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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Tázací dovětky v současné mluvené britské angličtině

Tag questions in present-day spoken British English

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the usage of question tags in present-day spoken British English. The theoretical part introduces both canonical and invariant question tags together with their distribution and pragmatic functions.

The analysis is a corpus-based study that uses the spoken part of British National Corpus 2014 as its source. It consists of two parts. The quantitative part provides a frequency list of all question tags found in the corpus.

The qualitative part focuses on a more detailed analysis of *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?* and *okay?*. The study analyses these question tags in terms of their syntactic characteristics and pragmatic functions, as well as from the socio-linguistic perspective.

KEYWORDS

tag questions, informal spoken British English, corpus linguistics

ABSTRAKT

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je využití tázacích dovětek v současné mluvené britské angličtině. Teoretická část popisuje jak kanonické, tak invariantní tázací dovětky společně s jejich distribucí a pragmatickými funkcemi.

Analytická část je korpusovou studií, která jako zdroj využívá mluvenou část Britského národního korpusu 2014. Skládá se ze dvou částí. Kvantitativní část zahrnuje frekvenční seznam všech tázacích dovětek, které korpus obsahuje.

Kvalitativní část se zaměřuje na detailnější analýzu tázacích dovětek *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?* a *okay?*. Tyto dovětky jsou analyzovány z hlediska syntaktických vlastností a pragmatických funkcí, stejně tak jako z hlediska sociolingvistického.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

tázací dovětky, běžně mluvená britská angličtina, korpusová lingvistika

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1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the use of question tags, both canonical and invariant, in present-day spoken English.

To do that, a corpus-based study is used. This thesis works with *Spoken BNC2014*, which contains data gathered between the years 2012 and 2016 (cf. *Spoken BNC2014* (Love et al. 2017)). It comprises 11 422 617 words of transcribed content, 668 speakers and 1 251 recordings (Ibid.).

The theoretical part deals with the form of question tags, their types, distribution, pragmatic, and speech functions. Moreover, it focuses on invariant question tags, their distribution, and functions. It also deals with some differences between British and American speakers' usage of question tags. Finally, a recent study of question tags comparing the *BNC1994* and *Spoken BNC2014* is discussed briefly.

The analysis consists of two parts. The quantitative part provides a frequency list and classification of question tags identified in the *Spoken BNC2014*. It also focuses on either verification or refutation of assumptions presented in the theoretical part of this thesis. The qualitative analysis focuses on a smaller sample (100 question tags). It consists of a more detailed analysis of four question tags – *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?* and *okay?*. The qualitative part focuses on the trends described in the literature, such as the tendency to use more invariant question tags in present-day English or the usage of the invariant tag *innit?* by British speakers. Its aim is also to focus on socio-linguistic factors, such as age or gender and the pragmatic functions that question tags carry.

The thesis is organised as follows. The second chapter of the thesis provides the theoretical background for the analysis. The third chapter describes the material used and the method adopted in the thesis. The results of the analysis are presented in chapter four and summarised in the Conclusion.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Question tags

Question tags are a type of *yes-no* questions, but they differ “sharply from other interrogative clauses both in form and use” (Biber et al. 1999: 204). They are not just an English phenomenon, but they can also be found in other languages like French, Dutch, Spanish, Hindi, etc. (Kimps 2018: 1). Their primary function is to elicit feedback, which according to Allerton (2009: 308), can be represented only by a single word signalling the hearer’s confirmation or agreement. Question tags are not independent clauses; they are appended to a preceding clause, usually a declarative one. The sentence comprising a question tag is sometimes described as a combination of an ‘anchor’ (i.e. the clause that the tag is appended to) and a ‘tag’ (cf. e.g. Tottie & Hoffmann 2006, Axelsson 2018).¹ The term ‘tag question’ may then be used to refer to the combination of the anchor and tag, and the term ‘question tag’ for the appended tag only (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 284). The category of question tags is relatively small compared to other question types, mainly since their form is very restricted. We can distinguish two main types of question tags: canonical and invariant (Tottie & Hoffmann: 2006).

2.2 The form of canonical question tags

A question tag “consists of operator and subject in that order” (Quirk et al. 1985: 810). If the operator needs to be negative, an enclitic *n’t* is used instead of the full form *not*, which is typical only of informal English in Northern British English dialects (Ibid.). When forming a question tag, several rules must be followed. First, an operator is used which corresponds to the operator of the preceding clause. If there is no operator in the anchor, the auxiliary *do* is inserted (e.g. *She goes to school every day, doesn’t she?*). Second, a pronominal subject is used, which must be coreferential with the subject of the anchor, “agreeing with it in number, person, and gender” (Ibid.). Next, the polarity of the tag is generally opposite to the polarity of the main clause. Finally, the intonation centre is placed on the auxiliary and is

¹ Different authors use different terms for the main sentence, such as *base sentence* (Allerton: 2009), *matrix clause* (Quirk et al.: 1985), *main clause* (Biber et al.: 1999), etc.

either falling or rising (Ibid.). A question tag formed according to these rules may be illustrated by *It's cold today, isn't it?*. In this example, *It's cold today* is the anchor and *isn't it?* is the tag that corresponds with the main clause in the operator and subject and is opposite to the main clause in polarity.

As was illustrated in the example above, the question tag is usually placed at the end of the sentence. However, it is also possible to put it in a different part of the sentence, but the tag can never precede the verb phrase of the main clause, e.g. *It seems a shame to break it up, doesn't it, when it's so good.* (Biber et al. 1999: 208).

2.3 The polarity and intonation of question tags

The classification of question tags in this thesis will be based on Quirk et al. (1985), who distinguish four main types of question tags. There are three factors in which these types differ – assumption expressed by the main clause, expectation expressed by the tag, and intonation (Quirk et al. 1985: 811).

The four types are:

1. Positive assumption + neutral expectation
e.g. *He enjoyed the play, didn't he?*
2. Negative assumption + neutral expectation
e.g. *He didn't enjoy the play, did he?*
3. Positive assumption + positive expectation
e.g. *He enjoyed the play, didn't he?*
4. Negative assumption + negative expectation (Ibid.)
e.g. *He didn't enjoy the play, did he?*

Regarding the intonation, types one and three have rising intonation, while with types two and four, falling intonation is used (Ibid.). Depending on the intonation used, the question tag gains different functions. “The tag with a rising tone invites verification, expecting the hearer to decide the truth of the proposition in the statement. The tag with the falling tone, on the other hand, invites confirmation of the statement and has the force of an exclamation rather than a genuine question” (Ibid.).

The types with a positive statement and a negative question tag are the most frequent ones both in British and American English (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 289). The reversed pattern is used far less, and it is more typical of American English (Ibid.).

2.4 Exceptions to the rules

Although the rules for forming question tags are relatively strict, there are some exceptions to be found. In addition to the four main types of question tags listed in 2.3, there is a less common type in which “both statement and question are positive” (Quirk et al. 1985: 812), and the intonation of the tag is rising (Ibid.). These questions “frequently echo a previous statement or draw a conclusion from something the previous speaker has said” (Biber et al. 1999: 209). This type of question tag is usually used sarcastically or with a scolding effect (Quirk et al. 1985: 812). It is also common for this type of question tag to be preceded by *oh* or *so*: *So that’s your little game, is it?* (Ibid.). It is used more often in British English than American English (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 289).

In their corpus-based study, Tottie & Hoffmann (2006: 283 – 284) also found instances of “constant negative polarity” tags, such as *Yes, they don’t come cheap, don’t they?*, which are only listed in Quirk et al. (1985: 813) as a theoretical option that “has not been clearly attested in actual use”.

In the research of González & Dehé (2020: 42), positive-negative question tags form seventy percent, negative-positive eighteen percent, constant positive eleven percent and constant negative only one percent of question tags used in everyday conversations.

Question tags may also follow a phrase or an incomplete clause: *Nice weather isn’t it?* (Biber et al. 1999: 209).

It can also happen that the question tag does not correspond with the anchor either in the subject or in the auxiliary (Ibid.). The reason behind this is usually that the speaker shifts “the assignment of conversational roles during the course of speaking” (Ibid.). An example of this could be: *He is always late, aren’t you?*

2.5 Question tags used with interrogative, imperative and exclamative sentences

Generally, question tags follow a declarative sentence. However, they can also be appended to interrogative, imperative or exclamative sentences.

In the sample used by González & Dehé (2020: 42) in their research, ninety-nine percent of question tags used a declarative sentence as an anchor, and the one percent left used an interrogative sentence.

In interrogative clauses, e.g. *Do you want this do you, anywhere?*, the function of the question tag is to underline “the speech-act function of the main clause” (Biber et al. 1999: 210).

