as <Q: identify> (see Chapter 10) and invites the presenter to provide the overall rate of the mutual fund fees for this year and to justify that rate. As Brown and Levinson (1985: 173) states, this use of a yes-no question employs a politeness strategy to “be pessimistic”. “This strategy gives redress to the (presenter’s) negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of the audience’s speech act obtain” (ibid: 173). This use of yes-no questions is very common in Q&A Sessions, as the questioners in the audience want to show respect by being polite in the interaction. The audience’s use of this redressive form is also more likely to get the required response from the presenter. In addition, they employ this question form to “put words into the speaker’s mouth”. It can be seen that this use of yes-no questions is a reason for its high frequency. One third of the yes-no questions function as <Q: identify>. Arguably, the yes-no questions which serve to <Q: identify> could have been produced in the form of wh-questions instead. In other words, this use of yes-no questions might lower the frequency of wh-questions. Table 13.9 below shows more examples of the use of yes-no questions functioning as <Q: identify> by members of the audience.

Table 13.9 Examples of yes-no questions in Q&A Sessions

Examples		Source
B1:	{ = [< ER >] } { \ [< P__ >] s__ } { \ from [C] s f < B > } { = a [^ QUEStion] < aBOUT > } { = [< liQUIDity >] management } { = you [OBviously] had to < WORK > } { = [< FIXED >] income } { = [< ER >] } { = [MARkets] REcently aggressively to < TRY > and } { = [< mainTAIN >] } { = the [< REvenue >] side } { = [< AND >] } { \ er [SHIFted] QUITE significantLY into one to FIVE years < seCUrities > } { = [COULD] you < GIVE > us some } { \ [< COlour >] } { = [< ON >] } { = the [NAture] of the inVESTments that have been < MADE > there } { = [< ERM >] } { \ the [< exTENT >] } { = [< ERM >] of } { / [CORporate] lending < THERE > and } { \ which [COUNtries] that’s < IN > } { = erm [< AND >] } { = i [NOTE] that MUCH of the < GROWTH > } { \ has been [BANKS] and other FInancial < insti * TUtions > }	B108: 414-424
B2:	{ \ [< YES >] } { \ [J__] w__ from u b < S > } { \ you’ve [^ alREAdy] got a very proGRESsive dividend < POlicy > but you } { \ [ALso] have a very < STRONG > } { \ [< CApital >] base } { \ with [eLEven] point NINE percent	B108: 456-461

tier < ONE > ratio } { = do you see [< Any >] } { = [< SCOPE >] to } { = er [< BETter >] } { = [< Utilise >] } { = any [< Other >] th } { = [TYPES] of like HYbrid < CApital > } { = or [< Anything >] to } { = [reSTRUCture] your BAlance sheet in the < FUture > }	
a1: { = good [< AFternoon >] } { = [< WHEN >] } { = [< C >] l p said that } { = [< ITS >] } { = [< TARget >] remains } { = to [< HAVE >] } { = [ONE] third of the < GROUP'S > } { = [< TOTAL >] earnings } { = [< UM >] } { = [CONtributed] from < CHIna > and } { = [< REgional >] } { = [< POWer >] } { = [< BUSInesses >] } { = [< BY >] } { = the year [TWO] thousand and < FIVE > } { = are you [< ^ BAsing >] that } { = on your [eXISting] < portFOlio > } { = [OR] inCLUding contriBUtions from < POWer > plants } { = [< ARISE >] } { = [aRISing] from < FUture > } { \ [< acquiSItions >] } { = [< UM >] } { = so could you [< TELL >] us like } { = [< IF >] } { \ if [< NOT >]} { = [HOW] < MUCH > } { = mega [WATT] of any adDItional < caPAcity > } { = you [< NEED >] } { = to [< acQUIRE >] } { = [< beFORE >] c l p } { = [CAN] reach < ITS > er } { = [< ONE >] third } { \ [< TARget >] } { \ [< THANK >] you }	B155: 528-539
b3: { = [< ER >] } { = i'm [< ^ HOping >] } { = [speCIfically] < ERM > } { = [ANdrew] and peter is < THERE > any } { = [CHANces] < THAT > } { = you could [< ACtually >] } { = [< UP >] } { \ your [< STICker >] } { = or [WALK] < BACK > } { = tai [WAH'S] ((inaudible)) THING was LOOking < AT > er } { = [< ^ reDUCing >] its } { = its own [< STAKE >] erm } { = [< DO >] } { = do you have any [COMments] on < THAT > }	B156: 452-457
b3: { = [< ERM >] } { = [WOULD] you with < reGARDS > to } { = your [< SALES >] to } { = to [< CHIna >] } { = would [< YOU >] be able to } { = [< ROUGHly >] er } { \ break [< DOWN >] how much } { = [< beCAUSE >] } { = [< ((inaudible)) >] } { \ [SHOULD] go p p < A > } { = and [HOW] much would actually be < SOLD > to } { = [< GUANGdong >] } { = [< ER >] } { / [< ^ GRID >] }	B156: 472-476

As discussed in the last section, one-third of the yes-no questions perform the function of <Q: identify>, which can also be performed by wh-questions. Figure 13.15 shows that wh-questions are the second most frequent form of question produced. Example 13.19 illustrates the use of a wh-question produced by a member of the audience in a Q&A Session. And Table 13.10 provides more examples of wh-questions in Q&A Sessions.

Example 13.19

a: financial analyst b1: presenter (CEO of a leading local bank)

	748	a: { = [< JACK >] } { = just [< NOW >] er } { = [WHAT] you are TALking about is
	749	< MAINly > er } { = [< TARgeting >] } { = on [< THOSE >] companies which }
	750	{ = [< MAnufactured >] } { \ [< PROducts >] }
	751	b1: { = [< SURE >] }
→	752	a: { = [< ^ WHAT >] if } { \ [LIKE] er fiNANcial < instiTUtion > where } { = [<
	753	THE >] } { = [< _ ERM >] } { = [< THEY >] } { = [< MAY >] be } { = [< ^
	754	SEventy >] }{ = [< PERcent >] } { \ of the [< COST >] } { = is [< Salary >] }
	755	b1: { \ [< ^ SURE >] } { \ i'll [TELL] you what we < DO > } { = [< ER >] } { = i can
	756	[< Only >] take } { \/ an [< eXAMple >] okay } { = [< ER >] } { \ [ONE] of our
	757	biggest CUStomers is the ROyal bank of < _ SCOTland > } { / [< oKAY >] } { = so
	758	[< WHAT >] they do } { = is they [BID] on < TEMporary > labour } { = they [<
	759	DID >] on paper } { = [< PROmotional >] items } { \/ [< YOU >] know } { ? th }
	760	{ \/ for [eXAMple] SEventy < perCENT > right } …
B094: 748-760		

Table 13.10 Examples of wh-questions identified in Q&A Sessions

Examples	Source
B3: { \ [< _ HI >] } { = it's [S__] h__ of < ^ M__ > } { = [< ERM >] } { = three [< QUEStions >] } { = [< FIRST >] } { = on your [NEW] < proVIsions > } { = [< CAN >] you } { = [BE] more specific in < TERMS > of } { = [< HOW >] much was } { = for [UNsecured] < conSUmer > lending } * { = [< AND >]} b1: ** { = [< HOW >] much } { / [< SORry >] } B3: { = [HOW] much was FOR < unseCURED > } { = consumer [< LENding >] } { = [SUCH] as < CREdit > cards } { / and [PERsonal] < LOANS > } b1: { \ the [< BULK >] of it } { \ i [DON'T] give the < BREAKdowns > } { \ but the [< BULK >] of it } { \ is [< REALly >] } (.) * { ? ((inaudible)) } B3: ** { = [< HOW >] about } { = did you [< HAVE >] to make } { = [< PROvisions >] for er } { = [< COLlateral >] } { = [< ^ SHORT >] fall } { = in [TERMS] of the FALling PROperty * < MARket > }	B108:495-507
a2: { = [< ^ WHAT >] } { = [WHAT] kind of < TEAchers > } { = [< ARE >] you } { = [< TRAIning >] }	B121: 1583-1584
a2: { / [< NO >] } { \ [< YEAH >] } ((inaudible)) { / [< ALright >] } { \ [^ THOSE] who said < YES > } { \ [< WHY >] } { = i'm [< FORcing >]you to give } { = you	B125: 166-170

know [< GET >] } { \ [beLOW] the < SERvice > } { = [< ^ WHY >]do you } { \ [GET] this < imPRESsion > } (.) { = [< Anybody >] } (.) { \ [HOW] do you < FEEL > that } { = [< THIS >] is a } { \ [CIvil] < ^ SERvant > }	
b3: { = yeah i [< ^ JUST >] } { = [ONE] < QUEStion > on } { = on [< INdia >] } { = [< ER >] } { = [< THE >] } { \ [DEBT] and equity < MIX > from } { \ g [< PAD >] } { \ i mean [HOW] much of THAT that you are < conSOlidating > } { = [< AND >] } { \ what was the [TOtal] < _ consideRAtion > } { = [< THE >] } { = [< E >] v }	B155: 565-568

Figure 13.15 shows that there are more alternative questions than tag questions in Q&A Sessions but this is not the case for all the other sub-genres. The use of alternative questions is illustrated by Example 11.20 below.

