Questions and Face-work: Research articles and popular science articles compared

Elsa Pic and Grégory Furmaniak

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle
Aims and scope

• Project on grammatical ≠ between research articles (RAs) and popular science articles (PAs)
• Interpersonal ≠ reflected in grammatical expression of stance, hedging, presupposition…often analyzed in terms of face-work (Varttala 2001, Thompson 2001)
• Today: questions
  – Face-maintaining tools (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987)
  – Qnt and Qlt ≠ between RAs and PAs (344 vs 735)
  ➔ Explained in terms of face-work
Outline

1. Presentation of the corpus
2. Methodology
3. Question-types in the corpus
4. How genre-specific constraints on face-management affect the use of questions?
Composition of the corpus

Articles in **British English**, written between **2000** and **2012**.

**Specialised subcorpus**
- 500,000 words
- Eco
- Astro
- Philo
- Applied Maths
- History

**Popularised subcorpus**
- 500,000 words
- Eco
- Astro
- Philo
- Applied Maths
- History
- AntConc software: 1079 questions
- Data-analysis: each question: 20 formal and semantic parameters (2-12 values): syntactic form, speech-act, position, cluster, conduciveness, answer, questioner/answerer, subject, modal…)
- Trideux statistical package → 8 types (prototypical properties)
  1) Pseudo-polemic questions
  2) Metadiscursive questions
  3) Argumentative questions
  4) Speech-act inquiries
  5) Hedged hypotheses
  6) Collaborative questions
  7) Content-inquiries
  8) Phatic questions

- PEM: (“percentage from maximum deviation” = “indicator of the strength of the link of attraction (or repulsion)” (Cibois 2009: 67)

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(Ex1) 4.1.4 Is the transport non-local?

(Ex2) 2.2 The psychology of divorce

**On what psychological trait does this ability to make an artefact that only has use together with, or for making, another depend?**

- **Function**: announce the problem/question to be solved
- **Prototypical features**: W>W, non-conducive, no direct answer, clusters, guiding positions
Type 2: Argumentative questions

(EX1) But **why assume that** Wittgenstein’s ‘we’ has a single, fundamental pattern of use throughout his later writings, or indeed within the Investigations?

(EX2) **Indeed, don’t such cases motivate**, if anything, an anti-luck epistemology defined in terms of some sort of safety condition, rather than an account of knowledge defined exclusively in terms of the epistemic virtues and cognitive faculties?

- **Function**: object to / support argument(s)
- **Prototypical features**: W>R (reader-in-the text), conducive, no answer, few clusters (esp. in PAs), non-guiding positions (body of text)
(Ex1) In other words, is it possible that our objects that lie below the local Fundamental Plane could have a bright-extended disc of recent star formation that would increase the observed effective radius?

(Ex2) Maybe this is because many British amateurs make a good south-facing observatory their top priority and find a tall tree always blocking their north horizon?

- **Function**: Tentative hypotheses and explanations submitted to R
- **Prototypical features**: $W > R$, ± conducive, no answer, non-guiding position, clusters (in RAs), yes/no
Type 4: Pseudo-polemic questions

(Ex) Similarly, claims widely recognised as unrealistic are a feature of seemingly all mathematical deductivist endeavour in modern economics (...). Why should this be? And specifically, why do I suppose that the emphasis on formalistic modelling is the problem? My answer, simply put, can be expressed in the following three propositions.

- **Functions**: R’s point of view ➔ object to W’s argument ➔ W anticipates R’s objection but real purpose: provide + argts

- **Prototypical features**: R>W, conducive, no answer, no cluster,± guiding positions, wh-
Type 5: Speech act-enquiries

(Ex1) Why do I suppose that mathematical deductivist modelling of the sort pursued by economists is a problem in itself?

(Ex2) What do I mean?

- **Function**: Invites W to justify/clarify what has just been written.
- **Prototypical features**: R>W, non-conducive, answer, no cluster, non-guiding position
Type 6: Content-inquiries

(Ex1) "But what on earth is computational fluid dynamics?" I hear you ask! Don't worry, we will come on to that.

(Ex2) Why does dry spaghetti snap not into two, but three, four, and sometimes even ten pieces when it is bent?

- **Function**: Invites W to provide information or explain a fact → ‘normal’ / ‘unmarked’ questions
- **Prototypical features**: R>W, non-conducive, answer, no cluster, non-guiding position
Type 7: Phatic questions

(Ex1) Can you see a difference in the supposedly more open spiral arms of M99 compared with M100?

(Ex2) Do you prefer your maths in exotic locations? Then perhaps you should join a band of bell ringers.

- **Function:** Connecting with R (direct address/non-content questions)
- **Prototypical features:** W>R, non-conducive, no answer, yes/no
(Ex1) What do we know about the structure of the planet?

(EX2) § What, then, can we learn from this episode? What do the reactions of early Victorian elites to Brooke suggest about how they related to their nation and their empire?

- Intermediate category (metadiscursive + inquiries)
- **Prototypical features**: $W+R>W$, non-conducive, ± cluster, ± guiding-position, ± answer
- **Function**: Construct R as W’s partner
  - In RAs: W and R progress through the text together
  - In PAs: W and R share the same interrogations
(i) Why are some question-types attracted to RAs or PAs?