When question tags are used with imperative sentences, e.g. *Open the door, won't you?*, they function as an invitation for the listener's consent (Quirk et al. 1985: 813). Question tags usually follow only positive imperatives (Ibid). The connection with negative imperatives is less common (Ibid.). The most common structure of these tags consists of the auxiliary *won't* for negative and *will* for positive tags, followed by the subject *you* (Ibid.). Nevertheless, other auxiliaries and subjects can be used as well, and with first-person plural imperatives (e.g. *Let's go for a walk.*), we can use *shall we?* as the tag (Ibid.).

Appending a question tag to exclamations, e.g. *How thin she is, isn't she?*, has the function of inviting the hearer's agreement (Ibid.). Therefore, the tag can be often interpreted as ‘*Or don't you agree?*’ (Ibid.).

2.6 Invariant question tags

Besides the canonical question tags, which are formed according to the above rules (see 2.2), there are also other tags that are used frequently in informal conversation. These question tags remain the same whether they are connected to a positive or negative statement and always take a rising tone (Quirk et al. 1985: 814). Some of them described by Quirk et al. (1985: 814) and Biber et al. (1999: 210) are *am I right?*, *don't you think?*, *right?*, *yeah?*, *OK?* or *eh?*.

In British English, one can also find the tag *innit?*² derived from *isn't it?* (Biber et al. 1999: 210). However, some authors, such as Kimps (2018: 53 – 54), do not find the fact that *innit?* is considered an invariant tag unproblematic, because in some cases, it grammatically agrees with the anchor. On the other hand, *innit?* can be appended to any sentence “regardless of the grammatical features of the statement” (Stenström et al. 2002: 168), and therefore it is usually considered an invariant tag (Ibid.). This type of question tag seems to be frequent mainly in London (Ibid.).

The invariant question tags like *yeah?*, *okay?*, *right?*, and *innit?* were found to be used mainly by working-class people (Ibid.: 172).

As Tottie & Hoffmann (2006: 306), together with Baker (2015: 315), stress, the tendency nowadays is to use more invariant question tags. However, textbooks usually pay little if any attention to them (Ibid.).

The increasing use of invariant question tags can be explained by speakers' tendency to employ more informal register (Baker 2015: 316).

2.7 The frequency and distribution of question tags

According to the findings of Biber et al. (1999: 211), question tags are widely used in conversation. “About every fourth question in conversation is a question tag; the most common type of question tag is negative” (Biber et al. 1999: 211). In this context, question tags are used mainly to keep the conversation going and seek an agreement from the listener (Ibid.). The reason behind the fact that the question tags are usually negative is that in conversation, we tend to use more positive than negative sentences, and therefore we must use a negative tag (Ibid.).

² The form *innit?* is used in southern England, whereas in north-western England, *intit?* is used more frequently (Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009: 311).

In fiction and news, question tags are used much less (Ibid.: 212). This is given because, unlike conversations, these genres do not usually use discourse markers³ (Ibid.).

Biber et al.'s findings are further confirmed and developed by Gongález & Dehé (2020). According to González & Dehé (2020: 44), most question tags have the power to keep the conversation going and involve the addressee in it. This is also connected to the fact that ninety-eight percent of question tags are used in dialogic genres (Ibid.). Keeping the focus on genres, question tags are used most frequently in face-to-face conversations followed by legal examinations, classroom lessons and discussions (Ibid.: 47).

The role of gender in the usage of question tags has been frequently discussed by many authors. It seems that women use more question tags than men, but the reason why this should be so is still fuzzy (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 304).

Focusing on their usage and position in a sentence, most of the question tags (forty-eight percent) express an 'A-event', which means that the speaker who uses a question tag is the one who has information (Kimps 2018: 59, 81). Hence, question tags usually initiate an adjacency pair⁴ (Ibid.). This is also connected with the fact that when using a question tag, an answer is usually expected, and this answer is, in most cases, a confirmation (Kimps et al. 2014: 69). Finally, the last point related to A-events is the frequent position of the question tag at the end of the speaker's turn (Ibid.). Another twenty-nine percent of question tags are formed by question tags expressing 'AB-events', where the speaker and the addressee both have relevant information (Ibid.). The rest (twenty-three percent) are question tags expressing 'B-events' with a speaker who is seeking information (Ibid.).

³ "Discourse markers are words or phrases like *anyway, right, okay, as I say, to begin with*. We use them to connect, organise and manage what we say or write or to express attitude." (online Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>).

⁴ According to Oxford reference (accessed at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/>), adjacency pair is described as "two successive utterances where the second (e.g. an answer) is required by the first (e.g. a question)".

2.7.1 Differences in the distribution of question tags in British and American English

According to the findings of Tottie & Hoffmann (2006: 288), “tag questions are more than nine times as frequent in British English as in American English“.⁵

The so-called ‘concordant mini-clauses’, which are composed only of a pronominal subject and a finite non-lexical verb (e.g. *are you?*; *is she?*), are usually thought of as the basic type of question tags and are the most discussed type of question tags in English textbooks (Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009: 311). However, they are rare in other languages⁶, and they are losing their importance in a speech in British English as well (Ibid.). The tag which is preferred by American speakers, and which is starting to influence British English as well, is *right?* (Ibid.).

Another difference between British and American English is how they treat *have (got)* in a sentence (Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009: 317). While in British English, *have* is treated as an auxiliary when used in a possessive sense, American English seems to prefer to use *have* as any other main verb (Ibid.). The form *have got* also appears to occur more in British English than in American English, which leads to the fact that question tags with *have* as an operator occur more in British English (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 293). It also affects the usage of *do* in question tags as in British English, *do* usually follows sentences with a full lexical verb, but in American English, *do* follows anchors with different forms of *have* and *have got* (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 294).

Both Brits and Americans prefer to use the verb *be* in question tags, but differences arise with the usage of modals and other auxiliaries (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 291). Although it is true that question tags with *do* are the second most frequently used ones, they occur far more often in American English (Ibid.). On the other hand, other frequently used operators like *will*, *have* and *can* are used more in British English (Ibid.). This is given by the fact that Brits use present perfect forms to represent past time more than Americans, who use the preterit instead (Ibid.). Therefore, when forming a question tag in British English, it is more likely that a form of *have* will be used (e.g. *You’ve seen California, haven’t you?*) while in

⁵ The relative frequency of occurrence is calculated per million words. (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 287)

⁶ They can be found, for example, in Celtic languages (Rohdenburg & Schlüter, 2009: 311).

American English, *do* would be used more often (e.g. *You didn't get moved today, did you?*) (Ibid.).

The pronoun used the most in both British and American English is *it* followed by *you*, which appears to be more frequently used by Americans (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 295). In their study, Tottie & Hoffmann (2006: 296) also found that speakers usually use personal pronouns in question tags. The only other word used, but only with low frequency, is *there* (e.g. *There are a couple of girls in there, aren't there?*) (Ibid.: 296 – 297).

The most frequently used question tag is *isn't it?* followed by its positive form *is it?* on the second place (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 296). Other heavily used question tags are those that contain a form of *do*, but as was already mentioned, these are more typical of American English (Ibid.).

The study of Tottie & Hoffmann (2006: 302) shows that about fifty percent of question tags used in American English⁷ are the so-called 'facilitating' tags (for examples, see 2.9), which means that they are used to involve the listener in the conversation. Together with confirmatory and attitudinal question tags, they form ninety-one percent of all question tags used in British English and ninety-two percent of those used in American English (Ibid.). Confirmatory question tags, through which the speaker asks for confirmation of what he or she said, and attitudinal question tags, which emphasize what the speaker said, are used with higher frequency in Britain (Ibid.). There is also a tiny group of question tags called 'aggressive question tags', used as an insult or provocation (Ibid.). What is interesting about them is that they occur only in British English⁸ (Ibid.).

If the focus is put only on canonical question tags used in both British and American English, it can be observed that younger people tend to use canonical question tags to a lesser extent than older speakers (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 305). In British English, the age at which the speakers use prototypical question tags the most is 25 – 34, and after that age, the usage drops a little bit and remains more or less the same (Ibid.). On the other hand, in American English, the frequency is slightly higher between the age of 35 and 44, then it drops a little

⁷ In British English, it is only about thirty-six percent (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 302).

⁸ Their proportion is very small; they form only one percent of all question tags used in British English (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 302).

bit and is the highest after the age of sixty (Ibid.). The summary made from these findings should not be that younger people generally use question tags less frequently. It is highly possible that they use the same number of question tags as older speakers, but the majority of them are invariant ones (Ibid.).