Example 13.20

b3: financial analyst B: presenter (CEO of a leading bank)

	823	b3: { = [< JUST >] } { = [< JUST >] on } { = on [< CHIna >] } { = [< UM >] } { ? i
	824	[< THINK >] i'm ((inaudible)) and } { = and [SAYing] that the BEIjing < GROW
	825	> over to this j v } { \ [NON] < exCLUsive > } { = [< UM >] } { = in [< WHICH
	826	>] case } { = the new [< PLAN >]} { \ [GIven] the opporTUnities that the
→	827	deVEloping in < CHIna > } { = [< TO >] } { = [USE] that < J > v } { ? as a } { ?
	828	as a } { = a [VEhicle] for exPANsion < ^ MAINly > } { = [< OR >] } { = do you
	829	[< SEE >] that as } { = it's [< BEing >] } { = [< COMplementary >] to } { = [<
	830	Other >] } { \ [THIRD] < PARty > } { \ [acquiSItions] that you < MAKE > }
	831	B: { = er your [< CORrect >] answer that is } { = is a [NON] < exCLUsive > } { \
	832	[< _ arRANGEment >] } { = we [< HAVE >] with } { = with [< ((inaudible))
	833	>] } { = er < [WE >] } { = we [^ VAlue] them < VEry > much as } { \ as a [<
	834	PARTner >] } { = you know [< WE >] would } { = [< LOOK >] to do } { =
	835	[WHATever] we look to < DO > in } { \ [< CHIna >] } { \ we [LOOK] to DO
	836	with strong < PARTners > } { \ [SUCH] as < ((inaudible)) > } { = [< UM >] } { =
	837	[< AND >] } { = you know as we [^ exCLUsively] < WORK > with them } { =
	838	you know to [< exTEND >] their } { = a [< MAjor >] } { \/ ((inaudible)) may [<
	839	NOT >] be } { = [< UM >] } { = we would [< ^ HOPE >] to be out of } { = you
	840	[< KNOW >] to } { \ [conTINue] to < inVEST > } { \ [toGEther] with < THEM
	841	> } { \ [BUT] it wouldn't be on < exCLUsive > bases }
B155: 823-841		

In Example 13.20, the financial analyst asks an alternative question in lines 825-830, in which he does not only present two alternatives, but also two different assumptions and asks the presenter's view on what has been presented. This use of an alternative question is more complicated than those identified in Service Encounters (see Section 13.2.3.5), since the presenter cannot respond to the question by just choosing one of the alternatives presented. He also needs to elaborate on his view (the company's view) on the particular aspect (that is the alternative chosen). For this alternative question, the presenter responds by saying that they view the new plan as working with partners in line 833. He then continues to explain how they work with China Development Bank as a partner. This use of alternative questions does not only restrict the presenter to choose an alternative, but also prompts the presenter to choose a stance and then gives his or her comment regarding matters with the chosen stance. It is often the case that the presenter would want to be cautious in his or her responses to avoid an impact on the valuation of the company (since the presenter, as the CEO of the company, represents the company's view). Financial analysts and journalists probably deliberately make use of this question form to constrain the presenter to take a stance on a particular issue.

More examples of alternative questions, which have the same function as those identified in Service Encounters, are shown in Table 13.11.

Table 13.11 Examples of alternative questions in Q&A Sessions

Examples	Source
b1: ** { \ [^ WHICH] < ONE > is it } { \ [WHICH] < ONE > is it } * { \ i feel [< SORry >] } { ? i i } { \ which [< PAGE >] } { \ do b2: ** { ? which page } { = which [< PAGE >] do you } you [< TALking >] about } (.) { = [< IF >] it's } { = [< FOrex >] } { \ [< TRAding >] } { = i [< THINK >] } { \ are you [TALking] about FOrex < TRAding > or } { \ or [< GENEral >] } * { \ the [TREAsury] < INcome > }	B108: 585-590
A1: { = [< V_ >] just } { = [< ONE >] } { \ [QUICK] < clarifiCAtion > } { = [< ON >] er } { \ [FOrex] < PROfits > } { = it rose [< QUITE >] er } { \ [QUITE] < subsTANtially > about } { = [THREE] hundred and twenty eight MILlion in the second < HALF > versus } { / [TWO] eighty in the < FIRST > half i think } { = [< IS >] } { = is [< ^ THAT >] } { = all [CUStomer] < TRAding > } { = or is [< THERE >] some } * { = [< ER >] } { = [prepaRAtory] < _ FOrex > }	B108: 573-578

B: … ((inaudible)) { ? [< oKAY >] } { = i'm [^ NOT] going to go into interNAtional < BUSIness > } ((laugh)) (.) { \ [THIS] is < ^ CRAzy > } (.) { = [< SAY >] no } { = when the [ANswer] < IS > no } { = [< alLOWS >] for } { = [< efFIcient >] } { = [< MORE >] } { = [< ACcurate >] } { \ [< communiCAtion >] now } { \ you remember [THAT] example with < D ^ > } (.) { \ [D__] or < _ D__ > } (.) { = is it [< ^ D__ >] } { \ or [< _ D__ >] }	B123: 1117-1122
a6: { = you [< MENtion >] about us ((inaudible))} { = being [< WARM >] } { \ or [< COOL >] } { \ [< _ SO >] } { = we [< GO >] with } { \ the [< WARM >] or cool colour }	B125: 1804-1806
b5: { = [COUple] of < QUEStions > } { = [< _ FIRST >] of all } { = [< ON >] } { = the [LOSses] that you've HAD on < interNAtional > } { \ [parTIcularly] in the asian PAcific < REgion > } { = of [THREE] hundred and < EIGHteen > } { \ [< MILlion >] } { = [< _ UM >] } { = [^ preSUmably] a LARGE element of < THAT > is } { = [< LINKED >] to } { = the [< perFORmance >] of ((inaudible)) } { \ in [< ausTRAlia >] } { = [^ WHAT] < WOULD > um } { = [< ((inaudible)) >] } { = into [< PROfit >] } { = in [TWO] thousand < TWO > } { ? is it } { = [REALly] a function of BLUE PRIces heading < HIGHer > } { = [< OR >] } { = is it a [< FUNCtion >] } { \ that you are [ACtually] going to SELL more < elecTRIcity > }	B155: 600-608

Two percent of the questions produced are in the form of insert questions. All the insert questions are produced by the presenter in Q&A Sessions during presentations. In the Q&A Sessions after announcements, which are more formal, acoustic equipment is also set up for the audience. However, in Q&A Sessions during presentations, acoustic equipment is only made available to the presenters, hence when the audience asks a question or gives a comment, it is very often that the presenter cannot hear clearly what has been said. This might explain the uneven distribution of insert questions identified in the Q&A Sessions.

13.6.4 Summary of use of questions in Q&A Sessions

In Q&A Sessions, the participants in the audience are found to produce more questions than the presenter, probably due to the institutional roles of participants in these discourses. In this sub-genre, it is the presenter who possesses new information which could enlarge the convergence between the speaker and the hearer, it is inherent in the audience's role to ask questions to seek new, more detailed, and specific information, resulting in the higher frequency counts in the audience's production of questions.

This phenomenon, however, does not lead to a higher frequency in wh-questions. In fact, yes-no questions are the most frequent form. One third of the yes-no questions perform the function of <Q: identify>, which explain the higher frequency counts of this question form and a lower frequency count of wh- than yes-no questions. In this sub-genre, there are more alternative than tag questions which is the opposite of other sub-genres. The alternative questions are typically produced as attempts to constrain the presenter to choose a stance and then elaborate on it. The presenter is likely to be perceived as not having answered the question completely if he or she does not elaborate on the stance chosen. Yes-no questions which function to identify also serve to constrain the presenter stance when answering questions (as shown by Example 13.18).

