

TAG QUESTIONS VARIETY: RENAISSANCE PERIOD

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Abstract

The work analyzes the constructions with tag questions from Renaissance artworks (circa 1485-1650). The discussion includes both "canonical" constructions with a predictive tag question like *She is at home, isn't she?* and constructions with other attached parts: an interjection, a well-established predictive combination, a word, an *or*-structure like *She is at home, eh? / say you? / then? / or is she?*. The typology of the constructions, lexical composition of the attached parts, grammatical details and some stylistic features of the construction of the reference sentence (anchor) and the attached question have been discussed. The discussion consists of authorial choice of lexical means, the arrangement of words in the tags, the place of tags in the anchors, the peculiarities of graphical representation of the constructions in the texts.

Key words: tag questions, historical syntax, spoken interaction, authorial styles.

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INTRODUCTION

Tag question construction is a widespread phenomenon of modern English spoken language. That is why this question never ceases to attract the attention of researchers as a kind of an interrogative sentence, and as an independent object of study.

In the work "Tag questions in English. The first century" [Tottie, Hoffmann, 2009] the so-called canonical tag questions constructions like *It is cold, isn't it?* functioning in the texts of 16th century drama were described. According to a number of scientists, and which is shared by the author of this work, it is possible to refer to the tag questions not only canonical, but also other attached structures, both predicative, such as *don't you know?* and *or does she?*, and non-predicative, such as *huh?* *er? eh? and what? right? of course?* [Bolinger, 1957, p. 17-18; Universals of Human Language, 1978, p. 223, 224; The Encyclopedia, 1994, v. 4, p. 1714; Zandvoort, 1966, p. 225; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, Svartvik, 1972, p. 392; 2000, p. 1089; Visser, 2002, p. 176].

In this regard, it was interesting, having developed a unified approach and slightly broadened the scope of the study, to consider not only the canonical, but also other types of constructions with the tag questions, which were used by the authors of art works for about a century and a half, from 1485 to 1650, the period when the literary artifacts were created in which the first constructions with the tag questions were recorded.

METHODOLOGY

The linguistic material has been selected from 93 texts of works by English authors written between 1485 and 1650. The methods of theoretical and linguistic analysis of concepts on the subject under study, continuous sampling of the material under study, linguistic research of language facts, comparative analysis were applied. The authorship and time of writing have been verified by sources [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].

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The found structures with tag questions have been systematized on the basis of a single principle – the degree of lexical and grammatical orientation of the attached part

components on the main members of the base (prop, anchor, reference) sentence; three groups and ten types have been identified.

The **first group** includes structures in which the composition of the tag question depends entirely on the composition of the subject and predicate of the prop sentence. The predicate tag part has a subject, always represented by a personal pronoun corresponding to the subject of the prop sentence. The predicate is expressed by an auxiliary verb or a link-verb that was used in the prop sentence, or by a substitute verb. Since it is possible to formulate rules for their building, the tag structures in this group are called "expected", the term "canonical" mentioned above applies to them.

On the basis of the composition of the tag part in the first group we will distinguish three types – with a modal verb (type 1), an auxiliary verb (type 2) and a link-verb (type 3). In each type we can see varieties of one "+/+" and the opposite "+/-" and "-/+" polarity (the sign "-" means the presence of a negative particle in the prop or tag part of the sentence, the sign "+" – its absence).

Type 1 is represented by a construction with a modal verb in the tag question: *You will make yourself a party in the treason, will you?* (1639, Shirley J., "The Gentleman of Venice", p. 70); *Blinde men should iudge no coloures: should they nat?* (1562, Heywood J., "Three hundred epigrams", p. 166); *You will no crosse my purpose, will you?* (1607, Heywood Th., "The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange", s. 1797).