To summarise, although there are some differences between the usage of question tags across English dialects, it could be said that British English is starting to be influenced by the American variety, which is mainly caused by its willingness to simplify grammar and by the fact that English is becoming highly internationalized (Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009: 323).

2.8 Functions and distribution of invariant question tags

As Tottie & Hoffmann (2006) suggested in their study, the trend among young people nowadays seems to be the usage of invariant question tags rather than the canonical ones.

The invariant *innit?* is already briefly described in 2.6. The main function of *innit?* is to make the hearer anticipate in the conversation and express his or her opinion about the proposition (ex. 1a) (Stenström et al. 2002: 168 – 169). This question tag is also often used as a softener in a conflicting conversation (ex. 1b) (Ibid.). On the other hand, it may also be used with a more challenging tone (ex. 1c) (Ibid.: 169 – 170). Finally, *innit?* can be used to help the addressee imagine the situation described by the speaker (ex. 1d) (Ibid.: 169;172).

- (1) a. Those old games, they're so shit **innit**. (Stenström et al. 2002: 169)
- b. There's only one Mothercare **innit** Gwen. (Ibid.)
- c. *Speaker A*: Got any new games for your computer?
 Speaker B: No. It's fucked **innit?** You must have fucked it up. (Ibid.).
- d. It came out like a bullet **innit!** (Ibid.)

Yeah? is another widely used invariant tag. Its primary function is to make sure that the hearer understands and can imagine what the speaker is talking about (Ibid.: 173). It could be illustrated by using the questions “Are you following my story? Are you able to imagine this?” (Ibid.: 175). Stenström et al. (2002: 176) call this function ‘continuation-checking’. Furthermore, it has the potential to expand on the whole utterance by adding and linking together further propositions (ex. 2a) (Ibid.: 172 – 173). It can also signal the speaker’s

uncertainty about his or her proposition (ex. 2b) (Ibid.: 174). Other uses are similar to *innit?*, such as making the hearer anticipate in the conversation or being used as a softener (Ibid.). Unlike *innit?*, it seems that *yeah?* is never used in challenging contexts, but it is used to increase politeness (Ibid.: 175). A feature in which this question tag differs from the other tags is its use after interrogative anchors, where other invariant question tags cannot be used (ex. 2c) (Ibid.). With interrogatives, it often adds an urge for the hearer to reply quickly (Ibid.: 175 – 176). Finally, *yeah?* can be used by the speaker to ask the hearer whether it is okay to continue talking (ex. 2d) (Ibid.: 176).

- (2) a. This geezer from Bedlam **yeah** got stopped the other day in this car **yeah**, he was pissed, he was tripping and he was speeding **yeah**, no MOT, no licence, no tax, no road insurance **yeah** (Ibid.: 172)
- b. You've read this book called Roll Of Thunder, **yeah?** (Ibid.: 174)
- c. Is it still recording, **yeah?** (Ibid.: 175)
- d. Mm, I think she is. What happened was **yeah**, she got divorced, when she was fifty, with, my mum's dad, and then she didn't (Ibid.: 176)

Another frequently used question tag is *eh?*. Its main function is to informally express “I beg your pardon?” (Ibid.: 177). As a question tag, it is again used to involve the hearer in the conversation, express the speaker's doubt, or soften the proposition (Ibid.). Same as *yeah?* this question tag cannot be used in a challenging or aggressive way (Ibid.). However, it is frequently used with a sarcastic or ironic tone (ex. 3a) (Ibid.). *Eh?* used with interrogatives has the same function as the previously discussed *yeah?*.

- (3) a. You thought that was funny **eh?** (Ibid.: 177)

Okay? is mainly used to determine whether the hearer understood what the speaker said and whether “the hearer has any objections to what was said” (Ibid.: 178). Unlike other invariant question tags, *okay?* is used by the speaker who is sure about what he or she is saying and presents it as a fact (Ibid.). Stenström et al. (2002: 179) call the function of this question tag “proposal-evaluating” (Ibid.: 179). It is often used after giving instructions and after sentences that describe a hypothetical state of affairs (ex. 4a) (Ibid.). This type of invariant question tag cannot soften the proposition (Ibid.). However, as the question tags above, it can be used to appeal to the hearer's imagination, and it also has the continuation-checking

function described with *yeah?* (Ibid.). After statements describing an attitude of the speaker, *okay?* could be paraphrased as “you can’t argue against it” (ex. 4b) (Ibid.: 180).

- (4) a. Next time you give it to me! **Okay?** (Ibid.: 179)
- b. Hello this is Antonio again. Carola’s got nice hair **okay?** (Ibid.: 180)

Another invariant question tag is *right?* which is in many ways similar to *okay?* (Ibid.). It can be used to express doubt, ask for confirmation, ask for the hearer’s opinion, soften a directive, appeal to the listener’s imagination, or it can have a facilitative function (Ibid. 180 – 181). Moreover, it is used to help the hearer “retrieve a concept from memory” (ex. 5a) (Ibid.: 181). Furthermore, it often has the continuation-checking function and the power to connect different parts of the text (Ibid.: 182). It can also be used after interrogative anchors to prompt a response (ex. 5b) (Ibid.).

- (5) a. In that episode **right** she gets pregnant (Ibid.: 181)
- b. Oh shall I open it **right?** (Ibid.: 182)

Overall, Stenström et al. (2002: 183) found out that the invariant tag with the most functions is *right?* while the set of functions of *okay?* is the narrowest one. Another conclusion that could be made is that invariant question tags mainly serve the purpose of making a proposition more polite (Ibid.). The only exception is *innit?*, which confirms that this invariant tag stands somewhere between canonical and invariant question tags as discussed in 2.6 (Ibid.).

Except *eh?* all invariant question tags are more frequent among teenagers (Ibid.: 185). *Eh?* seems to be used more by adults, which could either mean that it is generally more popular among this age group or that it is slowly becoming less popular and being replaced by other invariant question tags (Ibid.: 186). *Yeah?* is the most frequently used invariant question tag and is nowadays very popular among teenagers (Ibid.: 184).

Regarding the gender of the speakers, it is hard to make any conclusions without knowing a broader context. However, according to the findings of Stenström et al. (2002: 187) it seems that *innit?* is mainly used by females while *yeah?* is more frequent among male speakers.

The effect of social class on the distribution of invariant question tags is also hard to generalise. The only significant difference seems to be in the usage of *innit?*, which is dominant among lower classes, and *yeah?*, typical of middle classes (Ibid.: 188).

Overall, it can be said that except for age, invariant question tags do not follow any clear pattern regarding other sociolinguistic characteristics (Ibid.: 191).

2.9 Pragmatic functions of question tags

The classification of pragmatic functions of question tags in this thesis is based on Tottie & Hoffmann (2006)⁹.

According to their pragmatic function, we may distinguish the following types of question tags:

1. *Informational*, which are used by the speaker to seek information, e.g. *She is leaving tomorrow, is she?* (Ibid.).
2. *Confirmatory* question tags are used when the speaker is confident in being right but asks for confirmation, e.g. *It's not raining, is it?* (Ibid.).
3. *Attitudinal*, which only emphasize what was said in the anchor, and the speaker does not expect any reply, e.g. *That was so mean, wasn't it?* (Ibid.).
4. *Facilitating* question tags are used as a tool to involve the listener in the conversation by speakers who are sure of what they say, e.g. *I'm still your mum, am I not?* (Ibid.).
5. *Aggressive*, which are used as a provocation or insult, e.g. *Late again, aren't you?* (Ibid.).

It may be hard to distinguish between these five functions in writing, but in spoken language, intonation plays an important role (Baker 2015: 314). Usually, when we use rising intonation, we use the question tag to seek information, whereas when we use a falling tone, we only ask for confirmation (Ibid.).

⁹ Their division of question tags is based on the findings of Holmes (1983, 1984, 1986, 1995) and Algeo (1988, 1990, 2006) (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 299).

According to the findings of González & Dehé (2020: 47), the pragmatic function of the question tag “must be explained according to the grammatical, dialogical and contextual variables...regardless of the order”.

All the examples used below were taken from Kimps (2018) and were slightly modified to be easier to read for the reader of this thesis¹⁰. However, one can still find elements typical for spoken conversation as all these examples were initially found in corpora of spoken English which contain transcribed spoken conversations.

To start with, *informational* question tags (ex. 6) signal that there is a gap between the speaker’s knowledge and the knowledge of the hearer (Kimps 2018: 138). The speaker, therefore, expects the addressee to bridge this gap, which leads to a turn-final position of these question tags and an expected response from the addressee (Ibid.: 141). The uncertainty is signalled by a rising tone on the question tag (Ibid.: 140). Furthermore, they often use the generally less common positive-positive polarity (Ibid.: 141).

