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An analysis of the textbooks in Iran, old and new series, reveals that canonical tag questions have been given much attention and there is not much space for invariant tag questions

To bridge the gap between the written and spoken modes, Biber (1986) presented "multi-feature/multi-dimension" approach which was an attempt to overcome the contradictions between linguistic relationships between written and spoken modes, arising from the restricted methodologies like assigning undue weight to individual linguistic features. In a nutshell, grammatical materials not

only incorporate verbal discourse but also manage to provide activities that allow those features to be operated. Therefore, it is suggested that the material developers need to rebalance the canonical and invariant types of tag questions in the textbooks in order to create real language.

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more difficulties during its application (Bax, 2003). While, as Savignon (2007) states, the essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence. Nunan (1991) characterizes two of the CLT features as follows:

1. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

Therefore corpus linguistics can help material developers and teachers shift away from "correct and incorrect dichotomy" to new alternatives like "likely and unlikely". As Jones and walker (2015) have asserted, the contribution of corpus linguistics is about frequency, chunks and semantic prosody of grammatical items, that is, whether a pattern has negative, neutral or positive shading in context

One of the ways to overcome the problem is to teach both types of tag questions as "norms" in the class through integration of computer mediated communication (CMC) that can provide learners with more authentic input and more opportunities to participate in the

target socio-cultural contexts through

which both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge can be promoted (Nunan, 2015; Richards and Nunan, 2015). In addition, Nunan (2015) suggests watching a lot of movies without subtitles that provides learners with both types of the norms. The reason is that presenting norms (Gass et al., 2002), instead of 'criteria', sensitizes learners to the multiple and shifting meaning potential of language" (Kramsch, 2002). If we acknowledge variability in pedagogic norms, we have to acknowledge that different contexts call for different norms. It could be argued that the form of a language that is taught has rarely reflected the full range of native speaker forms and registers. Hughes (2011) believes that" there needs to be a balance struck between clearly inadequate models of spoken grammar and the norms of classrooms and published materials" (p.59).

Corpus linguistics can contribute to the development of tag questions teaching. Conrad (2010) believes:

The great contribution of corpus linguistics to grammar is that it increases researchers' ability to systematically study the variation in a large collection of texts – produced by far more speakers and writers, and covering a far greater number of words, than could be analysed by hand. Corpus linguistic techniques allow us to determine common and uncommon choices and to see the patterns that reveal what is typical or untypical in particular contexts. (p. 228)

Therefore corpus linguistics can help material developers and teachers shift away from "correct and incorrect

"colloquialization" because invariant question tags are a little too colloquial, they depend on "shared immediate context between speaker and hearer. They are characteristics of interactive spoken language."

Tag Questions in Iranian Language Education

An analysis of the textbooks in Iran, old and new series, reveals that canonical tag questions have been given much attention and there is not much space for invariant tag questions. There are a few reasons for this priority in language learning classes; one historical reason is the Chomkyan autonomous linguistics which focuses on the structural regularities in particular languages without taking into consideration the society, the language users themselves, or the beliefs of these language users. Additionally, Baker (2015) has listed some reasons and believes that "a satisfying degree of syntactic complexity that challenges intermediate learners" is one reason for this attraction. The second reason that Baker refers to is that "it includes pronouns, tenses

and forms" because it involves a range of linguistic items. The next reason lies in the fact that tag questions are a good vehicle for "checking and reusing learners' understanding." This may lead to a better perception of the speakers' intention. The last reason is that tag questions are "easy to test in exams." Therefore they live up to teachers' expectation to examine their students easily.

The writers of the new textbooks (Prospect Series) have shown much tendency towards CLT approach (Kamyabi Gol and Baghaeeyan, 2014). On the other hand, Tottie and Hoffman (2006), Leech et al. (2012) and Baker (2015) have attested that the use of invariant tags is becoming increasingly common in spoken language. Stern (1992) argues that one of the most difficult problems to make classroom learning communicative is the absence of native speakers. Nunan also sees it as a "challenge". Apparently, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, owing to limitations, like the purpose of learning English, learning environments, teachers' English proficiency, and the availability of authentic English materials, CLT faces much



putting on.

They also found that there are nine times as many canonical tag questions in British English as in American English. In addition, the greatest difference in polarity types is that the type negative-positive is more frequent in American English than in British English. They reported that in functions of question tags, facilitative question tags account for a greater proportion in American English while confirmatory and attitudinal uses account for a greater proportion in British English. And about the users they asserted that younger people (American and British) used far fewer canonical question tags than older people.

Baker (2015) refers to the same factors leading to poor

tendency of canonical question tags:

- A) The obvious effect of demographic change. This was found in question tags across two generations.
- B) The strong tendency for American English and its effect on British English.
- C) The tendency of local variants to challenge their native speakers. This may be the result of English as a lingua franca.

