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TAG QUESTIONS WITH PRAGMATIC MARKERS: RENAISSANCE
TEXTS

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Abstract

The paper deals with the tag question constructions, a part in which is represented by pragmatic markers – structures of variation composition: exclamations (*why, tush*), interjections (*ha, o*), adverbs (*then, sure, already*), modal-predicative structures (*I thinke, I hope*), and some others. The constructions with tag questions from Renaissance artworks (circa 1485-1650) are under analysis.

The linguistic material, sentences from the lines of the characters, has been selected from more than a hundred texts. Methods of theoretical and linguistic analysis of concepts on the subject under study, continuous sampling of the material under study, linguistic study of linguistic facts, comparative analysis have been used to study the linguistic material.

The study of the sentences, which include not only tag questions, but some other pragmatic markers, shows that the placing of the markers in the sentences is characterized by some tendencies. The main is that pragmatic markers, being phatic components of the constructions, form a a kind of a frame for the informative part of the sentence. The authors do not break the integrity of the sentence, that is served as an anchor for the tag, and place all markers at the beginning or in the final of the construction. Building a pragmatic marker into the anchor is not usual and is an individual peculiarity of the author.

The study can be useful to conduct further researches in the field of some theoretical disciplines – theoretical grammar, historical pragmatics, historical syntax of the English language, as well as in the study of changes in spoken interaction, synchronic functioning of tag-questions and pragmatic markers during the Renaissance period. Also the material can be used to provide lectures in Language History, English Literature.

The variety of predicative and non predicative pragmatic markers in tag question constructions from the texts which were created in 1485-1650 period, their composition in the sentences and the peculiarities of placement have not been investigated before.

Introduction

It is known that discourse markers are a wide class of language units, presented by words, phrases, sounds that do not have real lexical meanings, which are used by speakers for forming spoken structure. Among them there are exclamations, interjections, adverbs, modal-predicative structures, etc. Their variety and functioning in spoken interaction of different languages on modern

stage of their development have been investigated by many scholars (Fraser, B. 1999; Gonzales, M. 2005; Mueller, S. 2005; Verdonik, D. et al, 2007). Whereas less attention has been devoted to their functioning in other historical periods.

Tag question is a usual phenomenon in Present-day English. For Renaissance period (circa 1485-1650) it is rather a rare phenomenon. Speaking about the frequency of “canonical” tag questions in the texts of drama, S. Hoffmann shows about 60 cases per million words in the texts of plays written from 1550 till 1650, and about 450 cases per million words in the plays written after 1900s. (Hoffmann, S. 2006). Tag questions were not found in the texts created earlier than the end of XV century (Visser, Fr. 2002). The first tag question is attested in the play “Fulgens and Lucrece”, made in 1497 by Henry Medwall (Tottie, G., Hoffmann, S. 2009). This fact explains the choice of the time limits of this investigation. The choice of the object of the research is explained by the idea that pragmatic functions are characteristic for tag questions themselves now and were characteristic for them in the period of Renaissance (Hoffmann, S. 2006; Tottie, G., Hoffmann, S. 2009). The reason of it has been in the inclination of a speaker to involve and draw interlocutors into conversation (Biber, D. 2004).

Studying the constructions with tag questions from the Renaissance texts we substantiated the attribution of various attended structures to question tags (Merkuryeva, N. 2020), taking into consideration not only so-called “canonical” tags, i.e. predicative attended parts, having lexical and grammatical dependence on the anchor sentence, like *It is good, isn't it?* or *She has come, has she?*, but also “non-canonical” tags like *It is good, eh?* *It is good, say you?* *It is good, sure?*, in which such dependence is absent. In this work we have been examining all kinds of those tag structures using the same terminology.

Because of the heterogeneousness of pragmatic markers corpus, we will discuss only some of them. In the sentence under analysis there should be an obligatory component, a question tag, and some other pragmatic markers such as a noun / group of nouns - address, exclamation, interjection, adverb, modal-predicative phrase as variation components.