(ii) Why are questions more frequent in PAs? (including those attracted to RAs)
Face-work, question-types and genres

- Ethos of each genre creates ≠ expectations in terms of face-management
- Each question-type has different effects in terms of face-work

→ Explain results by comparing these 2 factors

- Face-work considered at 2 levels: interpersonal vs textual (Halliday 1994, Thompson 2001)

→ How each question-type contributes to face-management at each level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What the question does</th>
<th>R’s + face</th>
<th>R’s – face</th>
<th>W’s + face</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Involves R in the interaction</td>
<td>boosts</td>
<td></td>
<td>boosts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puts words into R’s mouth (manipulative)</td>
<td></td>
<td>threatens</td>
<td>threatens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives R a role</td>
<td>Asker ⇒ knowledge asymmetry</td>
<td>threatens</td>
<td>threatens</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arguer/Respondent ⇒ knowledge symmetry</td>
<td>boosts</td>
<td>boosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>± Guides R through the text</td>
<td>± boosts</td>
<td>± boosts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Face-work in RA-specific questions

• R = peer deserving respect; W = scholar appearing competent & modest

1. Interpersonal: R as Arguer/debater rather than as Asker (ep. asymmetry)
   ➔ *Pseudo-polemic / speech-act inquiries:*
     • R>W: R knowledgeable enough to react/object (+ politeness to R)
     • W takes into account R’s potentially ≠ view (+ politeness to R/W)
   ➔ *Argumentative / Hedges:*
     • W>R: R knowledgeable enough to confirm/assess/approve
   ➔ **Marked questions** attracted to RA because conducive / argumentative
   ➔ Still, *manipulative/FT* (W attributes words to R for his own purposes) ➔ rare

2. Textual: Expect guidance through highly structured texts (moves)
   ➔ ‘reader-friendly’ *metadiscursive questions* + guiding position
Face-work in PA-specific questions

- **R** = lay-person to be informed and entertained
- **W** = expert appearing knowledgeable and friendly (paying-audience)

1. **Interpersonal:**
   - **R**: Asker / **W**: Answerer: knowledge asymmetry inherent in the genre
   - **Unmarked ‘real’ questions** attracted to PAs
     - **Contents-inquiries**
     - **Collaborative questions** (solidarity W//R → redress FTA)
   - **R** as a Person-outside-the-text
     - **Phatic questions**

2. **Textual:** shorter texts, loosely structured, conversational
   - Still need to be reader-friendly but guiding less necessary
     - **Metadiscursive Q** and guiding positions less attracted
Conclusion

- Questions twice as frequent in PAs as in RAs
- But the genres attract different question-types

Explanation in terms of face-work based on 2 premises:
  i. Face-management expectations different in the 2 genres
  ii. Each question-type accomplishes different face-work

- Unmarked questions repulsed by RAs because FT in that context
- Marked questions attracted to RAs because argumentative + symmetry
- Yet markedness = low frequency → QNT difference betw. RAs and PAs

Further research:
- Impact of face-related specificities of genres on other grammatical markers
- Other (PA-specific) questions not explained by face-work
References

• Han, C-H. 2002. Interpreting interrogatives as rhetorical questions. Lingua 112, 201-229.
• Romero, Maribel & Chung-hye Han ( ) On Negative Yes/No Questions. Linguistic and Philosophy, 27 (5):609-658
Corpus: specialised sources

Peer-Reviewed Academic Journals. Written by and for experts.

SOURCES:
The Historian
The Historical Journal
IMA Journal of Applied Mathematics
Journal of Logic & Analysis
Journal of the London Mathematical Society
Analysis
European Journal of Philosophy
Journal of Moral Philosophy
Metaphilosophy
Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy
Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society
Cambridge Journal of Economics
Monthly Proceedings of the Royal Astronomical Society
Popularisation articles written by experts for the general public:

“History Today is a unique cultural institution, bringing the best in historical writing and research to a wide audience.”

SOURCES:

History Today
Plus Maths Magazine
Think
Economic Affairs
World Economics
Astronomy Now Magazine
Popular Astronomy
Ratiocinative questions

• Questions in RAs and PAs ➔ no response.
• But not necessarily “rhetorical”:

Ex: *How should facts about obligation shape deliberation? In particular, how should a promise shape our thinking about whether to fulfil it?* For a simple rationalist there are two alternatives: either a promise provides us with a good reason to fulfil it or it provides us with a decisive reason to fulfil it.

• “Rhetoricity” tests fail: *yet / after all / by any chance.*

 ➔ No biased assertion ➔ Rejected.
### ESP -

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### VULC

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Distribution of question-types in RAs and PAs

- Argumentative questions
- Hedging questions
- Connecting questions
- Pseudo-polemic questions
- Contents-inquiries
- Speech-act inquiries
- Guiding questions
- Collaborative questions

Raw Frequency

RA
PA
<p>| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | AA | AB | AC | AD |</p>
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Pseudo-polemic questions in RAs

Author anticipates objections from peers.

⇒ **Argumentation / justification:**

Ex: *Similarly, claims widely recognised as unrealistic are a feature of seemingly all mathematical deductivist endeavour in modern economics (...). Why should this be? And specifically, why do I suppose that the emphasis on formalistic modelling is the problem? My answer, simply put, can be expressed in the following three propositions.*

1. I make a claim.
2. You may wonder why I think/say is it the case and you may object to this.
3. I provide further evidence to support my claim.*