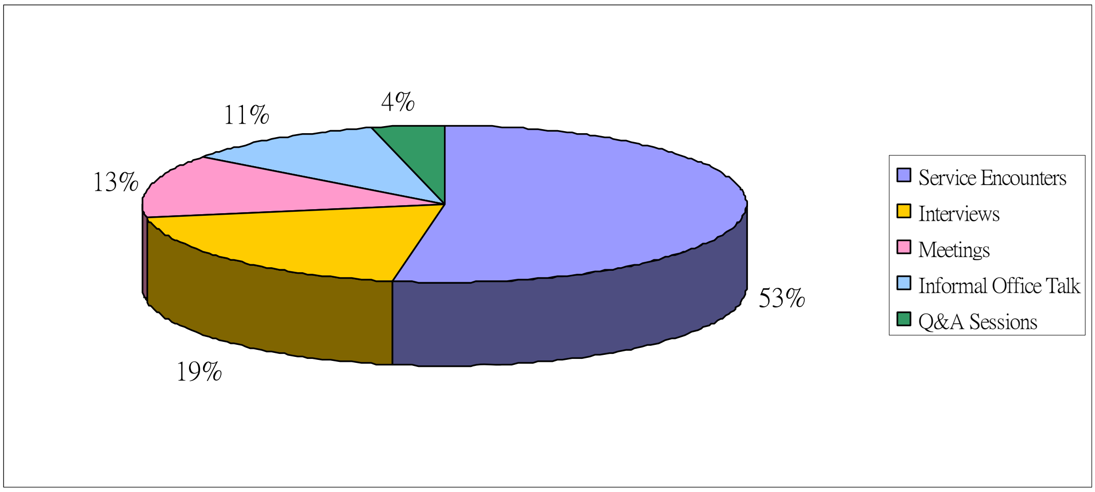
Due to the large number of people in the audience, it is difficult at times for the presenters to hear what members of the audience say. In the Q&A Sessions after announcements which are more formal, due to the availability of acoustic equipment to all participants, no insert questions are identified in either the production of the presenter or members of the audience. However, for the Q&A Sessions during presentations, when acoustic equipment is only made available to the presenter, it is difficult for the presenters and the other participants to hear what is said by a member of the audience. This explains the higher frequency of insert questions in Q&A Sessions during presentations. Indeed all insert questions are by presenters in the Q&A Sessions during presentations.

13.7 Comparing across sub-genres

13.7.1 Overall use of questions

A normalized total of 5776 questions are identified in the Corpus. Figure 13.16 below represents the percentages in questions identified per 100,000 words across sub-genres.

Figure 13.16 Distribution of questions identified across sub-genres



More than half of the questions are identified in Service Encounters. This means that despite the shorter length of the interactions in this sub-genre, they are dense in terms of the number of questions produced. The two groups of speakers, the service providers and service recipients, produce a similar number of questions. The participants are found to produce a series of questions which are responded to with short responses with precise information. This phenomenon of producing questions that elicit short responses result in a higher frequency of questions in proportion to a smaller number of words spoken, results in the higher frequency counts of questions as compared to other sub-genres in which the interactions are much longer in length (see Section 13.2 for average length of the interactions in Service Encounters). For example, there are 2.8 times as many questions identified in Service Encounters than in Interviews, which has the second largest number of questions.

Almost 20% of the questions are identified in Interviews. Quoting Komter's observation (1991: 21, see also Denzin, 1970: 137), in job interviews which are like any other kinds of interview, "one party seeks to elicit, by means of questions, information from the other party". This suggests that a large number of questions are predicted to occur. Indeed a high frequency count of questions is obtained, with 1123 items (per 100,000 words) identified. The frequency count is comparatively lower than Service Encounters and this can be the result of lengthy responses provided by the interviewees. The interviewees are often asked to describe and introduce themselves, in terms of background, qualifications and experiences. The total number of words in Interviews is also raised by the lengthy description of the projects, company and the post to be filled provided by the interviewers. The longer turns by the two parties result in longer interactions compared to those in Service Encounters, and thus lowering the frequency counts of questions per 100,000 words. The majority of the questions are produced by the interviewers. This confirms Komter's observation that one party in the interaction elicits while the other responds. It is not the case that the interviewees do not produce any questions, but their production is relatively low.

In Interviews, the interviewees only produce a question when invited to ask one or if a question asked by the interviewer is not heard or comprehensible. Thus it is very common to find a communicative goal shift toward the end of the interviews when the interviewers have finished the information eliciting process and invite the interviewees to ask questions.

The third largest proportion of questions is found in Meetings (13% of the total). Meetings are held reporting on the progress of work by different departments or co-workers, and to discuss and plan for upcoming schedules. In this sub-genre, a lot of the talk is dedicated to the elicited reporting of the progress with lengthy turns. This results in lower frequency counts for the number of questions.

As discussed in Section 13.4, the amount of questions produced varies in different kinds of Meetings. In the meetings with a chair, a lot of the questions are identified in the chair's production (31%) and 69% in the staff's production (it has to be borne in mind that there is only one chairman while there are multiple members in the meeting). In these meetings, the participants of different departments report to all the other participants in the meeting and the chairman brings up issues to be discussed by means of questions. Since the participants are from different departments, elicitation with regard to the progress of different operations is the role of the chair. Thus, it is mainly the chairman who checks on the progress and future work schedule of the different departments. In the meetings with supervisors and subordinates, the subordinates report the details of the tasks being carried out. Similar to the meetings with a chairman, the supervisors who have higher power over the other participants ask questions to monitor the progress and administrative work of the project. Thus it is found that 78% of the questions are produced by the supervisors while the subordinates only produce 22%.

Eleven percent of the questions are identified in Informal Office Talk, there is more “telling” than “asking” (Brazil, 1995; see also Chapter 8) in the interactions, when compared to other sub-genres such as Service Encounters, Interviews, and Meetings.

The smallest proportion of questions is identified in Q&A Sessions (4%). One reason is that questions are responded to with lengthy turns which typically explain, elaborate or clarify what has been presented or announced. It is expected that the audience produce a lot more questions than the presenter in general (with 67% to 33%), due to their respective institutional roles.

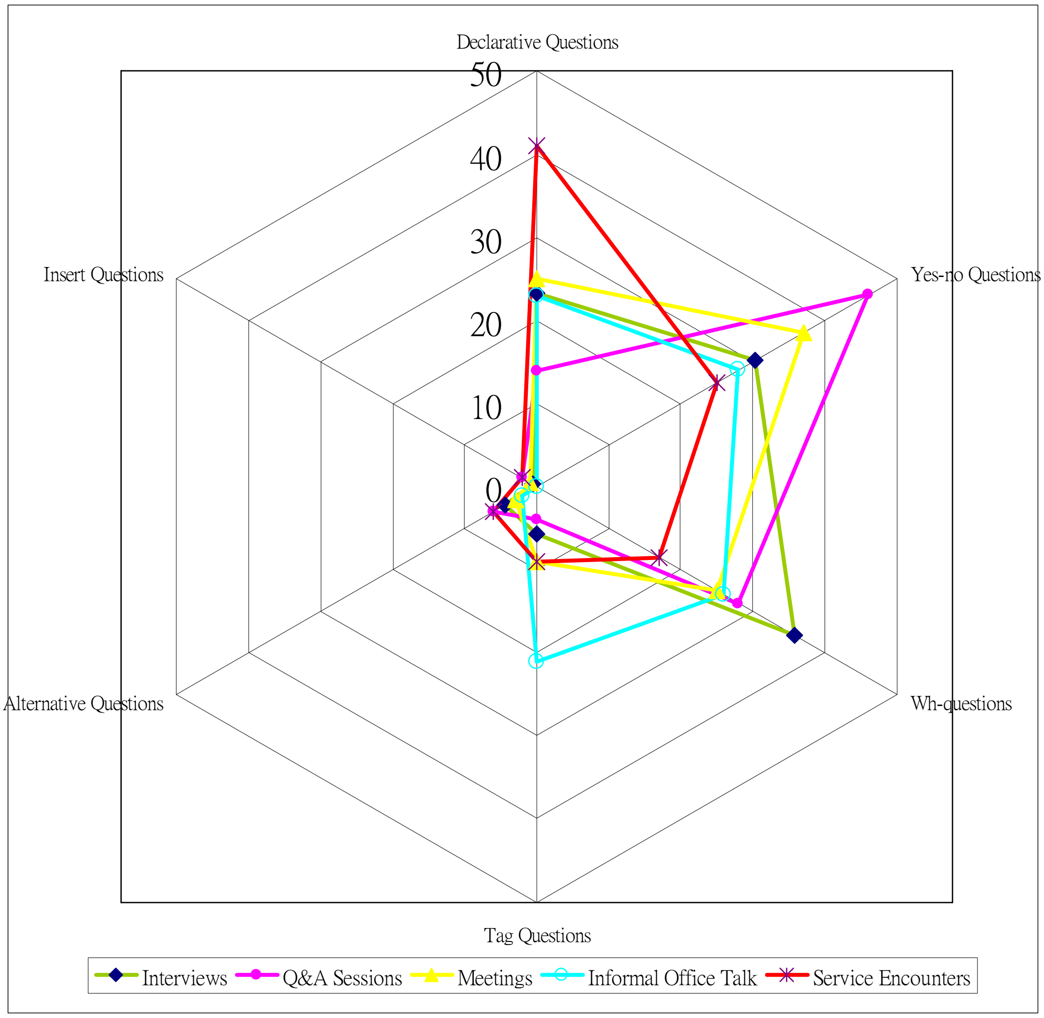
For the two different types of Q&A Sessions, there is an interesting divergence in the number of questions produced by the presenter in the Q&A during presentations and those after announcements. For the former one, questions are produced throughout the presentation both by members of the audience and the presenter. The use of questions in the presentation serves to create an interactive environment and to get the audience involved in discussion. As for the latter, only reporting and announcing are involved in the presentation, questions are mainly produced by the members of the audience towards the end of the presentation. Presenters only ask a few questions to seek clarification or repetition of the questions from the audience or to seek information from colleagues in helping to respond to questions from the audience. Therefore, there is a more even spread of questions for the former while the audience take the dominant role in producing questions in the latter.