- (6) *Speaker A*: But you do think it’s time you had some money in something other than building society. **I presume you have got some money in a building society, have you?**

Speaker B: Yes. (Ibid.: 141)

Confirmatory question tags (ex. 7) are relatively frequent question tags used in situations in which the speaker and the hearer share the same common ground (Ibid.: 172). The speaker is sure of what he or she is saying, and at the same time, he or she acknowledges the hearer as a co-source (Ibid.). They are usually statement-question blends (see 2.11 for more information) and are followed by confirmation or by no answer at all (Ibid.: 174). Most frequently, there is a fall on the tag (Ibid.: 175).

- (7) *Speaker A*: Haven’t got enough people though. They don’t want to come down from London. It’s too far, I think.

Speaker B: Uhm. **That’s the trouble if you’re out a bit, isn’t it?**

¹⁰ Some of the symbols used by the transcribers were omitted.

Speaker A: Yeah. I mean it's tucks through the Blackwall Tunnel it'll probably take about half an hour or an hour.

Speaker B: Well, that's like your friend Ruth who lives with someone. (Ibid.: 172)

Attitudinal question tags (ex. 8) usually do not expect any response, and therefore they often occur in a turn-medial position (Ibid.: 147). The speaker does not doubt what he or she is saying and uses a falling tone on the question tag and a positive-negative polarity (Ibid.: 146 – 147).

- (8) *Speaker A:* Well clearly **what we have here is a very subjective statement, isn't it** and I think you've all four of you given your own subjective reactions to three of these four phenomena. (Ibid.: 147).

Facilitating question tags (ex. 9) aim at making the addressee participate in the conversation, which leads to the fact that they are “highly conducive to a response”, which is usually a confirmation (Ibid.: 156). Therefore, they are often placed in a turn-final position (Ibid.). With this type of question tag, fall-rises and negative-negative polarity are more frequent than with other question tags (Ibid.: 157). Hence, the speaker leaves a place for the hearer to doubt the proposition, although the speaker thinks that it is highly improbable (Ibid.).

- (9) *Speaker A:* And as I say Richards has been quite negative and they cut off all the scoring shots. Well, I think they. I mean they. I think they did pretty well to get to end up like that.

Speaker B: Yeah. Yeah yeah it's it's not bad if if they can get a you know somebody can get a score tomorrow.

Speaker A: Yeah.

Speaker B: **Though I suppose the the best chance is s Smith isn't it?**

Speaker A: Smith to go on yeah.

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker A: But uh. Yeah. (Ibid.:157)

Finally, *aggressive* question tags (ex. 10) often do not elicit any response (Ibid.: 165). If any response is elicited, it is not a confirmation with a high probability (Ibid.). With this type of question tag, speakers usually use a reversed polarity pattern (positive-negative or negative-positive) and a higher pitch range connected with mocking the addressee (Ibid.: 166). It was also found out that this type of question tag is most frequently used among young speakers under eighteen (Ibid.: 203).

(10) *Speaker A*: Now d' you discuss the what was the manner of the way forward at that stage.

Speaker B: No not at all. He described to me in general detail his business e. g. where he operated from how many people he had and who the directors were.

Speaker A: **Yeah but you knew all that already didn't you?**

Speaker B: No I didn't at that time because it was twelve thirteen fourteen months later. (Ibid.: 163)

2.10 Distribution of pragmatic functions of question tags

In their work González & Dehé (2020) and Kimps (2018) distinguish even more types of question tags based on their pragmatic functions. However, this thesis will focus only on those described in 2.9. To be able to work with more sources and to make this chapter consistent, this thesis will use only the terms discussed in 2.9. However, one can find the terms used in different literature in Table 1 below.

This thesis	Baker (2015)	Tottie Hoffmann (2006)	& González Dehé (2020)	& Kimps (2018)
Informational	Informational	Informational	Epistemic	Doubt of presupposed knowledge
Confirmatory	Confirmatory	Confirmatory	Epistemic	Confirming
Attitudinal	Attitudinal	Attitudinal	Attitudinal	Informing
Facilitating	-	Facilitating	Deontic	Hedging
Aggressive	-	Aggressive	Attitudinal	Questioning stance

Table 1: Pragmatic functions of question tags in literature

In their research, González & Dehé (2020: 41) found that almost fifty percent of all question tags used in everyday speech are informational or confirmatory. The second place belongs to attitudinal question tags, which form a little more than twenty-seven percent of all question tags (Ibid.). Aggressive question tags are about eight times less frequent than attitudinal question tags (Ibid.). Finally, eleven percent of question tags involve the listener in the conversation (Ibid.).

Focusing on the position of the question tag, the majority of question tags (eighty-two percent) is placed after the anchor (Ibid.: 42). While informational, confirmatory, and facilitating question tags prefer turn-final¹¹ position, attitudinal question tags occur more often in sentence-final¹² position (Ibid.).

In terms of answers given to question tags, informational and confirmatory question tags usually expect a reply, which stems from their primary function of seeking information (Ibid.: 46). On the other hand, attitudinal question tags are usually followed by no reply (Ibid.).

Informational, confirmatory, and facilitating question tags are used across a wider variety of genres than attitudinal ones (Ibid.).

¹¹ Turn-final position of question tags means that they are “placed at the end of the speakers turn” (González & Dehé 2020: 34).

¹² Question tags in sentence-final position are “placed at the end of a syntactic sentence within an ongoing turn and followed by a full-stop” (González & Dehé 2020: 34).

Kimps (2018: 204) found out that the factors that have an impact on the distribution of different pragmatic functions of question tags are mainly the age of the speakers and the type of conversational setting. On the other hand, gender has no significant impact (Ibid.: 204).

2.11 Speech functions of question tags and their distribution

Kimps (2018) distinguishes one more characteristic of question tags which she calls speech functions. She views the speech functions as connected with the speaker's interactional position and with the position expected from the hearer (Ibid.: 94). On the other hand, pragmatic functions are about the interpersonal meanings that the speaker implies and which "convey speaker attitudes and expectations" (Ibid.: 129).

Kimps (2018) distinguishes six main functions that question tags have in speech. These are:

1. Questions
2. Statements
3. Statement-question blends
4. Responses
5. Desired actions
6. Ambiguous question tags (Ibid.).

All these types can be characterised by some of their typical features. However, in practice, the speaker always chooses a specific combination of features, which makes his or her communicative intentions clear (Ibid.: 127).

All the examples below were taken from Kimps (2018) and were slightly modified to be easier to read for the reader of this thesis¹³. However, one can still find elements typical for spoken conversation as all these examples were initially found in corpora of spoken English which contain transcribed spoken conversations.

The most significant part of Kimps' (2018) dataset is formed by statement-question blends, which makes them a default type (forty-six percent) (Ibid.: 123). However, it will be more

¹³ Some of the symbols used by the transcribers were omitted.

convenient for us to start by characterising statements and questions first to understand why the third category is a blend of the former two.

Questions (ex. 11) are with nineteen percent the second most often used type of speech function (Ibid.: 123). They can be described as B-events which means that the speaker (the one who uses a question tag) does not have some information, and therefore he or she asks the addressee who may know the answer (Ibid.: 98). Eighty-seven percent of question tags functioning as questions get a response (Ibid.: 99). This relates to the fact that they are usually the first part of the adjacency pair¹⁴, and they typically occur in turn-final position, which makes them very likely to trigger an answer (Ibid.: 99). Regarding the actual response, it usually “confirms the polarity of the anchor” (Ibid.: 99). However, disagreements also play an essential role because they occur more frequently than with other types of question tags (Ibid.: 100). What is interesting is the tone of the question tag, which differentiates questions from other speech types of question tags. According to Kimps (2018: 84), only twenty-two percent of all question tags use a rising tone. Therefore, the fact that seventy-three percent of questions used as a question tag have a rising intonation is striking (Ibid.: 100). By using the rising tone, the speaker conveys his or her uncertainty (Ibid.:100). Finally, fifty-one percent of questions have a constant polarity pattern (mainly positive-positive), which is again a significant number compared to the eleven percent given in 2.4 (Ibid.: 101). These question tags are most frequently used by people between 18 and 45 (Ibid.: 202). Furthermore, they constitute approximately a third of all question tags used in telephone conversations (Ibid.: 206).

(11) *Speaker C*: She does but, where do you think she wants to be buried?

Speaker A: < unclear >

Speaker B: **The ashes are buried, aren't they?**

Speaker A: Scattered. (Ibid.: 98)

Statements (ex. 12) are the complete opposite of questions in that the speaker is now the one who has the information, and he or she does not expect a response from the addressee

¹⁴ Adjacency pair can be understood as turn-taking. The first part of the adjacency pair triggers a response in the second part (Kimps 2018: 66). Question tags usually form the first part of the adjacency pair (sixty-one percent) (Ibid.).

