Interrogative Sentences

Interrogative sentences ask questions. There are five types of interrogative sentences: **general questions, special questions, alternative questions, tag questions, echo tags;**each type having its own distinctive form.

Various grammar books offer different lists of question types, which can be explained by the level of generalization assumed by the authors.

*14.1.2.1. General Questions (Yes/No Questions)*

General questions are formed by placing the auxiliary/modal verb (the operator) before the subject and giving the sentence a rising intonation. General questions require the answer *Yes*or *No:*

*Does she know you?*

*Have you ever been to Monaco?*

*Are they sleeping?*

*Must we really do it?*

Negative general questions rather express surprise, doubt or disappointment than ask a question:

*Doesn't she know you? Haven't you ever been to Monaco? Aren't they sleeping? Mustn't we really do it?*

They are translated into Russian with the help of the words *разве, неужели,*and they are responded to according to their meaning, not the form:

*Haven't they got a car?*(= *Разве/Неужели у них нет машины?)*

* *Yes, they have.*(= *Да I Нет, есть.)*
* *No, they haven't. (=Да1Нет, нету.)*

*14.1.2.2. Special Questions (Wh-questions)*

Special questions begin with interrogative words *who I whom I whose, what, which, when, where, why, how*with an operator (an auxiliary verb) to follow. Normally a singular verb form is used in subject-questions. However, a plural verb can occur in questions about the subject when this subject is predictably plural:

*Who is laughing there?*

*Who are playing in that team?*

*When did you see him last?*

In Modern English only *which*can be followed by *of.*

*Which of them has done it?*

*Who did you give my money to?*(informal)

*Whom did you give my money to?*(formal)

*To whom did you give my money?*(very formal)

*Where did you start from?*(informal)

*From where did you start?*(formal)

*Whose books are these?*

In questions about the subject group no operator is needed when the predicate verb is in the simple present or simple past tense:

*Who teaches you grammar? What car came first?*

All the question words except *which*and *whose*can be given greater emphasis by adding *ever*which is written as a separate word and is often heavily stressed. Such questions express anger, concern, admiration or surprise:

*Who ever would have thought that? (=Да кто бы мог так подумать?) What ever did she tell you? (=Да что такого она вам сказала?)*

*Where ever did you find that? (=Да где вы это нашли?) Why ever didn't he come? (=Да почему же это он не пришел?)*

The elliptical *wh-*question with *why*followed by the bare infinitive usually carries the force of an inducement:

Why *do it?*(= Don't do it.) *Why not go there?*(= Go there.)

*Wh-*questions can be negative in form and express various degrees of surprise:

*Why didn't you tell us about it? Who will not marry me?*

Special questions are sometimes called content questions because they require specific answers.

*14.1.2.3. Alternative Questions*

An alternative question offers a choice between two or more alternatives and requires a specific answer. Structurally alternative questions resemble general questions but the former have a disjunctive conjunction *or*linking two homogeneous parts of the sentence. The part that comes before the conjunction is spoken with a rising intonation; the part after the conjunction — with a falling intonation:

*Is she really*↑*rich or just*↓*well off?*

*Shall we go to the*↑*movies, a*↓ *cafe or stay at*v *home?*

Care should be taken not to confuse the alternative question with the general question where the conjunction *or*is rather copulative (= and) than disjunctive (offering a choice). They can be distinguished only by their intonation patterns. Cf.:

*Do you play*↑*chess or*↓*draughts ?*(alternative question)

— *I play draughts only.*

*Do you play*↑*chess or*↓*draughts ?*(general question)

— No, *I play only card games.*

There are crossbreeds of an alternative question and a special question:

*What would you like, soft or strong drinks? Which would you prefer, gold or silver?*

*14.1.2.4. Tag Questions (Question Tags)*

1. **Form and Meaning**. A tag question consists of two parts separated by a comma. The first part is a statement, the second *a tag.*A tag is a two-word question consisting of an operator (an auxiliary/modal verb, the verb *be,*sometimes the verb *have)*and a personal pronoun. The operator is repeated from the statement and the pronoun refers to the subject of the statement. There are four types of tag questions. For the first two most common types of tag question, the tag is negative if the statement is positive (1) and vice versa (2):

1. *The earth is round, isn't it?*(positive statement + negative tag)
2. *The earth is not flat, is it?*(negative statement + positive tag)

The meanings of all types of tag questions, like their forms, involve a statement and a question; each of them asserts something, and the used intonation reveals the focal point of communication. When the tag element has a rising intonation, it is a question; when the tag element has a falling intonation, it is rather a statement or an exclamation but not a genuine question.