To summarize, the number of questions produced across different sub-genres is due to the purpose of the discourses and the nature of the discourses, and what the participants have to achieve in the discourses determine the nature of them. For example, the purpose of a business meeting is to discuss and exchange information about the progress and details of work and to find out about work plans. The main actions of these meetings are reporting and discussing, which determine the relative proportion of telling and asking to be done. Furthermore, the role of the speaker is also found to have an effect on the production of questions. Results have shown that the participants who have a higher status in terms of power, or who have a specific institutional role which requires questions to be asked, produce more questions than the other participants. These factors are derived from the role of the participants. The higher power status may allow them to dominate the interactions and to ask more questions (Goody, 1978: 37).

13.7.2 Use of different question forms across sub-genres

The purpose and the nature of the different sub-genres are found to influence question production (in terms of the number), it was also hypothesized that the use of question forms is also influenced by these factors. The web graph below shows the distribution of the six question forms across the sub-genres.

Figure 13.17 Distribution of question forms across sub-genres on a web-graph



The majority of the questions, that is declarative, yes-no, and wh-questions, are plotted on the right side of the web. In the web graph, each colour contour shows the distribution of the different forms of questions in a sub-genre and the apexes show the highest percentage of the questions produced in a particular form. The following section focuses on all of the apexes that emerge on the web.

13.7.2.1 Declarative Questions

The largest proportion of declarative questions is identified in Service Encounters. The production of this question form is spread almost evenly between the two groups of participants, the service providers and recipients. In other words, the number of declarative questions produced is high for both groups of participants. This question form is indeed used as a means to check whether his or her information is accurate. When information is being presented, a participant has to check whether he or she has concluded or inferred the information correctly (see Section 13.2.2.1 for the use of declarative questions in Service Encounters). Thus a large number of declarative questions are identified in Service Encounters. Again, the characteristics of Service Encounters might explain why there are more declarative questions – the large amount of new information transmissions in these discourses prompts the participants to ensure that what they have concluded or inferred is correct.

13.7.2.2 Yes-no Questions

Yes-no questions are found to take up the largest percentage in Q&A Sessions. As discussed in Section 13.6, one-third of the yes-no questions are used to perform the function of <Q: identify>, that is to elicit specific or detailed information. These yes-no questions are produced with the politeness strategy, "be pessimistic", in an indirect form. These yes-no questions are indeed wh-questions phrased with "could you guide me ….", "can you explain" and so on (see examples in Section 13.6). The wh-questions are produced in the form of yes-no questions due to the nature of these Q&A Sessions. Thus the members of the audience have to employ such a politeness strategy to redress the FTA which is the tendency to constrain the presenter to commit to a particular position. With different functions of yes-no questions, such as <Q: polar> and <Q: confirm>, a large proportion of the questions are found to be produced in this form.

13.7.2.3 Wh-questions

The largest percentage of wh-question is found in Interviews. As discussed in Section 13.3, the majority of the questions are produced by the interviewers (91%). Wh-questions are found to be produced to elicit information about the interviewee's background, qualifications, and experiences etc. (see Example 13.8 and Table 13.6 for examples). Both the purpose of these interviews and the institutional roles of the participants explain the higher frequency count of wh-questions than for the other sub-genres.

13.7.2.4 Tag questions

When comparing the use of tag questions across sub-genres, this question form is more prevalent in Informal Office Talk (21%). This finding is similar to Biber et al's (1999: 213) finding that one in four questions that are identified in their Conversation corpus, is a tag question. This might suggest that these two genres are similar. This might be the reason why there is a higher percentage of tag questions in Informal Office Talk. It is suggested, however, that further studies might compare the discourses of Informal Office Talk and Conversations and further examine the use of questions in these two genres.

13.7.2.5 Alternative Questions

Alternative questions are infrequent in all the sub-genres studied, except for Service Encounters and Q&A Sessions (with the same percentage of 6%). In Service Encounters, 90.5% of the alternative questions are produced by the service providers and only (9.5%) is by the service recipients (N=178). In these encounters, the service provider has the knowledge of the goods and services of the transactions in the hotel and the airport. It is very common for them to list options, alternatives and choices to the service recipients, such as choices for seats arrangements, route options for tickets, means to settle the ticket or hotel bill and so on. (c.f. Section 13.2.3.5). With the knowledge of available options, the service providers provide the recipients with the opportunity to choose and decide what suits them best and this means the provision of better service. Both these factors contribute to unique institutional characteristics of this sub-genre.

Similar to Service Encounters, the preference for alternative questions is influenced by the institutional role of the speakers. There is an even larger divergence between the two groups of speakers in Q&A Sessions. All the alternative questions are found to be produced by the audience (100%). The use of alternative questions in the Q&A Sessions is different from those of the Service Encounters. Its use is not merely to provide alternatives or options for the other party; but to set requirements on the response to be produced by the presenter. The members of the audience producing such alternative questions are indeed making or hoping to make the presenter choose a stance for what has been presented or announced. It is then expected that the presenter would elaborate on the chosen stance (if one is chosen). The members of the audience also try to constrain the presenter on what to elaborate on by using yes-no questions which function as <Q: identify>. Members of the audience sometimes attempt to constrain the stance of the presenters' responses by exploiting certain question forms. Further studies can look into how different question forms are manipulative and restrictive with regard to the response, and how they are exploited in different sub-genres.

13.7.2.6 Insert Questions

Insert questions are found to be rare in all the sub-genres in the Corpus. None are identified in Informal Office Talk and only 2% is identified in both Service Encounters and Q&A Sessions. In Service Encounters, the settings are relatively noisier, when compared to those in Meetings and Interviews. It is then possible that a participant in Service Encounters is not able to hear clearly what the other participant has said. Another possible reason for the larger amount of insert questions might be due to the institutional role of the service providers. Their job requires them to ensure that information provided to and by the service recipients is correct. Also, they can make use of insert questions to elicit repetition of what the service recipients have provided. Thus there are four times as many insert questions produced by the service providers compared to the service recipients.

A relatively higher percentage of insert questions is also found in Q&A Sessions. All insert questions are found in the Q&A Sessions during presentations and none are found in those after announcements. This might be explained by the nature of the audience and the position of acoustic equipment that is made available to the participants. In the Q&A Sessions during presentations, since acoustic equipment is made available to the presenters only, it is assumed that it might be difficult for the presenter to hear what has been said by the audience. Thus when a member of the audience asks a question or gives a comment, the presenter may produce an insert question when he or she cannot hear what has been said. This might also explain why all the insert questions identified in the Q&A Sessions occur during presentations are produced by the presenters.

The accent of the other speakers in the interactions and the acoustic environment might be factors affecting the production of insert questions. In Informal Office Talk, it is believed that the acoustic environment would not create difficulty for the co-workers when talking to each other in the office. Given the familiarity of the co-workers, the participants are also familiar with the accent of their co-workers. These two assumptions might support the findings that no insert questions are identified in the sub-genre of Informal Office Talk.

13.7.3 Summary of use of question across sub-genres

More than half of the questions are identified in Service Encounters with short discourses. The purpose of these discourses is to sort out, for example, flight arrangements or settling hotel bills, involving information exchange. The information being elicited is brief which is shown by the short responses identified. In Q&A Sessions during presentations or after announcements, fewer questions are identified. Although these discourses are longer in length, a lot of the talk involves presenting and announcing information. Questions are also responded to with lengthy explanations and elaborations of what have been presented or announced. These responses are relatively longer when compared to those identified in Service Encounters. These findings indicate that the length of the discourses does not determine the number of questions produced. In fact, it is the purpose and the nature of the discourses of the sub-genres which form the need for question production. The amount of “telling and asking” in the discourses also affects the frequency counts of questions per 100,000 words.