However, both Tottie and Hoffman (2006) and Baker (2015) assert that the use of canonical question tags will not decline but invariant forms will gradually take the central stage, especially in informal speech. Leech, Hundt, Mair and Smith (2012, p. 225) call this tendency

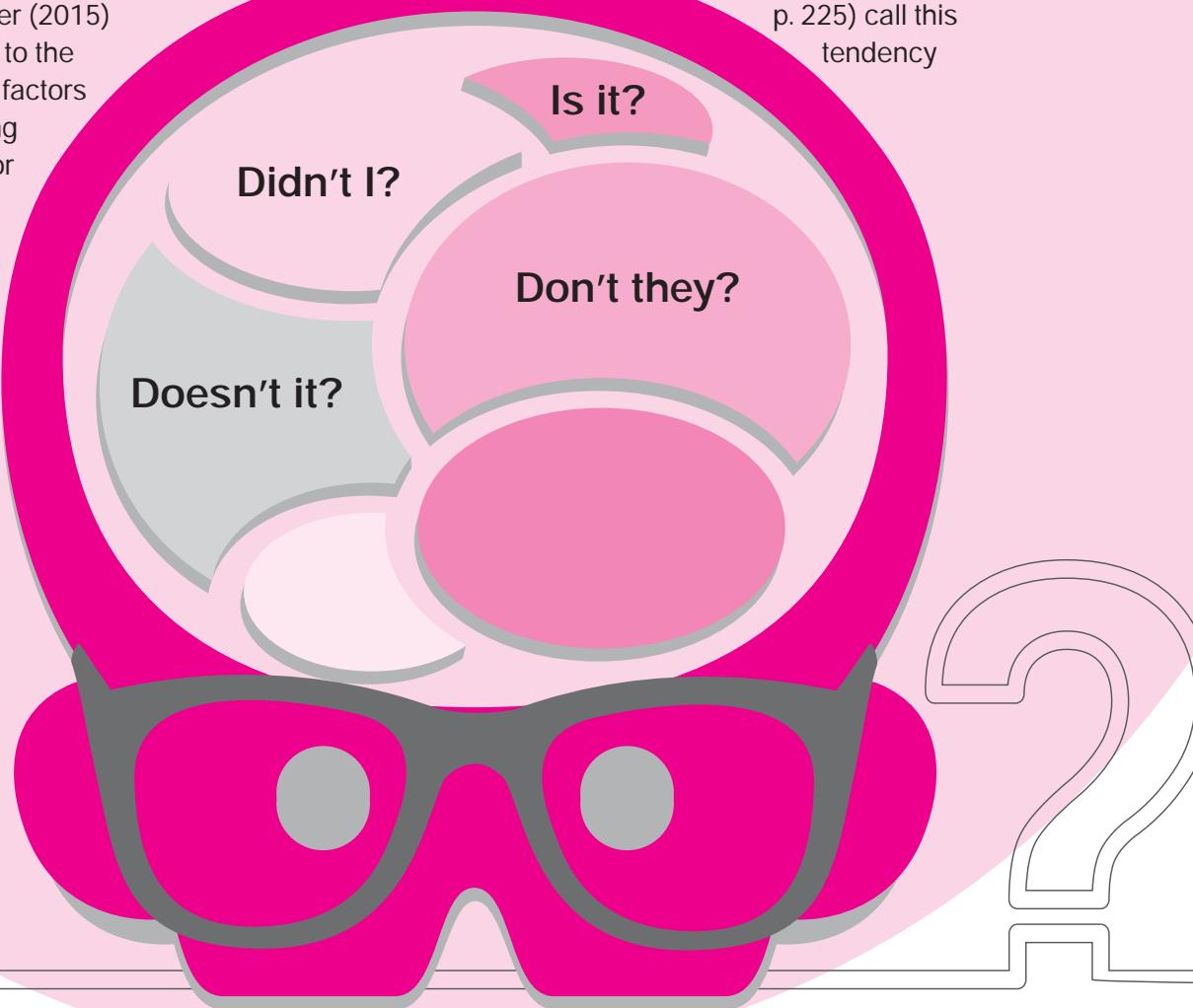


Table 1. Types of canonical question tags

anchor	question tag	polarity
1) Makes you really think,	doesn't it?	Positive-negative
2) Oh, it's not very valuable,	is it?	Negative-positive
3) So, this is the letter he sent you,	is it?	Positive-positive (rare)
4) Yes, they don't come cheap,	don't they?	Negative-negative (rare)

Another type of tag questions also reported in the literature is the one with elliptical anchors.

- 1) Terrible, isn't she?
- 2) Gorgeous blue, aren't they?
- 3) East Detroit, isn't it?
- 4) Piece of cake, isn't it?

As these instances show they are used as equivalents of regular tag questions.

Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Question Tags

Holmes (1995) made the first attempts to categorize question tag functions.

Question tags are divided into **epistemic modal** (expressing speaker uncertainty) and **affective modal** with three affective subtypes: facilitative (expressing positive politeness), softening (expressing negative politeness to attenuate the force of negatively affective utterances) and challenging (provoke an answer from a reluctant addressee). Holmes (1995) believes that, in this sense, tag questions can also fulfil the function of hedging.