In the tag part of **type 2** constructions the auxiliary verb from the prop part is repeated: *Whetstone has set an edge upon you, has he?* (1614, Jonson B., "Barthlomew Fair", p. 391); *I had byn finely handled, had I not?* (1609, Middleton Th., "The Witch", p. 41); *Poets! they did not talk of me since I went, did they?* (1601, Jonson B., "The Poetaster", p. 423).

In subtype **2A** we will identify the structures in which the predicate of the prop part is constructed with a principal verb. In the tag part, it is represented by the substitute verb *do* in the corresponding form. The verb *have* is traditionally not substituted for the substitute verb and builds the tag part itself: *his mules have the staggers belike, have they?* (1601, Jonson B., "The Poetaster", p. 407). Other verbs are substituted: *I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?* (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 60); *He spake not with the*

fellow, did he? (1598, Jonson B., "Every Man in his Humour", p. 109).

In the constructions of **type 3**, the tag part is formed by the verb *be*: *Mercury! that's a poet, is it?* (1601, Jonson B., "The Poetaster", p. 475); *This Moor is comeliest, is he not?* (1594, Marlowe Ch., "The Jew of Malta", p. 418); *I am no kin to you, am I?* (1611, Beaumont Fr., Fletcher J., "A King, and no King", p. 217).

The **second group** includes constructions with such tag parts, the lexical and grammatical composition of which is partly oriented to the subject and predicate of the prop sentence. In contrast to the first group, the components of the tag question – verb and/or pronoun – do not correspond to the "expected" one. This group, similarly to the previous one, consists of the constructions in which the tag question contains a modal, auxiliary verb or *be* link-verb. In the same group we have included constructions with an attached *or*-structure.

Type 4 includes structures with a modal verb in the tag part. We have referred the sentence *I will say the crowe is white. wylt thou so?* (1562, Heywood J., "Three hundred epigrams", p. 177) to this type, with the observed tag *wylt thou?* with the expected canonic *will I?* (in the event that the tag question referred to the main clause), or *is it?* (if it related to the subordinate clause).

To the same type we have included sentences with a mismatch of verbs in the prop and tag parts: *You'll nought else, sir, would you?* (1601, Jonson B., "The Poetaster", p. 431) and *I will hold my peace when Achilles' brach bids me, shall I?* (1602, Shakespeare W., "Troilus and Cressida", p. 818).

To **type 5** we have included constructions with an auxiliary verb in the tag part.

A characteristic feature of the period under study is the authors' use of specific structures, which we will call "absolute forms". The existence of such structures is also noted in the works of O. Jespersen and F. Visser [Jespersen, 1940, p. 481; Visser, 2002, p. 175, 277]. The tag question is formed by a verb repeated from the prop sentence, which may contain a negative particle: *...thou hast been at Parris garden hast not?* (1602, Dekker Th., "The Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet", p. 229). Obligatory deletion of the pronoun does not qualify them as canonical type 2.

Constructions of **type 6** have a tag question with a linking-verb.

This type can be illustrated with the sentence *You both are married, Lacy, art thou not?* (1599, Dekker Th., "The Shoemaker's Holiday", p. 84), with attaching word-combination *art thou?* but with "expected" attaching of the structure *are you?* Most likely, the prop part contains an assumption associated with two characters, and the query in the tag part is addressed to only one of them, hence the different forms of pronouns and verbs in the prop and tag parts.

The following sentence *How say you, Mrs Alise, is it not soe?* (from Thomas More's conversation notes, quote. on: [Wyld, 1936, p. 102]) will be referred to the same type, in which the prop part is constructed without the use of the verb *be*, while in the tag question it is present.

In constructions of **type 7**, with *or*-structure tags, both predicative *Will ye have this man, woman! or else will ye not?* (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 87), and non-predicative tag parts can be found. The latter can be represented as structures with reduced subject and predicate, but with preserved extreme elements, *or* and a negative particle: *Is it a bargaine Gemulo, or not?* (1600, Lyly J., "Maydes Metamorphosis", p. 375), or with preserved conjunction *or*, and a predicative part substituted with *no* or *none*: *Shall the maister weare a breeche, or none. sey you.* (1546, Heywood J., "A Dialogue of Proverbs", p. 143); *Nay? yes, very true, pray you*

tell her, be Selina in these woods, or no? (1625, Shirley J., "Love Tricks", p. 71).