In the examination of question forms produced across sub-genres, it is found that certain question forms are more prevalent than the others in different sub-genres. It is found that declarative questions are more prevalent in Service Encounters to check whether the service providers or the recipients have concluded or inferred the presented information correctly. This information checking is encouraged by the need to finish the task quickly. Yes-no questions are more prevalent in Q&A Sessions. They are produced not only to function as <Q: polar> and <Q: confirm>, one-third of the production performs the function of <Q: identify>. These yes-no questions are produced with politeness strategy to “be pessimistic” but with the ultimate aim of constraining the responder. It is found that participants in Interviews prefer to use more wh-questions. The prevalent use of wh-questions by the interviewers is to elicit information about the interviewees’ background, qualification, and experience etc. It is the interviewers’ task to elicit such information to decide whether to employ or where to place the interviewees (depending on whether it is a job interview or placement interview).

As for alternative questions, they are much more prevalent in Service Encounters and Q&A Sessions (with the same percentage identified). It is common that the service providers give options and choices when asking the service recipients about their preferences for seat arrangements, ticket routing and so on in Service Encounters. The use of alternative questions is found to be different in Q&A Sessions after announcements. The alternatives listed in the questions are indeed different stances which the analysts or journalists are pushing the presenters to take. The presenters are expected not only to choose a stance, but also to explain or elaborate on the stance (if one is chosen).

There is a relatively higher percentage of tag questions in Informal Office Talk. The higher percentage is compared to that identified in Biber et al’s (1999: 213) Conversation corpus. The similar preference for this question form is probably due to the similar characteristics of these two genres. This could be further explored in a closer examination of the use of questions in these kinds of discourse.

Finally, there are more insert questions in Service Encounters and Q&A Sessions while none are found in Informal Office Talk. The findings suggest that the accent of the speakers in the discourses (in the case of Service Encounters) and the acoustic environment (in the case of Q&A Sessions during presentations) might be the factors resulting in a larger production of insert questions in these sub-genres. It also suggests that the familiarity among the co-workers, and the acoustic environment of the settings in Informal Office Talk, account for the absence of insert questions in this sub-genre. A tentative conclusion can be drawn that a question form is more prevalent in a particular sub-genre due to the roles of the participants who produce the question forms and as a result of the tasks they perform.

13.8 Conclusion

This study examines the use of the question forms across five sub-genres in business and professional communication illustrated with examples from the Corpus. This chapter discusses the use of different question forms in each sub-genre and the distribution of production of each question form for the different groups of participants in the sub-genres. It is found that the number and proportion of questions produced are not determined by the length of the discourses but rather the communicative purpose and nature of them. The role of the participants and the tasks that the participants need to achieve in the discourses are also found to have an influence on both the number of questions produced and the question forms used. Different patterns of question forms are also identified and described across the sub-genres.

Chapter 14 Conclusions and implications

14.1 Concluding remarks

The present corpus-informed study examines the question-response sequences in the Business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (prosodic) both quantitatively and qualitatively. It examines the exchange structure of these sequences, question forms and functions, and response functions with reference to the communicative values of discourse intonation systems. The influence of the institutional roles of the participants, and the contexts of situation of different settings in the sub-genres of the Corpus are also studied. This chapter summarizes major findings in relation to the research questions. It discusses their contribution to discourse research theories and business communication and implications for language learning and teaching. Finally, the limitations of the present study are also discussed.

14.2 Summary of findings

This section summarizes the findings in relation to the research questions:

4. How are question-response sequences structured in business and professional settings? What are the forms and functions of these questions and responses?
5. What are the communicative values of the questions and responses with reference to the Discourse Intonation systems?
6. How does the institutional role of the participants in business and professional settings influence the use of questions, both in form and function? And to what extent is questioning uniform or diverse across the different sub-genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE?

14.2.1 Research question 1 – Structure of question-response sequences, forms and functions of questions and response functions

14.2.1.1 Structure of question-response sequences

This study examines the structure of question-response sequences using the framework of exchange structure (Coulthard and Brazil’s 1992; Sinclair 1992; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, 1992). Fourteen distinct combinations of exchange structure are identified (see Table 8.1) and some are found to be more typical in the Corpus. In general, most question-response sequences (64%) consist of only two moves, an initiation and a response, and this structure is regarded as the minimal structure of a question-response sequence. A follow-up move is found in 25% of the question-response sequences. The participant in a more privileged position, for example an interviewer in an interview, is more likely to produce a follow-up, and especially in multiple sequences. A follow-up move usually serves to summarize, conclude and sometimes evaluate what has just been said. A speaker can also signal that he or she does not have anything to add, and wants to retire from the exchange and initiate a new exchange by producing additional follow-up moves.

In the Corpus, 11.4% of the sequences contain a challenge move. A challenge move is usually produced when the current speaker wants to perform the act of checking and clarifying (Stenström, 1994). A challenge move might also be produced when something preceding has not been clear. In the identified sequences with a challenge move, the ICR sequence, one which resembles the IR sequence, is most common (7.68%). By means of these challenge moves, speakers are able to resolve points of miscommunication. In other words, these challenge moves do not affect the coherence of the discourse and instead help these discourses proceed smoothly.

14.2.1.2 Question forms and functions

The questions identified in the Corpus are classified into six forms: yes-no questions, declarative questions, tag questions, wh-questions, alternative questions and insert questions. The syntactic forms of these questions are then further analyzed, and results show that 29% of the questions are yes-no questions. This confirms Biber et al’s (1999: 212) findings that this question form is very common. Among these yes-no questions, the vast majority (95%) are positive yes-no questions. As Biber et al (1999: 206) state, with the use of positive yes-no questions, the questioner expects the addressee to supply a truth value by answering “yes” or “no”. These positive yes-no questions are not conducive (Biber et al 1999, Carter and McCarthy 2006, Huddleston et al 2002, Quirk et al 1985, Stenström 1984, 1994 and Tsui 1992). In other words, the speaker expects the response to enlarge his or her worldview and does not have a preference for either of the two polarities. This suggests that when a speaker chooses a yes-no question, new information is expected of which he or she has no presumption as to either of the polarities. This might be further studied to confirm whether this can be generalized to the use of positive yes-no questions in other business and professional settings.

Another important finding is that declarative questions are not determined solely by the intonation choice on the question itself. In the Corpus, 32% of the questions are declarative questions. They are mainly used to seek confirmation (78%) or to seek adjudication (16%).

Ten percent of the questions are tag questions, compared to 25% in casual conversation settings (c.f. Biber et al, 1999). This might suggest that tag questions are more common in comparatively less formal settings. In more formal settings, like business and professional settings, speakers use other question forms, such as declarative questions and yes-no questions as suggested by the higher numbers in the production of these two question forms in this study.

As for the wh-questions (23% of the total), they are categorized into two main types according to the types of wh-word used: open and closed (Biber et al, 1999). Examples of open wh-words include “what”, “why” and “how”; and examples of closed wh-words are “which” and “when”. Eighty-one percent of those wh-word fronted questions are formed with an open wh-word, and 18% with a closed wh-word. The higher percentage of questions produced with open wh-words shows wh-questions are used to elicit more elaborated and detailed responses in the Corpus. It is suggested that further examination of the number of words and amount of information in the responses be conducted and compared with those identified in casual conversation. Alternative questions give the addressee a set of alternatives in the questions (Biber et al, 1999: 207; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 428; Huddleston et al, 2002: 868; Quirk et al, 1985: 722). In the Corpus, 4.7% of the questions are in this form. They are classified into two main types in the present study: one which resembles a yes-no question and one which resembles a wh-question (Biber et al, 1999: 207; Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 428; Huddleston et al, 2002: 868; Quirk et al, 1985: 722). In the Corpus, the majority of the alternative questions resemble a yes-no question (>80%), followed by those produced in a reduced form (10%) and those that resemble a wh-question (3%). Carter and McCarthy (2006: 428) suggest that there is also a reduced form of alternative questions which is more common in informal speech.

However, this reduced form seldom occurs in the Corpus, suggesting that this form is much less common in business and professional settings.

The last question form, insert questions, is extremely rare in the Corpus (>1%). Variations of insert questions are “sorry”, “excuse me” and “pardon/ I beg your pardon”, and insert questions can function as a question which seeks repetition and clarification of the previous utterance (Biber et al, 1999: 1093). As the results show, only insert questions with “sorry” (79%), “pardon” and its variations, i.e. “I’m sorry” or “Pardon me”, “I beg your pardon” (21%) are identified. There are no cases of insert questions with “excuse me”.