Methodology. Tag question constructions with pragmatic markers, found in the artworks, written in the period from 1485 to 1650 have been studied. To investigate linguistic material methods of theoretical and linguistic analysis of concepts on the subject under study, continuous sampling of the material under study, linguistic study of linguistic facts, comparative analysis are used. After every illustrative example the time of writing or first publication of the play or poem, its author (specified by A Dictionary of Literature in the English Language, 1970; The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, 1977; The Dictionary of Literary Biography, 1982; Reference Guide to English Literature, 1991), title and source page are given.

Analysis and Discussion. Working in the field of historical syntax, a scholar has to deal with written texts in which he can find imitation of “live” spoken speech. That is why first of all we appealed to some modern literature works to get an idea of the principles, if any, their authors place pragmatic markers into tag question constructions when creating the speech of the characters. The localization of pragmatic markers in the sentence (in spite of the fact of being various) turned out to have some tendency. If there is only one tag in the sentence, this tag can be placed in the final of the construction or it can delimit a syntagma as in the example *Mother understood – did she not? – that all this*

peace and solitude, this haven if tranquility, must be paid for somehow? (2018, Ley R., “Her Mother’s Secret”). If the sentence with a question tag has additional predicative or non-predicative marker, the marker can be placed at the beginning of the construction, as in the examples with the predicative phrase *I mean* and the adverb *anyway* – *I mean, everyone likes to let their hair down every once in a while, don’t they?* (2008, Challis C., “The Beautiful Game”, p. 83), *Anyway, we were only friends, weren’t we?* (ibid, p. 221). The marker can be placed in the immediate vicinity of the tag, in ante- or postposition of it. So, in the sentence *Hurts good, though, huh?* (1996, Robbins H., “The Stallion”, p. 176) we can see the adverb *though* in ante-position of attended interjection; in the sentence *Social call, is it, then?* (1995, Robinson P., “Dry Bones That Dream”, p. 60) – the adverb *then* in postposition of “canonical” question tag; in the sentence *It’s got nowt to do with her, though, does it?* (1995, Robinson P., “Dry Bones That Dream”, p. 106) the adverb *though* is found in front of the tag. At last, markers can be combined into peculiar units made of two or three items as in the example *But, of course, you were away then, weren’t you?* (2001, Collier C., “Swansea Girls”, p. 127), in which the marker receiving sentence, having the informative part *you were away*, is surrounded by such units, every of them consists of two markers – initial *But, of course* and final *then, weren’t you?*.

It was interesting to examine the types of pragmatic markers which were placed into tag question constructions by Renaissance authors and to find some common tendencies, if any, of their arrangement in the sentence.

It is characteristic for any tag question of the period under review to be placed into the final part of the construction, irrespective of the amount of the words that are between the part of the sentence to which the tag is determined and the tag itself. In the example *This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that praised my Lord Such-a-one’s horse when’a meant to beg it, might it not?* (1601, Shakespeare, “Hamlet”, p. 769) we can see that the “distance” between the tag *might it not?* and determining phrase *This might* is 16 words.

In the period under study authors place an additional marker in tag question structures in some ways that can be kept within some variants.

The first variant – there is one non-predicative marker at the beginning of the construction.

An adverb can be such a marker. For example, the sentence *Than thay have some maner gettynge By some occupacione, have thay?* (1497, Medwall H., “Fulgens and Lucrece”), quote on: (Totti, G. Hoffmann, S. 2009, p. 142) with a “canonical” tag *have thay?*, has the adverb *than* at its beginning.

An address can also be placed at the beginning, being represented by one word (a title or a name), if the utterance is appealed to one listener. Such an example we can see in the sentence *George, Ralph was ever comfortable, was he not?* (1607, Beaumont Fr., “The Knight of the Burning Pestle”, p. 45). An address, of course, can also consist of a group of words, as *My good lords*. Sometimes it contains enumeration of names if there are several listeners, as in the example *Theridamas, Techelles, and Casane, here are the cates you desire to finder, are they not?* (1590, Marlowe Ch., “Tamburlaine”, p. 199). It is usual for an address to be separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

Forming an initiating segment of a sentence, an exclamation is built into a tag question construction as well. Moreover an exclamation can be separated from the rest part of the sentence with a punctuation mark, as in the examples *Tush! thou shalt do it, ha?* (1640, Shirley J., “The Humorous Courtier”, p. 545) and *O, you haue made him a swecte beagle, ha’ y not?* (1606, Chapman G., “The

Gentleman Vsher”, p. 320), where we observe an exclamation mark and comma after the exclamations *Tush* and *O*. A punctuation mark can be absent, as in the example with the initial *Why*: **Why** *y’are not angry, are you?* (1611, Chapman G., “May-Day”, p. 355).