The obligatory presence in the tag part of the delimiting conjunction *or*, and also potential possibility of replacement of the predicative tag structure by a simplified variant *or not* or *or no* do not allow to list such constructions to the first group of structures with tag questions. Structures of type 7 cannot be classified as alternative questions either, first of all because of the peculiarities of their functioning in a dialogical unity, because the response they call may be the same as a response to a general question sentence, i.e. containing words-sentences Yes/No or their equivalents, which is not characteristic for alternative questions at all.

The **third group** includes constructions with tag questions that have no lexical-grammatical connection with the prop sentence.

The tag question-phrase in constructions of **type 8** is based on verbs *quod*, *trowen*, *say*, *think*, *hear* in conjunction with the pronouns *you / thou*: "Enamoured, **quod you?**" (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 13); *Is it not, trow ye?* (ibid, p. 48); *Betweene nine and ten saist thou?* (1599, Shakespeare W., "The Merry Wives of Windsor", p. 561).

Among the tag structures with *think* and *hear*, there are examples of using analytical verb forms: *For such chance may chance in an hour – do ye hear?* (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 76); *Am I at livery, d'ye think?* (1637, Ford J., "The Fancies Chaste and Noble", p. 311), as well as constructed with synthetic forms: *Nay, nay, stay, stay; hear you?* (1599, Jonson B., "Every Man out of his Humour", p. 24); *Will all be perfect, think'st thou?* (1622, Middleton Th. and Rowley W., "The Changeling", p. 73).

We have classified the structures with tag interjection as **type 9**. The connected *ha? ho? и ah?* were found: *All thy tediousnesse on me, ah?* (1598, Shakespeare W., "Much Adoe about Nothing", p. 625); *You said it was a Toledo, ha?* (1598, Jonson B., "Every Man in his Humour", p. 142); *That is the matter, ho?* (1604, Shakespeare W., "Othello", p. 491).

In constructions of **type 10** there is a tag question word, represented by adverbs *indeed? sure? then?*: *But there was no such matter, Dame Cuustance, indeed?* (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 86); *You will not help me, then?* (1594, Marlowe Ch., "The Jew of Malta", p. 454); *You will not, sure?* (1641, Shirley J., "The Cardinal", p. 347).

Further we would like to note some lexical-grammatical and stylistic features of the found structures.

Speaking about lexicon chosen by authors at construction of the tag part, we will specify the forms of words and their quantity.

We have found few examples in which the authors fix partial phonetic reduction of words in the tag part. The reduction is characteristic for:

– verb *have*, as in the example *tis a good inditements, you haue put in enough for her ha you not?* (1602, Dekker Th., "The Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet", p. 215);

– pronouns *thou* and *you*: *Thou wou'lt not, wou'lt 'ou?* (1609, Beaumont Fr., Fletcher J., "The Captain", p. 279); *you are no Bayliffe nor Bayliffs man, are ye?* (1637, Deloney Th., "The Gentle Craft", p. 222);

– both verb *have* and pronoun *you* in the sentence *O, you haue made him a swecte beagle, ha' y not?* (1606, Chapman G., "The Gentleman Vsher", p. 320).

The complete reduction of the pronoun is observed in "absolute forms": *But it becoms me wel enough, dost not?* (1601, Shakespeare W., "Twelfth Night", p. 783); *Nay but harke you Frances, for the sugar thou gauest me, twas a peniworth, wast not?* (1598, Shakespeare W., "Henry IV", p. 520); *Count Hipolito, ist not?* (Dekker Th., "The Honest Whore", p. 30).