(Ibid.: 101). The absence of response means that statements are not a part of an adjacency pair (Ibid.: 102). They usually appear in turn-medial position, which means that the speaker continues talking after uttering the question tag (Ibid.). Regarding other features, statements have all the properties that are typical of question tags generally. They have positive-negative polarity and a falling tone on the question tag (Ibid.: 103). This type of question tag is often found in classroom conversations that are less spontaneous (Ibid.: 207). Other contexts in which this type occurs are broadcast interviews and broadcast discussions (Ibid.).

(12) *Speaker A*: **That's all very well, isn't it**, when you 've got cases where you haven't got to worry about what you're going to leave. but when you get things like breast change obviously the cosmetic side comes into it more.

Speaker B: Uh uh when you get things like what sorry. (Ibid.: 103)

The largest group of speech functions is a *blend of questions and statements* (ex. 13). The term 'blend' here means that they combine features of questions with features of statements (Ibid.: 104). They behave as questions in that they expect an answer, but on the other hand, the speaker is the one who is giving the information like in statements (Ibid.). Statement-question blends resemble questions in being the first part of an adjacency pair, but they are usually described as A-events, which means that it is the speaker who has more information (Ibid.: 106). They are placed at the turn-final position, and therefore they trigger a response, which in most cases confirms what is said in the anchor (Ibid.: 107). Disagreement is not frequent with this type, and the question tag is pronounced with a falling intonation, as the speaker is certain about what he or she is saying (Ibid.: 107 – 108). The polarity is positive-negative like in statements (Ibid.: 108). These question tags are typical for legal cross-examination, and like statements, they are common in broadcast interviews and broadcast discussions (Ibid.: 207).

(13) *Speaker A*: I mean uh it'd be nice to have the possibility of portability to other operating systems I suppose in the future. **But I think I mean being realistic about it most people are in a P C DOS environment or an Apple environment in this sort of general world, aren't they?**

Speaker B: Yeah. (Ibid.: 106).

Response question tags (ex. 14) are the least discussed speech type of question tags in literature (Ibid.: 108). However, they form fifteen percent of all speech types, which makes them – together with statements – the third most significant type (Ibid.: 123). They can be preceded by various sentences, including statements, *wh*-interrogatives, polar interrogatives, or other question tags (Ibid.: 109). The features of response question tags differ according to which type of sentence they are preceded by (Ibid.: 109). The only feature which connects all types of response question tags is their final position in an adjacency pair (Ibid.: 115). This type of question tag is mostly used by people under 18 (Ibid.: 202).

(14) *Speaker A:* Well he should change his jumper he's been wearing that for about two weeks now.

Speaker B: **Yeah he has, hasn't he?**

Speaker A: Maybe he's got lots. I hope so. (Ibid.: 110)

Question tags negotiating *desired actions* (ex. 15) form only three percent of all speech types (Ibid.: 123). They usually constitute the second part of an adjacency pair and assume a turn-final position (Ibid.: 117). Although they expect a response, the response is often non-verbal, and in the case of a verbal response, the addressee, in most cases, accepts the offer or the desired action (Ibid.: 117). There are again various subtypes containing, on the one hand, commands and requests which are “beneficial to and desired by the speaker”, and on the other hand, advice and offers which are “beneficial and desirable to the hearer by the speaker” (Ibid.: 117). There is also a third subtype called ‘joint actions’ “benefiting speaker and co-participant equally” (Ibid.: 118). Each subtype has slightly different features. However, they often have a positive-positive polarity and a question tag with a rising tone (Ibid.: 117).

(15) *Speaker A:* **Right sit down here, would you?**

Speaker B: And you're from Lincoln?

Speaker C: Yes, I'm near Lincoln. (Ibid.: 118)

Finally, *ambiguous* question tags (ex. 16) form only two percent of all cases (Ibid.: 123). Their ambiguity consists in the fact that one cannot determine clearly whether they are negotiating information or the desired action (Kimps et al. 2014: 82).

(16) *Speaker A*: Couldn't you make her give you your money then?

Speaker B: **Well, I can, I can't say give me your money when she hasn't got it, can I?** (Ibid.: 121)

Kimps (2018) found out that there are slight differences in using different speech functions in the three corpora that she analysed¹⁵. It was shown that time does not significantly impact these differences (Kimps 2018: 202). Statements, statement-question blends and ambiguous question tags were also shown to be independent of the age of the speakers (Ibid.). With responses and questions, there were slight differences regarding the age of the speakers (Ibid.). However, these differences were not significant, and therefore it can be said that age does not play a prominent role in the distribution of different speech types of question tags (Ibid.). The same can be said about the impact of gender (Ibid.: 204).

2.12 Question tags in present-day spoken British English – a study based on the *Spoken BNC2014* and *BNC1994*

Axelsson (2018) focused in her study on the distribution of question tags mainly concerning the sociolinguistic parameters recorded in the *Spoken BNC2014*¹⁶. Furthermore, her aim was to compare it with an older corpus, *BNC1994DS*, widely used as the primary source by other researchers but is getting old for today's purposes¹⁷.

According to Axelsson's findings, there might be a drop in the usage of question tags between the 1990s and 2010s (Ibid.: 102). However, this result may be skewed because the types of conversations in the two corpora are slightly different (Ibid.).

¹⁵ „The London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language and the British English component of the International Corpus of English” (Kimps 2018: 35).

¹⁶ She used a sample version of this corpus (Axelsson 2018: 98).

¹⁷ The recordings in the BNC1994DS were compiled in the 1990s while the ones in the BNC2014 were compiled in the 2010s. (Axelsson 2018: 98).

Regarding the use of verbs and operators, the only significant difference between the two corpora is in the usage of *have*, which is used less in *BNC2014* (Ibid.: 103). An interesting fact found by Axelsson (2018: 104) is that the frequency of *innit?* is much lower in the *BNC2014*. On the other hand, this could again be given by the fact that the types of conversations in this corpus are different, and the speakers might try to avoid *innit?* on purpose (Ibid.). It also seems that the constant polarity patterns of question tags slowly decrease in frequency (Ibid.).

As was already discussed throughout this thesis, the role of gender in the usage of question tags is hard to estimate. Axelsson (2018: 106) found out that in the *BNC1994DS*, women seem to use more question tags than men. However, in the *BNC2014*, the frequency of usage is relatively stable across the category of gender (Ibid.). Social class does not seem to influence the distribution of question tags either (Ibid.: 109 – 111). The only sociolinguistic parameter that influences the usage of question tags is age (Ibid.: 107 – 109). The findings of Axelsson (2018: 107 – 109) confirmed the findings of Tottie & Hoffmann (2006) discussed in 2.7.1.

3 Material and Method

The sentences analysed in this thesis were excerpted from the spoken part of the British National Corpus 2014 (further referred to as *Spoken BNC2014*). This corpus is composed of samples from real-life contexts and focuses on contemporary British English language usage. It contains data gathered between the years 2012 and 2016 and comprises 11 422 617 words of transcribed content, 668 speakers and 1 251 recordings (cf. *Spoken BNC2014* (Love et al. 2017)). The conversations were usually recorded at home, and the participants were often family members or close friends. The speakers recorded the conversations by themselves and provided them together with additional information to the research team. The conversations were further transcribed, and basic information about the speakers and the type of conversation was added to them.

I will start with the method I used in the quantitative part of the analysis. First, I wanted to find all questions which the corpus contains. To do that, I used a query `\?` which found all sentences ending with a question mark. Then I chose *collocations* and set the collocation window to display immediate left collocates of the question mark (a total of 2 747 collocates). I ranked the results by frequency.

Further, I went individually through all the words. Using the sample of the first 50 utterances containing the word, shown in random order, as a probe, I decided whether the word could form a question tag or not. If it was clear that a question tag could not be formed with this word, I did not deal with it anymore and continued to another word. On the other hand, I did further research if the word could be employed in a question tag.

I will illustrate the method by the example of *it*. In the *Spoken BNC2014*, there are 23 391 instances of a question mark preceded by *it*. The sample of the first 50 randomly ordered examples reveals that *it* has the potential to form a question tag, even though the concordance also includes examples of other constructions, such as *What day is it?* (S2K7 870)¹⁸. Therefore, it is necessary to explore what the question tags look like. To do that, I perform a *frequency breakdown* and choose a breakdown position ‘2 left’. This allows me to see all

¹⁸ In the examples from the *Spoken BNC2014*, the source is indicated by an alpha-numerical code of the text (e.g. S2K7) followed by the number of the utterance in the text (e.g. 870).

the words that can appear before *it?* (681 different types). I then further analyse these individual words. With each of them, I again randomly order the sentences.