The second variant – there is one predicative marker at the beginning of the construction.

In the capacity of such a marker some phrases on the base of the verbs *say*, *think*, *hope*, *faith* are used.

The variety of the combinations with the verb *say* is formed, in particular, as a result of changing the tense of the verb. In the phrase *you said* we see the verb in Past Simple: **You said** *it was a Toledo, ha?* (1598, Jonson B., “Every Man in his Humour”, p. 142). The verb *say* can also be combined with a first person singular pronoun and be “reinforced” by the modal verb *will*, building the phrase *I will say*: **I will say** *the crowe is white. wylt thou so?* (1562, Heywood J., “Three hundred epigrams”, p. 177). Besides the verb can form an interrogative structure with the adverb *how*, as in the sentence: **How say you, is this my original or no?** (1553, Udall N., “Ralph Roister Doister”, p. 69).

The verb *think* is used with the second person singular and the first person singular pronouns as we can see in the examples **Thou thinkst** *thou maist be as fawcy with me as my Buffe Ierkin, to sit vpon me, dost?* (1600, Dekker Th., “The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus”, p. 112) and **I thinke** *it is god morrow is it not?* (1598, Shakespeare W., “Henry IV”, p. 525). As additional words, when a marker is built, the auxiliary verb *do* and the adverb *well* are involved: **I do think well, thou art in love; art thou?** (1609 Jonson B., “The Case is Altered”, p. 350).

Sometimes tag question shows the function of the marker in the sentence. So, in the sentence **I think** *I must have an Officer to trust thee out of my doors, must I?* (1608, Beaumont Fr., Fletcher J., “The Coxcomb”, p. 360) the marker *I think*, most probably, serves for creating a parenthetic clause, and the tag relates to the main clause *I must...must I?* In the sentence **Thou thinkst** *thou maist be as fawcy with me as my Buffe Ierkin, to sit vpon me, dost?* the tag *dost?* is related by the speaker to the main clause, which is formed with *Thou thinkst*.

A parenthetic clause can also be formed with the verbs *hope* combined with the first person singular pronoun, as in the construction **I hope** *he will not sneak away with all the money, will he?* (1604, Dekker Th., “The Honest Whore”, p. 238). In the sentence **I’ faith**, *you were not all riding away, then?* (1604, Middleton Th., “A Mad World”, p. 94) the parenthetic clause is built with the pronoun *I*, the noun *faith* and a reduced verb marked with an apostrophe.

Not only one, but two markers can be disposed at the beginning of the sentence with a tag question. So, we can form **the third variant** – there are two markers at the beginning of the construction.

Usually the markers belong to different types, for example, the interjection *Ha* and the address *my good Lords* in the sentence **Ha my good Lords**, *that every one of you now Had but a Lady of that youth and beauty To bless your selves this night with, would ye not?* (1624, Fletcher J., “A Wife for a Moneth”, p. 23), the exclamation *Why* and the adverb *then* in the sentence **Why, then** *you took my chain along with you to prolong my days, did you?* (1604, Middleton Th., “A Mad World”, p. 101). If the initial group consists of a modal-predicative phrase, the latter can be combined with a non-predicative marker, as the phrase *I hope* in the sentences **Why I hope** *I am no spirit, am I?* (1609, Jonson B., “The Case is Altered”, p. 339) and **I hope sir**, *I have no wages in*

your hand, have I? (1637, Deloney Th., “The Gentle Craft”, p. 219), where it is combined with the exclamation *why*, standing in ante-position or the address *sir* in postposition.

We also found a unit consisting of the interjection *O* and the exclamation *no* in the sentence *O no: will he be entreated, think you?* (1601, Jonson B., “The Poetaster”, p. 425).

In the sentence *Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not?* (1594, Shakespeare W., “The Taming of the Shrew”, p. 35) we met the combination of the markers in that an exclamation and a predicative combination are separated with a preposition. Some prepositions can be ranked among the pragmatic markers because they can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. And besides a preposition can realize connection between the current and previous sentences in the speech chain, i.e. as a pragmatic marker should be, it forms a spoken interaction structure. Then at the beginning of the sentence tree markers are concentrated – the exclamation *why*, the preposition *and*, and the modal-predicative phrase *I trust*.