In another taxonomy, Tottie and Hoffman (2006) presented their categorization as follows:

- 1) Informational (genuine request for information)
A: *You are getting paid for this, aren't you?*
B: *Twenty five quid.*
- 2) Confirmatory (speaker is not sure of what he/she says and wants confirmation)

A: *I'm going to try to go walking for a little bit. I don't need a jacket, do I?*

B: *No, it's still pleasant.*

3) Attitudinal (emphasizes what the speaker says; no reply is expected)

A: *She'll be in trouble, won't she? She often eats fatty food. Every day...*

B: *Mh*

4) Facilitating (the speaker is sure of the truth of what he/she says but wants to involve listeners)

Teacher: *Right, it's two, isn't it?*

Student: *Mm.*

5) Peremptory (it follows a statement which follows a generally acknowledged truth and intended to close off debate)

A: *How old are your mum and dad?*

B: *(laughs)*

A: *He doesn't know either.*

B: *They're, hh their forties anyway, I think.*

C: *That's what I said.*

A: *Well, we came to that conclusion, didn't we?*

B: *My dad's forty seven; my mom's about forty three.*

6) Aggressive (it functions as insult or provocation)

A: *Well I put. Thought you were staying to tea so I put six eggs on.*

B: *Oh aye, yeah, alright.*

C: *You put what?*

A: *Put six eggs on, didn't I? Anyhow, I'm*

Abstract

This study aims at investigating different types of question tags and their use. Tag questions can be classified into canonical tags where either a positive statement is followed by a negative or a negative statement is followed by a positive tag and invariant tags where the same tag word is used irrespective of the syntax of the main clause. Studies have shown that during the process of "colloquialization" invariant forms will gradually take the central stage especially in informal speech while the use of canonical question tags will not decline. An analysis of the textbooks in Iran, old and new series, reveals that canonical tag questions have been given much attention and there is not much space for invariant tag questions. The writers of the new textbooks (Prospect Series) have shown much tendency towards the CLT approach; on the other hand, recent studies have attested that the use of invariant tags is becoming increasingly common in spoken language. Therefore it is suggested that the material developers need to rebalance the canonical and invariant types of tag questions in the textbooks in order to make language as natural as possible.

Key Words : Tag questions, canonical tags, invariant tags, colloquialization, CLT approach

Introduction

Tag questions are widely used in many languages. A question tag consists of two clauses, an anchor and a tag. The subject may be a full noun phrase, a pronoun or the word "there", but in the tag part, it must be either a personal pronoun, or the words "there" or "one". The verb is a lexical item, an auxiliary or a modal. The verb in the tag must be an auxiliary or a modal. Tag questions can be classified into four canonical tags where either a positive statement is followed by a negative (it is beautiful, isn't it?) or a negative statement is followed by a positive tag (It isn't beautiful, is it?). Two other rare types are also found; positive-positive tag forms (this is your own work, is it?) and even negative-negative type (Tottie and Hoffman, 2006; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik, 1998).

The second category is invariant tags where the same tag word is used irrespective of the syntax of the main clause (e.g. you told her, right? Or you're going now right?). Additionally, there is evidence showing that the use of these

invariant tags is on the rise. In spite of this trend, the canonical tags normally receive most of the attention in ELT education (Tottie and Hoffman, 2006; Baker, 2015).

Polarity Types of Tag Question

Question tags vary between two positive and negative poles. The canonical type is often found with reversed or constant polarity as it is shown in Table 1.



Do Question Tags Tag Questions?

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چکیده

هدف این مطالعه بررسی انواع «دم سؤالی»ها (Tag Question) و کاربرد آن‌ها می‌باشد. دم سؤالی‌ها به انواع معیاری و کاربردی تقسیم می‌شوند. در نوع معیاری دم سؤالی مثبت به دنبال جمله منفی می‌آید و دم سؤالی منفی در انتهای جمله مثبت قرار می‌گیرد. در نوع کاربردی که دم سؤالی‌های یکسان بدون توجه به قواعد نحوی جمله به کار می‌رود. مطالعات نشان می‌دهد که در جریان فرایند «محاوره‌ای سازی» Colloquialization دم سؤالی‌های کاربردی به تدریج جایگاه اصلی را خصوصاً در زبان محاوره‌ای خواهند داشت در حالی که کاربرد دم سؤالی‌های معیار نیز کاهش نخواهد یافت. مطالعه کتاب‌های درسی قدیم و جدید در ایران نشان می‌دهد که تمامی توجه به سوی دم سؤالی‌های معیار بوده و جایی برای نوع کاربردی آن وجود نداشته است. نویسنده‌گان کتاب‌های درسی جدید (Prospect Series) تمایل بسیاری به رویکرد CLT نشان می‌دهند، از سوی دیگر مطالعات اخیر نشان می‌دهد که دم سؤالی‌های کاربردی در گفتار به طور فرایندهای در حال رواج است. بنابراین پیشنهاد می‌شود طراحان محتوای آموزشی در کاربرد طبیعی زبان به کارگیری انواع معیار و کاربردی دم سؤالی‌ها را مورد بازبینی قرار دهند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: دم سؤالی، دم سؤالی معیار، دم سؤالی کاربردی، محاوره‌ای سازی، رویکرد CLT