The strategy used here is as follows. If the first 50 randomly ordered examples are question tags, I assume that also the rest of the concordance lines contain question tags and use the number of hits in my frequency list. However, if not all 50 examples are question tags, I go through 100 randomly ordered examples and count how many instances (i.e. the percentage) of question tags they contain. Based on that number, I calculate how many question tags approximately appear in the whole set of examples. To exemplify that, if we take *is*, there are 4 392 hits immediately preceding the sequence *it?*. I found out that approximately thirty-six percent contain a question tag in the first 100 randomly ordered examples. Therefore, I estimated that there is a total number of 1 581¹⁹ examples with a question tag *is it?*.

Furthermore, *n't* signals a negation, so it needs to be found which verb is negated. To do that, I need to perform another frequency breakdown, with '3 left' chosen as a breakdown position.

This way, I went through the whole list of words. It should also be said that the first frequency breakdown is not necessary with invariant question tags, which consist of only one word (we do not need to know the words which are further left). The results were then exported into an excel sheet together with an example of the randomly chosen tag (see Section 4.1 and Appendix I).

Continuing with the qualitative part, the method used with all 4 question tags analysed was the same. Let's exemplify it using the analysis of *okay?*. To find all sentences that end with *okay?* we need to use a query *okay \?*. The speaker-related sociolinguistic parameters (age, gender, region) of these utterances (based on the whole corpus) were explored. Then I randomly ordered the concordance lines and chose the first 25 sentences employing *okay?* as a question tag. These sentences form my sample. By clicking on *okay?* in the individual examples, more context can be seen. Moreover, by clicking on the reference of the

¹⁹ The total number found in the frequency list is a little bit higher. This is because it also contains the question tag *is it?* followed by another word (e.g. *ridiculous –ANONnameM said oh this isn't much fun is it mum?* (SN4N 1216)).

conversation or the number of the speaker, the metadata are shown. This information is used to analyse the use of the question tag further, and the context is used to understand better the pragmatic function employed. The information was then again exported into an excel sheet and further analysed.

4 Analysis

4.1 Quantitative research

4.1.1 The classes of question tags

During the research, a total number of 37 748 question tags was observed. As expected, the predominant part is formed by canonical question tags, while fully invariant question tags form only 13,5 percent of the tags. There was yet one more group of question tags discovered, which was for the needs of this thesis called *ain't group* (ex. 1). However, this type appears only in 573 tokens.

(1) you like you got a bit on the side **ain't you?** (S4T3 457)

type of tag	No. of types	No. of tokens
canonical	229	32 066
invariant	14	5 109
<i>ain't</i>	9	573
TOTAL	252	37 748

Table 2: Numbers of question tags in the *Spoken BNC2014*

4.1.2 Canonical question tags

Regarding the canonical part of question tags, 229 different types were observed. Only the first 50 of them are included in the table in this part of the thesis. For the whole table of canonical question tags, see Appendix I. The findings of Biber et al. (1999), who claim that mainly negative question tags are used as in conversation we tend to use more positive than negative sentences, were confirmed. Only 24 percent of canonical question tags observed were found to be positive. Moreover, two types of negative polarity were found. Besides the typical negative contractions with a contracted negation (ex. 2a), in 13 cases, a full negative form with *not* appears (ex. 2b).

(2) a. oh they're doing a barbeque **aren't they?** (STNX 588)

b. and everyone gets to see this **do they not?** (SAUR 1912)

Other assumptions presented in the theoretical part (see 2.7.1) were also verified. Beginning with pronouns, speakers tend to use personal pronouns in question tags. There were only two

exceptions to this tendency. The first is *there* (ex. 3a), and the other is a complete omission of the pronoun, which appeared in 10 question tags (ex. 3b). Personal pronouns used the most are *it* and *you*, which points to the facilitative function of question tags (see 2.9) and their frequent usage in dialogues. An interesting feature discovered during the research was an occasional usage of *ya* instead of *you* in question tags (ex. 3c). It should also be pointed out that it was observed that *it* is also used in the situations where there appears *that* as the subject in the anchor (ex. 3d).

- (3) a. there's nothing there though is **there?** (S263 147)
- b. four hundred and fifty de- degrees oh that was hard **wasn't?** (SW6K 1692)
- c. you you're not going for a cigarette are **ya?** (S7SU 1174)
- d. **that's** what you were struggling with wasn't **it?** (SKL5 519)

Furthermore, 21 different verb forms were observed, most of them used in the present tense. The verb used the most when forming a question tag is *is*, followed by *do*, and its past form *did* in the third place. Modal verbs such as *can*, *should*, *could*, *might*, *must* or *shall* are also used (ex. 4a). Moreover, in one case, the speaker used *ought* (ex. 4b) in her question tag. Another peculiarity found, is the usage of verb forms *were*, *are*, *do* and *have* with 1st and 3rd person singular, although the prototypical verb form is usually used in the anchor (ex. 4c). The same happens with personal pronouns *you*, *we* and *they* and the verb forms typical for 1st and 3rd person singular, but in fewer cases (ex. 4d). Furthermore, in two cases, non-inverted word order was used (ex. 4e).

- (4) a. yeah she should be alright **shouldn't she?** (SZJ7 317)
- b. ought to learn about all the main religions really **oughtn't they?** (SK82 258)
- c. yeah it was fun **weren't it?** (SR7C 4)
- d. no you never were very fond of that one **was you?** (SN8K 1654)
- e. he just pretended, **he didn't?** (SRDJ 58)

The most frequently used question tag in present spoken English appears to be *isn't it?* followed by *is it?* (7 247 and 1 595 instances, respectively). Only six types of canonical question tags have more than 1 000 tokens.

Finally, the last point that needs to be mentioned about canonical question tags is that in some cases, the question tag is followed by another word. These are mainly nouns that serve as vocatives, and they amplify the facilitative function of question tags. Some of them are *mum*, *dad*, *darling*, *love*, or male and female names (ex. 5a). Besides these, adverbs like *though*, *so* or *actually* appeared as well (ex. 5b).

(5) a. you don't play that do you **mum?** (S68F 131)

b. it's hard to know who's in isn't it **though?** (S38V 2572)

pronoun	verb	polarity	example	reference	frequency
it	is	negative	it's terrible isn't it?	S49V 941	7 247
it	is	positive	yeah well it's not the right way is it?	SJB4 5458	1 595
they	are	negative	oh they're doing a barbeque aren't they?	STNX 588	1 263
it	was	negative	it was the big red one wasn't it?	SF2Q 1224	1 227
they	do	negative	uh they really teach you a lot of stuff don't they?	SCYY 391	1 226
you	do	negative	you mostly send text messages don't you?	SV2N 916	1 117
it	does	negative	it seems a bit silly doesn't it?	SUNM 396	956
you	do	positive	well you don't like the long drive do you?	S6AK 352	769
you	did	negative	you wanted to have your own money didn't you?	SVKF 55	586
he	is	negative	well he's funny when he's not performing isn't he?	S8RU 249	531
you	are	negative	you're going out for dinner with your parents aren't you?	SV4W 467	514
they	did	negative	but they sold off all the council houses didn't they?	S6YA 1072	496
you	have	negative	you've seen the cake haven't you?	SZAK 943	476
it	would	negative	it would be easier wouldn't it?	SL9V 3161	470
he	did	negative	your er your brother came with him as well didn't he?	SN98 592	442

you	can	negative	and you can fill the fridge up with bottles can't you?	SGCA 2 56	337
they	have	negative	so they've got some really cool stuff haven't they?	SCG9 4 58	326
you	would	negative	you'd be surprised if it was Terry Wogan wouldn't you?	SXNE 1 758	321
it	does	positive	it doesn't feel real does it?	STEY 1 61	319
they	do	positive	older people don't normally like that sort of thing do they?	SQ2C 2 62	306
you	can	positive	yeah (.) you can't eat them too much can you?	SAHB 5 19	301
it	was	positive	oh that probably wasn't the best move was it?	S5EM 3 93	298
there	is	negative	there's loads of butterflies now isn't there?	SYRT 1 14	298
you	are	positive	you're not doing a very good job are you?	S9YC 5 36	294
it	did	negative	that took a long time didn't it?	S2GC 5 90	275
she	is	negative	she yeah she yeah she's working with children isn't she?	SQE6 3 62	268
they	are	positive	that those are not the buttons that you originally had are they?	S2UT 2 25	268
you	have	positive	you haven't got any cancer sausages left have you?	S7JG 27 16	258
they	were	negative	they were in Vietnam weren't they?	SL9V 2 684	257
we	did	negative	yeah we went there for breakfast didn't we?	S26N 6 92	249
there	is	positive	your your riding (.) so there's nothing wrong with that is there?	S6AK 1 220	246
she	did	negative	but she said your job was safe didn't she?	SWTX 177	244
I	did	negative	so I grabbed the that glass jewellery box didn't I?	S6W8 2 413	244
you	did	positive	you didn't dress up did you?	S6UQ 3 19	238
he	does	negative	Superman messes up all the time too (.) doesn't he?	SHSD 1 43	236
it	were	negative	yeah it was fun weren't it?	SR7C 4	227
it	will	negative	yeah it will be good won't it?	SLH6 3 6	219

it	has	negative	one because York has only got one this year hasn't it?	SXAQ 224	213
we	do	negative	no er we need to feed the animals don't we?	SAZX 206	213