With regard to the number of words in the predicative tag questions, the authors may diversify the structures of "verb +

pronoun + (not)" not only by the reduction of words mentioned above, but also by adding a word or word combination. We have encountered examples with the addition of the adverb *so*, which is located in the final of the structure: *You'll shed his blood, you'll say: will you so?* (1623, Fletcher J., Rowley W., "The Maid in the Mill", p. 61); *He speaks here he's condemned. Is't so?* (1604, Dekker Th., "The Honest Whore", p. 197); *You would have me, and lie with me; is't not so?* (1611, Fletcher J., "The Womans Prize or the Tamer Tam'd", p. 6). In addition, the tag question can be supplemented by a predicative pragmatic marker, such as *I pray you: Why, so I do; do not I, I pray you?* (1600, Jonson B., "Cynthia's Revels", p. 342).

Speaking about grammatical characteristics of the tag-questions constructions of Renaissance period, we will mark the order of words in the tags, the choice of anchor type, the punctuation design of the constructions, the place of the tags in the anchors.

The constituents of tag questions of types 1-6 with negation are placed in the sequence "verb + pronoun + not" or "verb + not + pronoun": *You heard what this knave told me, did you not?* (1599, Shakespeare W., "The Merry Wives of Windsor", p. 552); *Why, so I do; do not I, I pray you?* (1600, Jonson B., "Cynthia's Revels", p. 342). The arrangement of the negative particle at pronoun is most characteristic, the placement *not* at verb is carried out in single cases by individual authors. The verb is always placed before the pronoun.

The order of words in the tag structures of type 8 may be different – with the verb taken forward *A little longer, say you?* (1631, Shirley J., "The Traitor", p. 183), or the pronoun *Yea, sir; by this shoe, you say?* (1599, Dekker Th., "The Shoemaker's Holiday", p. 58).

As for the choice of a prop sentence, it should be noted that in almost all groups there is a tendency for authors to use different communication types of sentences as prop ones.

For constructions of types 1-6, the most typical variant of a prop sentence is with a direct word order. Such a sentence can be represented in two ways. On the one hand, as a narrative. In this case the construction can be considered as a combination of a narrative sentence with an interrogative one. On the other hand, a prop sentence with a direct word order may be considered as a so-called declarative question, i.e. a general interrogative sentence characterized by the absence of inversion. And in this case the construction is a sequence of two questions – declarative and general. A prop sentence with inversion is a rarer phenomenon: *Is it sir Ambrose Coxcomb, is it not?* (1632, Shirley J., "The Ball", p. 29); *Already have I been too troublesome; say, have I not?* (1599, Dekker Th., "The Shoemaker's Holiday", p. 87).

Type 7 constructions are built with inversion of the prop sentence: *Attends he here, or no?* (1607, Shakespeare W., "Timon of Athens", p. 1002).

Type 8 is characterized by the use of prop sentences of all communicative types: imperative *Nay, nay, stay, stay; hear you?* (1599, Jonson B., "Every Man out of his Humour", p. 24), narrative *Why, ye drunken whoresons, will it not be?* (1533 Heywood J., "The Play of the Weather", p. 99), as well as interrogative. Then the question may be special: *What weigheth this evidence on both sides, think you?* (1556, Heywood J., "The Spider and the Fly", p. 164), or general with inversion: *Were it good think you?* (1598, Shakespeare W., "Much Adoe about Nothing", p. 620).

In constructions of types 9 and 10, the prop sentence is presented as a general question with inversion: *Ist good, Ist good, pure Helicon ha?* (1602, Dekker Th., "The Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet", p. 192); *Wilt thou forsake me, then?* (1600, Jonson B., "Cynthia's Revels", p. 315), or a sequence with a direct word order: *My sister should have been my Bride,*

that name Puts me in mind of Polidora, ha? (1635, Shirley J., "The Coronation", p. 275); *My brother Iohn is gone then?* (1631, Dekker Th., "Match mee in London", p. 198). For the type 9 construction, there is also an example with a special question *Who calles, ha?* (1601, Shakespeare W., "Twelfth night", p. 800).