Questions that need answers:

*The earth is round,*↑*isn't it?*

*The earth is not flat,*↑*is it?*

Either no response is expected or a confirmation is hoped for:

*The earth is round,*↓*isn't it?*

*The earth is not flat,*↓ *is it?*

Two less common types of tag questions are the tag questions in which both the statement and the tag element are of the same denomination, either affirmative or negative:

1. *You'll do that, will you?*(positive statement + positive tag)
2. *So you won't do that, won't you?*(negative statement + negative tag)

Tag questions where both parts are positive (3) may have either rising or falling intonation. Tag questions with both parts negative (4) are rarely used as they are offensively aggressive. Cf.:

*So she is here,*↑*is she?*(request for confirmation of a deducted conclusion)

*You'll clean my shoes,*↑*will you?*(patronizing order)

*So she is here,*↓*is she?*(disappointment, suspicion)

You *won't call me names,*↓*won't you?*(threatening order)

A tag element can also be added to imperatives and exclamations. The operator with imperatives is *will, won't, can, can't*or *could:*

*Open the door, will you?*

*Do sit down, won't you?*

*Don't do that, will you?*

*Shut up, can't you?*

*How nice she is, isn't she?*

*2.*Usage. The tag element after the pattern *I am...*is *aren't I*(or *ain't I*in AmE):

*I'm right, aren't I?*

*There*can be used as the subject in both parts of a tag question:

*There is something fishy in it, isn't there?*

*This*and *that*in the statement are replaced by *it*in the tag element:

*This / that (notebook computer) is very expensive, isn't it?*

*Let's*in the statement is represented by *shall we*in the tag element:

*Let's do it, shall we?*

A statement can be made negative with the help of the negative pronouns *nothing, nobody,*etc. and (semi)negative words *seldom, rarely, scarcely, hardly, barely, few, little:*

*Nothing I little is known about it, is it?*

*She can hardly do it, can she?*

*He scarcely seems to care, does he?*

When the subject of the statement is *somebody, someone, anybody, anyone, nobody, no one, everybody, everyone,*the plural personal pronoun *they*(and the plural form operator) is used in the tag element:

*Nobody knows it, do they?*

*Anybody can do it, can't they?*

The negative tag can sometimes be unabbreviated in a formal style or for special emphasis:

*We have unanimously come to this agreement, have not we?*(or *have we not?).*

If the speaker is making a statement about him / herself and wants to check if the other person has the same opinion or feeling, s/he can put a tag with stressed you after the statement:

I *like coffee, don't you?*

There are a number of set phrases that can be used in place of the tag element. They are: *right?, OK?*(informal) or *isn't that so /true?, don't you think /agree?*(formal style). These phrases are invariant, i. e. they have the same form whether the statement is positive or negative:

*We are no longer enemies, right?*

*We're friends now, OK?*

When replying to a tag question the answer refers to the statement, not to the tag.

Question tags are usually translated into Russian with the help of the words *не так ли?, не правда ли?, ведь:*

*They haven't got a car, have they?*(= У *них ведь нет машины, не так ли?)*

* *Yes, they have. (=Да/Нет, есть.)*
* *No, they haven't. (= Да IНет, нету.)*

*14.1.2.5. Echo Tags (Response/Reply Question)*

An echo tag is a response, in tag form, to a preceding affirmative or negative statement:

*She loves him.*— Oh, *does she?*

*He doesn't like her.*—*Doesn't he?*

Echo tags express interest or concern when they are pronounced with a rising intonation. Their most common use is just to show that we are listening:

*I've got a terrible headache. —*↑*Have you? I'll get you an aspirin then.*

*They aren't too happy together. —*↑*Aren't they? I'm really sorry about it.*

When pronounced with a falling intonation, echo tags express surprise, disbelief, disapproval or anger:

*I've got the sack.*— ↓ *Have you? But it's outrageous!*

A negative echo tag may be given as a reply to an affirmative statement to express emphatic agreement:

She *looks terrific today.*— *Yes, doesn't she?*