Four question functions are identified in the present study, <Q: identify> (37%), <Q: polar> (31%), <Q: confirm> (31%) and <Q: repeat> (1%). There is a more or less even spread of percentages among the first three. In other words, in terms of information transmission, the rather even spread of these question functions suggests that there should be a similar number of different question forms except for insert questions which function as <Q: repeat>. However, this is found not to be the case. This discrepancy might indicate that a question form does not only carry a single question function. Put simply, there is not a direct form-function relationship in terms of usage. For instance, 75% of the <Q: identify> function is realized by wh-questions. As discussed in Chapter 10, yes-no questions are used also to elicit detailed information instead of just a “yes” or “no” response, and 11% of the <Q: identify> function is realized by yes-no questions. Another 10% is realized by alternative questions. Similarly, the other question functions are not realized by a single question form, but most of the question forms. These findings also reinforce the conclusion that the functions of questions are a result of the combination of discourse intonation, situational contexts of communication, shared/unshared knowledge, and so on.

14.2.1.3 Response functions

The number of responses (5158) does not match the number of questions (5776) in the examination of question-response sequences. Three main reasons are identified: challenge moves in place of an expected response, multiple questions in the same sequence, and inaudible responses.

In business and professional discourses, the majority of the questions (95%) are not only responded to but also answered. Ninety-two percent of the responses answer the questions directly. Only 5% of the responses do not answer the question either explicitly or inexplicitly (with 1% <R: supply>, 3% <R: disclaim> and 1% <R: evade>). It might be thought to be discourteous or unprofessional not to answer questions in some of the sub-genres studied, such as in a service encounter, a meeting, and an interview. For example, it is the job of the service provider to provide requested information at the information desk or check-in counter. Although there are cases in which the service providers are not certain about the information, they would then use an <R: disclaim> as a response instead of an <R: supply> or an <R: evade>. Similarly, it would be inappropriate for a member in a business meeting to evade or not to answer the question if the chair requests information of the tasks done or progress of the tasks. A failure to provide the requested information might imply that the respondent has not been carrying out his or her task properly. Future studies are suggested to verify these claims.

However, there is an exception in the case of Q&A Sessions. The purpose of the Q&A Sessions is to request information that is not sufficient or not clear from the business announcements and seminars. It would seem that it does not make sense if the presenter, who has the information, does not provide relevant information to the audience. There are cases in which the presenter is provided with two or more stances in an alternative question and asked to elaborate on them, but the presenter chooses to respond with an <R: evade> or <R: disclaim>. However, these are cases in which sensitive information is not supposed to be discussed or disclosed due to professional ethics or business laws.

To reiterate, the main conclusion is that the great majority of the questions (95%) are answered by the addressee, either directly or indirectly.

14.2.2 Research question 2 – Communicative values of discourse intonation

In the present study, almost half of the questions (44%) are produced with fall tone. The second most common tone is level tone (26%), followed by rise tone (22%), fall-rise tone (6%) and only a small number (2%) of the tone choices of the questions are not identifiable. Rise tone is commonly referred to as “question intonation”, but this study concludes that this is often not the case.

In the Corpus, no questions are produced with rise-fall tone. Cheng et al (forthcoming) find only 53 occurrences of rise-fall tone in the whole HKCSE (prosodic) and there are only 3 in all tone units in the business sub-corpus (the Corpus), confirming Brazil's (1997) observation that this tone is rare. Since this tone choice does not entail prospection of a response, it may explain why it is not common to use such a tone choice on questions which prospect a response from the hearer. In addition, in business and professional discourses, the conditions of preference organization are often observed in the process of meaning negotiation. This study concludes that rise-fall tones are not commonly found in questions in business and professional discourses which do not expect participation from the hearer.

By examining the tone choices and communicative value of each question form, the study finds that none of the syntactic forms of questions is restricted to a single intonation choice. It confirms Brazil's (1997: xii) claim that intonation choice is not syntactic-dependent, but context-dependent. It also demystifies the perception that some question forms are uttered more frequently with particular intonation, for example, a declarative question and a yes-no question with rising intonation (see Batliner and Oppenrieder, 1988; Biber et al, 1999; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Quirk et al, 1985). In this study, almost half of the declarative questions are produced with fall tone and the most frequent tone for yes-no question is level tone. Table 14.1 summarizes the percentages of various tone choices across the six question forms.

Table 14.1 Distribution of percentages of intonation choices on the six question forms

Question forms	Fall tone	Rise tone	Level tone	Unidentifiable
All	44%	28%	26%	2%
Declarative	46%	29%	23%	2%
Yes-no	30%	31%	37%	2%
Wh-	64%	12%	22%	2%
Tag	16%	68%	12%	4%
Alternative	45%	19%	31%	5%
Insert	18%	76%	6%	0%

The finding that none of the question forms is produced with a fixed intonation also reinforces Brazil's (1997: 110) conclusion that the pairing between tone choices and the grammatical form only reflects the kinds of situation in which different question forms tend to occur. The choice of tone in fact depends on the context of situation and whether the information presented is common ground. It is further found that the choice of tone is not the sole determinant of the kind of response that the question expects; the response is also partly determined by the termination choice which seeks to constrain the hearer through the respondent's choice of key in providing the preferred response.

As far as termination choice is concerned, its use indicates the kind of response a speaker is expecting: whether it is concurrence (by mid termination) or adjudication (by high termination). High termination on questions may also serve to indicate surprise, prompting the hearer to respond actively. The participants in these business and professional settings observe the conditions of preference organization (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Cheng, 2003) of discourses; with the speaker choosing mid termination and the hearer choosing mid key to create "pitch concord" (81%). "Pitch concord" is found to occur more often in contexts with mid termination, while "pitch discord" is more frequently found in contexts with high termination. The fact that there are significantly more instances of mid termination-mid key sequences reinforces the argument that the participants are observing the conditions of "preference organization" in the discourses.

14.2.3 Research question 3 – The impact of the institutional role in business and professional settings

To understand the impact institutional roles have on the use of questions in business and professional settings, five different sub-genres are examined: Service Encounters, Interviews, Meetings, Informal Office Talk, and Q&A Sessions. The number of questions, different question forms and their functions, and the influence of speakers' institutional role on the use of questions in each sub-genre are summarized below.

14.2.3.1 Service Encounters

The Service Encounters in the present study take place at check-in counters and the airport information counters at Hong Kong International Airport, at the front desk at Hong Kong hotels and retail outlets. A normalized total of 3046 questions are identified in this sub-genre. The two sets of speakers, the service providers and the service recipients, are found to have produced a more similar number of questions than participants in other sub-genres: with 42% and 58% respectively. The institutional role of the participants is found to have an influence on the use of questions. As discussed in Chapter 8, these Service Encounters are short and transaction-oriented (Cheng et al, forthcoming). The service providers are trained and familiarized with regular routines in which various tasks are to be carried out (Cheng, 2004a). As these interactions are transaction-oriented (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1-5), they are loaded with "transmission of factual, or propositional, information" (Lyons, 1977: 32). This results in a higher number of questions produced in these encounters, compared with other sub-genres.

It is found that 41% of the questions are in the form of declarative. The service providers who have better knowledge of the procedures of the transactions and the discourse itself might explain the significantly higher number of declarative questions asked. Another major finding is that the service recipients produce twice as many wh-questions (348) compared with the service providers (170). Service recipients tend to ask a series of wh-questions to seek specific information. Another interesting finding is that the service providers produce 10 times as many alternative questions (161) compared with the service recipients (17). One possible reason is that the service providers primarily offer choices, alternatives and options to their customers.

14.2.3.2 Interviews

The Interviews that the present study examines involve a single interviewee and two (or sometimes three) interviewers. The interviewees are candidates applying for the post of project assistant at universities or as an intern at hotels. In the Corpus, 1123 questions are identified: wh-questions (35.7%), yes-no questions (30.4%), declarative questions (23.2%), tag questions (5.7%), alternative questions (4.5%), and insert questions (0.5%). The interviewers produce ten times as many questions because they need to obtain information in these interactions in order to make the corresponding decisions. The frequency counts of all question forms are higher for the interviewers. This is due to their participant role which requires them to ask more questions in these interactions.

The interviewers produce ten times as many wh-questions (91%) compared with the interviewees (9%). And in the interviewer's production, 36.7% are in this form. By producing wh-questions, the interviewers are requesting specific or detailed information, and thus prompting the interviewees to provide responses in greater detail. The interviewers use yes-no questions for information seeking in addition to eliciting "yes" or "no" responses. As for the interviewees, the most common question form is declarative questions (40%). Its main use is to invite the interviewers to concur with their inference of what the interviewers have said or asked, so that the interviewees can respond to the interviewers' questions accordingly.

Needless to say, the role of the interviewers allows them to ask significantly more questions (in all the six question forms) than the other party. Their role which is to seek detailed information needed for making recruitment decision also results in distinctly more wh-questions in their production. However, it is interesting that it is the nature of interviews to create an environment for questions which functions to elicit specific or detailed information. This is supported by the larger number of wh-questions and yes-no questions which perform the <Q: identify> function.