Then we will say a few words about punctuation design of the structures with tags.

As is known, punctuation marks were originally intended for stylistic rather than grammatical purposes. In G. Puttenham's tract "The Arte of English poesie", written in 1589 [Puttenham, 1936] there is an indication of the number of pauses transmitted by punctuation marks. Therefore, both the presence and absence of a punctuation mark between the prop and tag parts are expected.

As can be seen from the above example sentences, in most of them there is a comma between the prop sentence and the tag structure. We have also met a period, question mark and exclamation mark: *You see an Asse head of your owne. Do you?* (1595, Shakespeare W., "A Midsummer Night's Dream", p. 362); *You know me? doe you not?* (1602, Shakespeare W., "Troilus and Cressida", p. 823); *Will ye have this man, woman! or else will ye not?* (1552, Udall N., "Ralph Roister Doister", p. 87). Some authors mark the border of the prop and tag parts with a colon or semicolon: *And I too harsh, perhaps, in my reproof: was I not, Clarinda?* (1632, Massinger Ph., "The Maid of Honour", p. 200); *You would have me, and lie with me; is't not so?* (1611, Fletcher J., "The Womans Prize or the Tamer Tam'd", p. 6).

The absence of a punctuation mark is observed before the tag parts of different types: *I thinke it is god morrow is it not?* (1598, Shakespeare W., "Henry IV", p. 525); *My brother Iohn is gone then?* (1631, Dekker Th "Match mee in London", p. 198); *Ist good, Ist good, pure Helicon ha?* (1602, Dekker Th "The Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet", p. 192); *Is he at M. Fords already think'st thou?* (1599, Shakespeare W., "The Merry Wives of Windsor", p. 562).

Constructions are completed, for the most part, with a question mark, while other final punctuation marks – a period, an exclamation mark – are an individual choice of the author: *Shall the maister weare a breeche, or none. sey you.* (1546, Heywood J., "A Dialogue of Proverbs", p. 143); *One of my wiues, is't not!* (1631, Dekker Th "Match mee in London", p. 144).

Stylistic techniques used by writers also bring variety in the constructions. For example, an unknown author of the play "Iacob and Esau", dated 1550, puts the tag question not in the end of the construction, which is typical for the vast majority of the examples we found, but in the middle, between the main and subordinate sentences: *I told you, did I not? that there would be a fray.* (quote. on: [Totti, Hoffmann, p. 142]).

Some authors use a combination of the same or different types of tag questions. So, in the construction *Gracious with the dutchess! sure, you said so?* (1632, Massinger Ph., "The Maid of Honour", p. 208) we see a combination of types 10 and 8, types 6 and 8 – in the construction *O t'is a wittie hearing, ist not thinke you?* (1606, Chapman G., "The Gentleman Vsher", p. 319). Tag questions of types 8 and 6 form the final of the construction *A peace concluded, saist thou? ist not so?* (1600, Heywood Th., "The Second Part of King Edward the Fourth", p. 110).

CONCLUSION

The paper describes the constructions with tag structures used by the authors of the end of XV - beginning of XVII centuries when reflecting the speech of their fictional characters. It is in the texts of this period, the so-called Renaissance period, that a construction with a tag question is first recorded. At this time, the authors are still very cautious when "working" with such constructions, not excessively saturating the speech of the characters, many do not use them

at all. In some examples, we can easily recognize the sentences of modern everyday speech, a number of structures are typical only for the period described.

The variety of found constructions has been shown and attempts to systematize them have been made. At the same time, the discussion includes not only sentences with canonical tag structures, but also with other established predictive combinations, as well as with non-predicative tag parts built by interjections and adverbs. The specified variety of the first constructions demands the further comprehension, while systematization and detailed consideration of the resulted material gives the chance to continue their studying.

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