The fourth variant – there are two markers in the construction with a question tag, one of them is at the beginning, and the second is at the end of the construction. So, the sentence begins and finishes with phatic parts, special density of which is observed at the end.

The placement like this we met in the structure, in that the interjection *Oh* can be found at the beginning of the construction, and at the end of it, just after the question tag, is an address: *Oh, that was the story of Jone and the wall, was it not, George?* (1607, Beaumont Fr., “The Knight of the Burning Pestle”, p. 60).

In the sentence *Why, so I do; do not I, I pray you?* (1600, Jonson B., “Cynthia’s Revels”, p. 342) we can see an initiate exclamation *why*, and the modal-predicative structure *I pray you* at the end.

The fifth variant – there is no marker at the beginning of the construction, but there is a marker in its final, next to the question tag.

Such a marker is, first of all, an address. There are some cases where an address is placed in ante- or postposition to the question tag, for example *They bite when they are at dinner, do they not, coz?* (1622, Middleton Th. and Rowley W., “The Changeling”, p. 23); *You’ll nought else, sir, would you?* (1601, Jonson B., “The Poetaster”, p. 431).

Between a tag and an address we can see various punctuation marks. Then, between the “canonical” tag *Do you* and the address *M. Ford* there is a question mark: *You vse me well, M. Ford? Do you?* (1599, Shakespeare W., “The Merry Wives of Windsor”, p. 559); between the tag question word *indeed* and the address *Dame Cuustance* a comma can be seen: *But there was no such matter, Dame Cuustance, indeed?* (1553, Udall N., “Ralph Roister Doister”, p. 86); between *or*-structure tag and the address *woman* we see an exclamation mark: *Will ye have this man, woman! or else will ye not?* (1553, Udall N., “Ralph Roister Doister”, p. 87).

Next to a question tag there can be not only an address, but an adverb, as in the sentence *Gracious with the dutchess! sure, you said so?* (1632, Massinger Ph., “The Maid of Honour”, p. 208), where the adverb *sure* is located in ante-position to the tag question-phrase *you said so?*.

At the beginning of the question, as it has been mentioned above, markers of different types can be found. As for the final of the construction, it can be formed from two markers belonging to one and the same type. They are question tags themselves. It should be pointed out that, if there are two tags, they are of different types. Speaking about the complex of two tags, we will

follow the same terminology and classification we used describing Renaissance tag questions in the work (Merkuryeva, N. 2020).

In the construction *You'll shed his blood, you'll say: will you so?* (1623, Fletcher J., Rowley W., "The Maid in the Mill", p. 61) the tag question-phrase *you'll say* is placed before the "canonical" tag *will you*. The latter has in its composition an addition word, the adverb *so*.

A tag question-phrase can be also combined with "non-canonical" question tags. In the sentence *O t'is a wittie hearing, ist not thinke you?* (1606, Chapman G., "The Gentleman Vsher", p. 319) the tag question-phrase *thinke you* is after the "absolute form" *ist not*, and in the sentence *A peace concluded, saist thou? ist not so?* (1600, Heywood Th., "The Second Part of King Edward the Fourth", p. 110) the tag question-phrase *saist thou* stands before the "absolute form" *ist not*, the latter being complemented with the adverb *so*.

Tag question constructions with an imperative clause are interesting as well. The using of an interrogative sentence itself by one of the interlocutors means stimulating the listener to give an answer. Such a meaning in some degree is characteristic of any interrogative sentence. But so long as the meaning of supposition, request or some others are typical for tag questions, an imperative clause in the sentence has a double function. On the one hand, it "returns" the original meaning of stimulating to the question, "cuts off" the possibility of being understood as a rhetorical question, on the other hand, the imperative clause "hints" unambiguously that the answer is being waited. So, imperative clauses such as *Say, Speak, Respond*, building into tag question constructions, can entirely be considered as peculiar pragmatic markers.