14.2.3.3 Meetings

Altogether, 751 questions are identified in Meetings: 37% in the form of yes-no questions, 25% wh-questions, 25% declarative questions, 9% tag questions, 3% alternative questions, and 1% insert questions.

In the three types of meetings that are examined in this study, there is a preference for specific question forms due to the specific roles of the participants. In the meetings where there is a chair, the requirement to nominate speakers and control the agenda results in more yes-no questions. In the meetings between supervisor(s) and subordinates, due to the role difference between the two parties, similar results to the meetings with chair are found. There are more yes-no questions produced by the supervisor(s) who has a higher power status and an expected dominant role to play. The supervisor(s)' role in monitoring work progress probably explains their production of more wh-questions. Supervisors use wh-questions to seek specific information and details of the tasks that the subordinate has carried out. In meetings between co-workers, declarative questions are most frequent. The absence of the monitoring role has possibly resulted in a smaller number of wh- and yes-no question used to find out the progress and performance of work tasks as in the meetings with a chair or supervisor. Instead, one of the co-workers reports the progress of work, and the other co-workers ask declarative questions to seek confirmation on the inference or conclusion drawn.

14.2.3.4 Informal Office Talk

In Informal Office Talk, a normalized total of 632 questions are identified. There is a similar percentage spread between yes-no questions (28%), wh-questions (26%), declarative questions (23%), and tag questions (21%). There are significantly fewer alternative questions (2%), and no insert questions.

When comparing the percentage of tag questions in other sub-genres (<10%), there is a relatively higher percentage in Informal Office Talk. These discourses are characterized as not goal-oriented and there are no agenda to be followed. The informality of these discourses could possibly result in interactions which resemble those in conversation.

14.2.3.5 Q&A Sessions

In Q&A Sessions, 224 questions are identified. Almost half of the questions are yes-no questions (46%), the others are wh-questions (28%), declarative questions (14%), alternative questions (6%), tag questions (3%), and insert question (2%).

The participants in the audience are found to produce more questions than the presenter in the Q&A Sessions after business announcements. In this sub-genre, the presenter possesses new information which could enlarge the convergence between the speaker and the hearer, thus it is inherent in the audience's role to ask questions to seek more detailed and specific information. Due to this uneven distribution of knowledge and information and the nature of this discourse type, the audience is actually invited to ask the presenter questions after the presentations and announcements.

Interestingly, there is a higher frequency in yes-no questions than in wh-questions. In these interactions, one third of the yes-no questions perform the function of <Q: identify>, that is to identify detailed and/or specific information. This use might not only explain the higher frequency counts of this question form. It might also explain why there is a lower frequency count of wh- than yes-no questions. In addition, there are proportionately more alternative questions compared with other sub-genres. They are produced as attempts to constrain the presenter to a particular stance and then elaborate on it. The presenter is likely to be perceived as not having answered the question completely if he/she does not elaborate on the stance chosen. This <Q: identify> function is also carried out by yes-no questions. It constrains the presenter to elaborate on the "yes" or "no" that he or she gives in the response. Another observation worth noting is that in the Q&A Sessions after announcements of a company's results, the members of the audience often consist of journalists and competitors who have had an agenda prepared beforehand. The journalists may want to get soundbites; and the competitors often want to find out information about the future plans or policies of the presenter's company. They tend to make use of yes-no or sometimes alternative questions to push the presenter to unveil particular information.

As for the Q&A Sessions during presentations, the fact that acoustic equipment is only made available to the presenter makes it difficult for the presenter and the other participants to hear what a member of the audience has said. This sometimes leads to the production of insert questions by the presenter when a member of the audience produces a question or gives a comment. This can explain why all the insert questions in this study are found in the production of the presenters in the Q&A Sessions during presentations.

In each sub-genre, a speaker's choice of a question form and the function that the question might perform are found to be influenced by the specific institutional roles of the participants. Table 14.2 summarizes the frequencies of question forms across sub-genres.

Table 14.2 Frequencies of question forms across sub-genres

	Yes-no Questions	Wh-questions	Declarative Questions	Tag Questions	Alternative Questions	Insert Questions	Totals
Interviews	342	401	261	64	50	6	1123
Q&A Sessions	103	62	32	10	13	4	224
Meetings	277	188	188	71	20	7	751
Informal Office Talk	178	162	146	134	12	0	632
Service Encounters	747	518	1256	288	178	59	3046
Totals	1646	1331	1883	567	273	76	**5776**

14.2.3.6 Questioning across sub-genres

In addition to examining the effect of institutional roles on the use of questions in the five different sub-genres, this study also compares the findings focusing on both the number of questions, the use of different question forms and functions across sub-genres.

This study has identified significant differences in the number of questions across different sub-genres. Within a sub-genre, the number of questions produced is also not evenly distributed among participants either. The number of questions produced in the interactions is not determined by the length of the discourse but by the purpose and nature of the interactions, the institutional role of the participants and the tasks that the participants need to achieve in the discourses. Discourses which are more “transactional” compared with “interactional” (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1-5) are found to be more question-laden.

As found in each sub-genre, the institutional roles of the participants are also found to have an impact on the question forms that they employ. Declarative questions are most preferred in Service Encounters by both the service providers and recipients, yes-no questions in Q&A Sessions by the audience, wh-questions in Meetings by the supervisors or chair, tag questions in Informal Office Talk by the co-workers, and there are relatively more alternative questions and insert questions in both Service Encounters by the service providers and Q&A Sessions by the audience.

14.3 Significance of the present study

This study involves a systematic analysis of the communicative value of discourse intonation, the exchange structure of question-response sequences, the question forms and functions, the response types, and the impact of the institutional role of the participants in the five sub-genres. Results from these analyses contribute to our understanding of discourse intonation, discourse analysis, pragmatics and communication in business discourse. The present study also provides the practitioners in the business and professional settings and L2 learners with pedagogical implications and suggestions.

14.3.1 Contribution to the study of spoken English

14.3.1.1 Discourse intonation

The present study is the first of its kind to apply Brazil's (1985, 1997) discourse intonation framework in the analysis of questions and responses in authentic discourses in a large-scale corpus study. In addition to confirming to systems as described by Brazil's model, the present study has discovered that it is not always the case that speakers tend to maintain "pitch concord" in discourses.

Brazil's (1997) systems of discourse intonation are described comprehensively, and yet some of his examples are described to be "constructed – and perhaps fanciful – situations" (ibid: x). The analyses address the choices made within the tone, key and termination systems, by means of frequency counts of individual intonational choices, key choices, termination choices, comparison of the frequencies of these choices across participant groups, question forms and sub-genres. Frequencies of the choices made within the key and termination systems are also presented and discussed in a manner which relates questions and responses as a sequence. Qualitatively, an example of each of the choices with all the question forms by different participants in all the sub-genres is described and discussed.

This study reinforces the proposition that each intonational choice is made in the "here-and-now of the utterance" (Brazil, 1997: xii) and "intonational meaning is freestanding". This is to say "intonation can be explicated without reference to such other features of the utterance as syntactic descriptions seek to identify" (ibid: xii). The study concludes that Brazil's framework of discourse intonation is "most useful in accounting for the moment-by-moment intonational choices made by discourse participants to project, negotiate and mediate meanings when the spoken discourse unfolds" (Cheng et al, 2008). With a large amount of evidence from the Corpus, this study is able to identify patterns which illustrate the systems described by Brazil.

In addition to confirming Brazil's (1995, 1997) system and underlying assumptions, as the first major study of pitch concord, the present study has found that it might not be always the case that speakers have a tendency to maintain "pitch concord", i.e., to match the key choice of an utterance to the termination choice of the preceding utterance (Brazil, 1997: 53-60). It is found that "pitch discord" occurs even when the next speaker concurs with the previous one. The findings of the present study provide detailed descriptions of the types of "pitch discord" that are identified and suggested interpretations of these instances.

14.3.1.2 Discourse analysis

In the analysis of spoken discourses, there has been controversial discussion on whether discourses are linear (Coulthard and Brazil, 1992; Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006). Schegloff's (1972) insertion sequence and Jefferson's (1972) side sequence in conversational analysis, for example, are presented as evidence that sometimes discourse is non-linear. Coulthard and Brazil (1992) identify a gap in the prospection web of move type when evaluating the labels of the three different moves. To fill the gap, Sinclair (1992) in the same volume, *Advances of Spoken Discourse Analysis*, proposes a challenge move to be added. It is a move which "breaks the presuppositions and precipitates a new exchange", and "cancels the interactive value of the previous move" (ibid: 87). Sinclair and Mauranen (2006) explain that due to the linearity of speech, language users cannot work on two distinct organizational systems in parallel. In Linear Unit Grammar, utterances unfold incrementally in a linear manner to make meaning. The absence of "bracketing" conventions suggests that linear speech does not allow embeddings (ibid: 224). To resolve the problem of prospection that arises from embedded or inserted sequences, the introduction of "challenge move" is useful. In this study, the notion of a challenge move has been adopted and is used to delineate the structure of question-response sequences in a clear and linear manner.