Table 3: Canonical question tags (sample; for the complete list, see Appendix I)

4.1.3 Invariant question tags

Fourteen different types form the group of invariant question tags. Besides the typical ones described in the literature, I also included less well-described ones, such as *you know?* (ex. 6a) or the interjections like *eh?*, *huh?* or *hm?* (ex. 6b). I view them as question tags because in the examples found during the research, they seem to have a facilitative function associated with question tags. The most frequent invariant question tag is *you know?*, followed by *right?* and *innit?* in 3rd place with 920 tokens (see Table 4). There were also observed two different variants of *don't you think?* (ex. 6c), one with a contracted form of the negative particle, the other with the full negative form – *do you not think?* (ex. 6d). However, I treat those variants as two different types of invariant question tags. Similarly, it is a question of whether *yeah?* and *yeas?* or *eh?*, *huh?* and *hm?* are just different variants of one question tag or not. Nevertheless, I treat them all as individual types of invariant question tags.

- (6) a. most places in the world everybody's becoming more American **you know?**
(S9ZP 83)
- b. this is Moroccan oil **huh?** (SKRC 394)
- c. is a little bit like Austria or something **don't you think?** (S4MV 324)
- d. at home he'd pick up the phone (.) **do you not think?** (SRYY 512)

question tag	example	reference	frequency
you know	most places in the world everybody's becoming more American you know?	S9ZP 83	1 558
right	and she disappeared for several several months (.) because she was pregnant right?	SVUC 197	1 048
innit	it's good getting lost sometimes innit?	SDTD 458	920

yeah	I think two meats would be you know would be good y eah?	SEPP 3 00	824
okay	a voice and he's gonna be a podcast voice okay?	SZAP 4 67	287
eh	he should be alright then eh?	S4QF 1 9	137
no	Amsterdam to Rostov but it's gotta go via Vienna no?	S6W8 2 779	118
huh	this is Moroccan oil huh?	SKRC 3 94	77
alright	there was no sign of it was likely to be snowing alright?	SYHW 664	47
don't you think	is a little bit like Austria or something don't you think?	S4MV 3 24	31
yes	we're going to defrost the lamb yes?	SVBB 3	23
hey	think we're meant to put some thickener in hey?	S7JG 21 56	20
do you not think	at home he'd pick up the phone (.) do you not think?	SRYY 5 12	10
hm	is there? maybe your mum would be up for it hm?	S8G6 2 33	9

Table 4: Invariant question tags

4.1.4 The *ain't* group of question tags

The last group of question tags is called *ain't group* since all the question tags use *ain't* as the verb. They comprise the verb *ain't* and a pronoun. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (accessed at: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>), *ain't* is as a short form of *am not/is not/are not/has not/have not*. However, this was found to be only partially true as in the *Spoken BNC2014*, there are instances in which *was not* is used in the anchor (ex. 7a). Regarding the fact that *ain't* is rarely described in the literature and that it can represent different verbs, I view it as a special type of question tag. It was discovered that all types of pronouns could be used with *ain't*, including *there* (ex. 7b) and *ya* (ex. 7c).

- (7) a. or wherever it **was** I think it was Rwanda **ain't it?** (SYDJ 343)
b. yeah there's a murder every now and then **ain't there?** (SJH6 263)
c. bet you got your feet up **ain't ya?** (S968 427)

question tag	example	reference	frequency
ain't it	yeah that's the sensible thing to do ain't it?	STB7 708	325
ain't you	you're a good boy ain't you?	S968 1599	66
ain't they	they're really thick ain't they?	S5TE 50	65
ain't he	so he's still young ain't he?	S8GL 345	45
ain't there	yeah there's a murder every now and then ain't there?	SJH6 263	31
ain't she	well she's only lived in two places ain't she?	SDHB 236	20
ain't we	we're getting used to it now though ain't we?	SKDA 301	11
ain't I	take them I'm usually awake about six o'clock ain't I?	SP6E 453	7
ain't ya	bet you got your feet up ain't ya?	S968 427	3

Table 5: *Ain't* group

4.2 Qualitative research

This chapter of the thesis focuses on a more detailed analysis of four different question tags – *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?* and *okay?*. For each of them, 25 randomly selected examples were analysed from the point of view of their pragmatic function, polarity, position in turn, type of the anchor, power to elicit a response and finally, gender and age of the speaker. The most challenging part was to determine the pragmatic function. As Baker (2015: 314) points out, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the different functions in writing. It is usually intonation that plays a key role (Ibid.). Nevertheless, with all of them, I examined a broader context to make the decision easier and make my findings more accurate.

Moreover, the pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *okay?* are different from those used to describe the rest of the question tags. Since *okay?* is a fully invariant question tag, the classification of pragmatic functions applied to canonical question tags (see 2.9) was inadequate for the description of its uses. Therefore, the pragmatic functions described in 2.8 were applied. However, the same did not apply to *innit?*. Although an invariant question

tag, it is derived from the canonical question tag *isn't it?*. Therefore, the pragmatic functions of canonical question tags could be used.

Regarding the socio-linguistic characteristics, the *Spoken BNC2014* metadata make it possible to give a general overview of the main speaker categories. This analysis, drawing on the whole corpus, is always presented first in the section dealing with the age, gender and regional distribution of the particular tag. Then, I present the findings of gender and age concerning my 25 examples.

In this chapter, the main findings concerning the four selected question tags are presented. The complete analysis of all 100 examples together with their references can be found in Appendix II (*isn't it?*), Appendix III (*innit?*), Appendix IV (*do you?*) and Appendix V (*okay?*).

4.2.1 *Isn't it?*

4.2.1.1 The form of the anchor and the tag

Twenty-five examples including the question tag *isn't it?* were analysed in this section (see Appendix II). What is interesting are the examples (in total five examples in my probe) in which *that* or *this* is used as a pronoun in the anchor. As can be seen in examples (8a) and (8b), instead of using *that* or *this* again in the question tag, the speakers use *it*.

(8) a. polite **that's** that is a good joke **isn't it?** (S7FU 573)

b. >>no (.) well **this is** the third day **isn't it?** (S33N 255)

In most cases, *isn't it?* is connected to a declarative sentence. However, as shown in example (9a), it can follow a phrase (in total four examples in my probe). This can be explained by the nature of these conversations as all of them are spoken conversations in informal settings, which often leads to using fragmented and elliptical sentences.

Another interesting example is (9b). Although it uses *you* as a subject and *are* as a verb in the anchor, the question tag connected to it is *isn't it?*. This might be because the speaker refers to the whole situation of 'the hearer being really connected to the story'. We may paraphrase it, for example, by using *isn't it true?*.

(9) a. bit worrying **isn't it?** (SZ98 388)

b. **you're** really connected to the story **isn't it?** (S5DJ 483)

Finally, all 25 examples have a positive-negative polarity (positive anchor and negative question tag), and direct response is given to 17 of them.

4.2.1.2 Pragmatic functions of *isn't it?*

The most frequent type of pragmatic function expressed by *isn't it* is confirmatory (see Table 6). That can be illustrated by example (10). A couple is walking in the countryside, talking about smoking. The man is craving a cigarette, but it is already his 3rd day without smoking, so he does not want to start again. He seems to be confident that it is the 3rd day but asks for confirmation from his partner. Because he expects an answer, he places the question tag at the end of his turn. His partner agrees with him by saying: *yeah (.) so it's the worst day.*

(10) S0024: so anyway (.) what are we going to do tonight?

S0144: I don't know (.) I'm starving (.) and I'm absolutely gagging for a cigarette

S0024: you can't have one here (.) you're in the middle of nowhere (.)

[...]