Similar with the other markers, imperative clauses are built into the constructions forming its beginning or they are placed right near the question tag. Every author use such clauses in his own way. In the sentence *Say, will you have me, or no?* (1609, Jonson B., "The Case is Altered", p. 409) imperative clause *say* is placed at the beginning of the construction with *or*-structure tag.

In the sentence *Shall the maister weare a breeche, or none. sey you.* (1546, Heywood J., "A Dialogue of Proverbs", p. 143), having the question tag of the same type as the previous one, the imperative clause *say you* is found in postposition to the tag *or none* and is "strengthened" with the pronoun *you*.

In the following constructions *And thou affirmst the like: say, dost thou not?* (1600, Heywood Th., "The Second Part of King Edward the Fourth", p. 110) and *This Moor is comeliest, is he not? Speak, son.* (1594, Marlowe Ch., "The Jew of Malta", p. 418) we can see tags of "canonical" types, the first of them, *dost thou not?*, has the imperative clause *say* in ante-position, and the second, *is he not?*, has the imperative clause *Speak* in postposition, accompanied by the address *son*.

We also met the combination of the imperative clause *say* with the tag *have I not?* in the final of the construction: *Already have I been too troublesome; say, have I not?* (1599, Dekker Th., "The Shoemaker's Holiday", p. 87), another marker, the adverb *already*, is taken out at the beginning of the sentence.

The most uncommon case is building an additional marker into not at the beginning and not in the final, but in the middle of the marker receiving sentence serving as an anchor for the question tag. This case will form another, **the sixth**, possible **variant** of placement of markers in the studied construction. In the sentence *And I too harsh, perhaps, in my reproof: was I not, Clarinda?* (1632, Massinger Ph., "The Maid of Honour", p. 200) we can see the adverb *perhaps*, standing on the border of the sintagmas of the anchor sentence

and, undoubtedly, is drawn to attract a listener's or reader's attention to the word *harsh*. In the sentence *Thy name, I heare, is Tiril, is it not?* (1600, Heywood Th., "The Second Part of King Edward the Fourth", p. 148) the modal-predicative phrase *I heare* is placed in the middle of the anchor, separated the theme part *Thy name* from the rheme one *is Tiril*. Such a placement of the marker can be also connected with the speech rate when the sentence is being pronounced as a character's retort. We can make various suppositions about the author's intentions when they place the markers into the anchors not typically, but, we can assert, that marker placement in the middle of a tag question construction is rather rare for the period under study and individual for the creator of the text.

Conclusion

Building the sentences, which form the lines of the characters, trying to make the speech "alive", to give it similarity with real one, authors saturate tag question constructions with the pragmatic markers that are characteristic for the everyday speech of their contemporaries.

The choice of the markers depends on objective and subjective factors. To the objective ones we can rank the existence of words and phrases using as pragmatic markers in everyday speech of the people who are living during the period under study, and for that the play has been written. The content of the markers and the peculiarities of their building can also be put to objective factors.

To subjective factors it is possible to rank author's making a decision about its being included or not included in the speech of a hero, the choice of the type of the marker and the site of its placement in the construction, and sometimes the demand of the rhyme or a peculiar plan of the author.

"Ready-made" units, the composition and structure of which vary, surround the anchor part of the sentence with a question tag. These units consist of one, two or even three predicative (modal-predicative phrase *I think, I mean, I 'faith, I trust*) and non-predicative (exclamations (*why, tush, no*), interjections (*ha, o*) adverbs (*then, sure, already*), addresses (*sir, my good Lords*) components. They form the borders of the construction, not being built into it. There is a tendency of the combination of markers belonging to different types. Such combinations form the initial and the final parts of the construction. Thus, the structures that form phatic part are placed outside and build a special "frame" for the informative part of the sentence. But some authors place the phatic components inside the sentence, delimiting a certain syntagma. In the period under study such a placement is not usual.

Limitation and Study Forward. This study charts only several types of pragmatic markers in the tag question structures, found in the artworks of English authors, which were written in the period from 1485 to 1650, and the object of the discussion is only some structural characteristics of the sentences consisting such markers. As study forward it is possible to imagine the enlargement of the variety of the markers under analysis, investigating functional and pragmatic aspect of the constructions, their "conduct" as the lines in dialogic unities, analyzing individual preferences of the authors to choosing pragmatic markers and author's particularities of building sentences and dialogues.

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