The IRF framework, with challenge moves, is adopted in the present study in the examination of exchange structure of question-response sequences throughout the whole Business sub-corpus in the HKCSE. Each of these structures or combinations of structures is exemplified with excerpts from the Corpus. Results have confirmed the structures of exchanges described by Sinclair (1992: 87) and confirmed that utterances unfold in a linear manner (Sinclair and Mauranen, 2006). Further, it has found that the utterances identified as challenge moves do not overwrite the communicative value of the preceding moves. Instead, the preceding moves become common ground for the unfolding utterances in the interaction. This study concludes that Sinclair's conceptual framework for spoken discourse structure (IRF with C move) is the most robust framework to work with.

14.3.1.3 Pragmatics

In the examination of question forms, it is found that not all interrogatives have the function of questions (such as exclamations) and utterances doing questions can be in non-interrogative forms (such as declaratives). The present study concludes that the pragmatic function of a speech act, in this case a question and its corresponding response, are only realized when factors such as discourse intonation, discourse structure, situational context, institutional identities and roles of the participants, goals and communicative purposes of the interactions and so on are taken into consideration. In addition, through the analysis of question functions, the study concludes that there is not a direct form-function relation for questions. The pragmatic functions which a question can perform are not restricted to nor determined by its syntactic form. The pragmatic functions of a question, regardless of what form it is in, are influenced by the various factors that are listed above. These factors also have important roles to play in the analysis of the functions of responses. Some of the responses may appear to be irrelevant to the preceding questions. They may actually be providing information which answers the questions indirectly, such as through an implicature. In other words, special attention should also be paid to the above-mentioned factors in the analysis of the functions of responses.

14.2.3 Contribution to the studies of questions

The present study has confirmed that there is no direct form-function relationship of questions. It has further demystified the general association of specific intonation and question forms. More importantly, the institutional role of the participants in business and professional settings is found to have a major influence on the number of questions in the interaction, the distribution of questions among participants within an interaction, and the question form to be chosen. The goal and purpose of the interaction are also found to influence the question function that the participants wish to employ which determines the question form that the participants wish to employ.

14.3.3 Pedagogical implications

14.3.3.1 Communication in business settings

The present study is pedagogically useful to and relevant for practitioners working in business and professional settings, language learners and teachers especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP). To the service providers and professionals, this study stresses that it is not enough just to know their responsibility, but also to understand their institutional roles in the discourse. It is especially helpful for practitioners to understand how institutional roles in different settings impact questioning and responding. To quote an example, in Cheng's (2004a) study, the "checking-out" discourse of the hotel is examined. It is found that all the hotel staff of these encounters use referring tone when asking the guests whether they have taken anything from the minibar (ibid: 158). Cheng comments that it is indeed not appropriate in such a context to use a dominant tone, which projects "insistence" or "forcefulness" (ibid: 159). It is hoped that the results of the present study would raise the awareness of the significance of the communicative value of discourse intonation in questioning. A different intonational choice can change the focus or function of a question. Findings in the present study also help demystify the association of syntax of questions and intonational choice. Knowledge of "pitch concord" in the key and termination systems could also better equip practitioners with the ability to both setting requirements on responses, and formulating and interpreting responses. In general, the present study describes the linguistic behaviour in questioning in the settings where they work. Members of the business and professional sectors should also be aware of the functions that a question form can perform.

It will be practical to incorporate the teaching and learning of discourse intonation and the institutional roles in different sub-genres into training programmes in business and professional corporations. Researching in business and professional settings is a helpful and cooperative means in determining the needs and design of training programmes. This in turn helps promote the success of the corporations and encourage increased involvement in research in the business and professional domains.

14.3.3.2 Language learners and teachers

Brazil (1997: x) states that a lot of his examples are minimally contrasted pairs instead of naturally occurring data. He also warns that it is dangerous for teachers to provide and then students to repeat specimens (ibid: 142). Real-life naturally-occurring examples from the present study will be readily available data for second/foreign language learning and learning English as a lingua franca (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Bolton, 2005; Glaz, 2006; Jenkins, 2003, 2006a, 2006b). These examples of speakers' choices and interpretations of local meanings could serve as the basis for learning and teaching materials. Quantitative and qualitative information on discourse intonation, the use of questions and responses, and the impact on institutional roles in business and professional settings are available to ESP and LSP practitioners. These readily available examples and quantitative and qualitative information should be valuable to listening and pronunciation studies, and teaching and learning materials and activities such as those published recently (see, Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Cauldwell, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Cauldwell and Hewings, 1996; Hewings, 2004, 2005; Hewings and Goldstein, 1999; O'Keefe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007)

Findings of the present study confirm that discourse intonation is a set of meaningful choices. It represents a set of speaker choices, and is independent from syntactic forms and attitudes. The subject of discourse intonation should be incorporated into language teaching and learning (Chun, 2002: 199), making use of the data available from the present study and the whole HKCSE.

14.4 Limitations of study and suggestions for further research

As discussed earlier, the present study, to some extent, makes valuable contributions in the fields of discourse intonation, discourse analysis and pragmatics and has pedagogical implications. However, there are a number of limitations which call for further research.

As one of the relatively few studies of the intonational choices made in terms of questions and responses using Brazil's discourse intonation systems, more focus has been put on three of the four systems: tone, key and termination. In fact the system of prominence is reflected in the three systems – a word (or a syllable) can only carry a tone, key or termination choice when it is prominent. Thus in effect, prominence is also discussed in the examination of intonational choices.

Secondly, although a misuse of intonation choice or a misinterpretation of such choices could possibly cause misunderstanding in an interaction, it is often the case that when misunderstanding occurs, it is caused by a combination of variables, such as socio-cultural background, linguistic background or the situation context, etc. In the Corpus, it is not found that a misinterpretation of an intonational choice has been the sole cause of a complete breakdown of communication. Mutual understanding of the participants is indeed found to be negotiated throughout the building up of common ground as the discourse unfolds. In future studies, it will be interesting and of great value to examine if misinterpretation of intonational choices leads to misunderstanding in different contexts. Future studies could also analyze how repair work is or can be done if instances of ambiguous intonational pattern have been identified.

Furthermore, the framework for analyzing question forms is formed with reference to different grammar-based approaches (Quirk et al, 1985; Biber et al, 1999). In addition to the five widely recognized question forms, the present study terms certain formulaic expressions, which function as a question, insert questions. These inserts are used for apologizing and sometimes as request for repetition or clarification (Biber, 1999). Although the number of questions identified is 5776, only 1% of these are insert questions. It is suggested that further examination and investigation needs to be done on this particular question form, such as how they are used in different settings and whether they are similar or diverse in NS' and NNS' use.

The study examines question-response sequences in business and professional settings in five different sub-genres, namely Service Encounters, Interviews, Meetings, Informal Office Talk and Q&A Sessions. Future studies could involve other sub-genres in business and professional settings to extend our understanding of business communication. In addition, the focus of this PhD study is on the influence of the institutional roles of the participants, the similarities and differences identified might also be a result of variables such as gender, cultural background or NS-NNS difference. It would be interesting to examine, for example, service encounters with native speakers as service providers and compare the results with those of the present study or more generally in non-business/professional contexts.

Finally, it would be helpful if interviews could be conducted with the participants employing the "Think Aloud Protocol" to find out why a particular question form or an intonational feature is chosen at the moment of speech. However, due to the nature of the data, a lot of the participants involved are travellers, job interviewees and audience in presentations, which has made it impossible to trace the location of these participants. To compensate, in the present study, the questions and responses are analyzed with reference to the discourse intonation systems, the institutional role of the participants and the situational contexts of the interactions so that the maximum amount of information is obtained from the data that is studied.

This thesis has explored the value of discourse intonation on the local meanings of questions. It confirms that the functions and meanings of the questions and responses are largely defined by the communicative value of discourse intonation. The present study does not suggest that it is the sole determinant which gives meanings to the utterances, other contextual factors are also important areas to be studied. Again, a lot of attention has been paid to the effect of the participants' institutional roles. It is suggested that future studies of discourse intonation examine the differences between HKC and NES in the Corpus or in other settings, if there are any.

Through this corpus-informed study, attention is drawn to the naturalness, spontaneity, and fruitfulness in conducting corpus research. Finally, the fact that this study uses a prosodically annotated corpus emphasizes the general lack of prosodically annotated corpora and hence the need to compile not only orthographic corpora but also prosodic ones. These corpora could then be used for research and teaching and learning purposes.

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