S0144: >>no (.) well this is the third day **isn't it?**

S0024: yeah (.) so it's the worst day (S33N 255)

pragmatic function	No. of instances
confirmatory	10
attitudinal	8
facilitating	7
TOTAL	25

Table 6: Pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *isn't it?*

In the 2nd place in frequency is the attitudinal function. In example (11), the woman places the question tag in a turn-medial position which could mean that she does not expect an answer. By using it, she only tries to emphasize her opinion on how cheap the return tickets that her friend got are.

(11) S0439: >>how much was your ticket here today?

S0450: eight pound fif- (.) about eight pound fifty return I think it was

S0439: >>it's so good **isn't it?** it's so good (SD92 170)

Example (12) represents the facilitating function of question tags. Here, two women talk about how work can take over one's personal life. After the first one complains about it, the other one expresses her opinion and wants the first woman to continue talking about it. In other words, she wants to pull her back in the conversation and finish the topic, so the question tag has a facilitating function.

(12)S0439: >>you'd yeah but like having your work life take over your normal life so much that you're you're working more than you're living

S0441: bit worrying **isn't it?**

S0439: yeah

S0441: money's not that important

S0439: no I'd rather earn forty grand and [...] (SZ98 388)

Regarding the position of the question tag, most of them are placed in a turn-final position. Only four of them are in the turn-medial position, and all of these express an attitudinal pragmatic function. When using an attitudinal function, we usually do not expect the hearer to answer, which is why a turn-medial position is often applied.

4.2.1.3 Age, gender and regional distribution of *isn't it?*

Generally, *isn't it?* is most frequently used by older people aged between 35 and 44 (873 ipm²⁰). The youngest speakers (categories 0 – 14 and 15 – 24) use *isn't it?* to a much lesser extent (136 and 428 ipm, respectively). There are also regional differences in the use of *isn't it?* – the main areas of usage are Wales and Scotland (805 and 725 ipm, respectively). On the other hand, speakers in Ireland seem to rather avoid it (100 ipm). Finally, using this question tag appears to be a more female phenomenon.²¹

²⁰ The abbreviation ipm used in giving relative frequency stands for 'items per million words'.

²¹ The difference between the frequency in female's (672 ipm) and male speakers (558 ipm) utterances is statistically significant at the level of $p < 0.05$ (Log-likelihood test, <https://www.korpus.cz/calc/>).

My 25 examples mostly correspond to the general tendencies, with most speakers being 19 – 39 years old. Regarding gender, 15 speakers are female, and 10 are male.

4.2.2 *Innit?*

4.2.2.1 The form of the anchor and the tag

Twenty-five examples including the question tag *innit?* were analysed in this section (see Appendix III). All the anchors have positive polarity. In seven cases, *innit?* is connected to a phrase instead of a sentence (ex. 13a). The rest of them are appended to a declarative sentence. This could again be given by the nature of these conversations and by the fact that *innit?* is an invariant question tag and can therefore be easily appended to any sentence form without any strict rules. Direct response is given to 17 of them.

Moreover, nine examples use *that* as a subject in the anchor (ex. 13b). Regarding the fact that *innit?* is derived from *isn't it?*, it is an interesting finding.

There are only nine examples in which the position of the question tag is turn-medial (ex. 15).

- (13) a. it when's it you have to go back? **after Easter innit?** (SF8D 622)
 b. that's for a pregnant woman **that's** a bit too much **innit?** (S26N 287)

4.2.2.2 Pragmatic functions of *innit?*

The representation of the pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *innit?* is presented in Table 7.

pragmatic function	No. of instances
facilitating	11
attitudinal	9
confirmatory	5
TOTAL	25

Table 7: Pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *innit?*

Example number (14) has the facilitating function, which is the most frequent one used with this question tag. There are four speakers involved in this conversation. One of them bought

a new car, and all of them are talking about it. The woman tries to continue talking about the topic and wants other speakers to contribute to the conversation as well. She expresses her opinion about the car and expects the others to do the same. Her attempt is successful, and the conversation continues. The frequency of the question tags with *innit?* which have a facilitating function confirm the findings of Stenström et al. (2002: 168-169), who claim that the main function of *innit?* is to make the hearer anticipate in the conversation and express his or her opinion about the proposition.

(14) S0008: well it seems to like I say it seems to be alright

S0013: it's a lovely car **innit?**

S0024: yeah

S0008: but the thing I like about it is

S0012: economical (S5PW 1651)

In example (15), the speaker tells a story about someone's wedding and his turn of speaking is relatively long. In the middle of his turn, he gives his opinion of what he is saying as he finds the story 'ridiculous'. Then, he immediately continues talking without wanting the hearer to respond. Therefore, this is an instance of an attitudinal question tag.

(15) S0362: and for all the way to er New York for him and one of them's a lecturer so he had to like wing work off (.) ridiculous **innit?** and so I was thi- oh I know what it was (.) it was --ANONnameF telling me about her and --ANONnameF's bridesmaid dresses (S2C9 46)

Finally, an instance of a confirmatory function of a question tag is the example (16). One male asks the other when he is going back to school. He is almost sure it is after Easter but asks the hearer for confirmation.

(16) it when's it you have to go back? after Easter **innit?** (SF8D 622)

Eight out of the nine examples in which the position of the question tag is turn-medial perform the attitudinal function. There is one example of facilitating function placed in a turn-medial position. In example (17), the man wants the co-participant to answer and give him her opinion. He not only expresses his attitude but also wants the woman to contribute

to the topic. Interestingly, the woman's answer is not a confirmation, because she does not find the situation of a dad and mum with a little boy on a scooter *sad* but *cute*.

(17) S0689: bit sad **innit?** dad and a mum on a scooter

S0688: what with the little boy?

S0689: mm

S0688: I think it looks cute (S9ZL 141)

4.2.2.3 Age, gender and regional distribution of *innit?*

Interestingly, although *innit?* is an invariant question tag, it is popular mainly amongst people in the age category 60+ (250 ipm). The youngest speakers (categories 0 – 14 and 15 – 24), on the other hand, use it less frequently (3 and 62 ipm, respectively). As mentioned in 2.6, Stenström et al. (2002) found out that this question tag is popular mainly in London. However, in the *Spoken BNC 2014*, London is in 3rd place (162 ipm) after Eastern England (480 ipm) and Midlands (476 ipm). Moreover, males appear to use *innit?* more than four times more often (148 ipm) than females (38 ipm), which is a conflict with the findings of Stenström et al. (2002: 187), who claim that females mostly use it.

These general findings were projected into my 25 random examples as sixteen speakers were males between 70 and 79.

4.2.3 *Do you?*

4.2.3.1 The form of the anchor and the tag

Besides the reversed negative-positive polarity (negative anchor and positive question tag), there are 3 cases in which constant positive-positive polarity was used (ex. 18). Moreover, two of them have an informational function with which positive-positive polarity is often associated.

(18) mm (.) I'm getting quite full (.) you **wanna finish** the ham **do you?** (SEYD 301)

All 25 examples of the question tag *do you?* are appended to a declarative clause. In no case was a phrase used in place of the anchor. Seven examples are placed in a turn-medial position, and only three examples stay without direct response.

4.2.3.2 Pragmatic functions of *do you?*

In example (19), a father with his daughter is looking for accommodation for their holiday. The father wants to show her some options that he found, but he wants to make sure they have time for it. Therefore, he asks her if she must go to bed early tonight. He thinks that he knows the answer but wants to make sure. As expected, the daughter confirms that she does not have to go to bed early. This is an instance of a confirmatory function of *do you?*.

- (19) S0423: there you are (.) mm but but are you going inside or are you staying here?
I'm coming in now anyway cos there's nothing to do
S0421: oh right okay
S0423: coming in in a minute (...) well you don't have to go to bed early tonight or anything **do you?**
S0421: no (SMM7 117)

A facilitating function can be seen in example (20). Three older people talk about how it is weird to meet people from their school as they look so old now. One woman says that it scares her, so the man tries to make her continue in her thoughts by asking her if she feels old herself.

- (20) S0012: that's strange I you know go down to --ANONplace occasionally and see people that we actually they went to s- that they took their kids to school or we've taken ours to school and seeing the some of them
S0278: they look ever so old yeah
S0012: >>scary that's so scary all these old people walking about I can't stand it
S0278: but you don't feel old yourself **do you?**
S0012: no no (SHTW 702)

There were also three instances representing an informational function of the question tag *do you?*. One of them is example (21), where a girl asks her friend if he wants to finish the

rest of the ham as she is getting full. She even uses the positive-positive polarity, which is often used with this function of question tags. It can signal that she really does not know the answer and expects either a positive or a negative response from the hearer.

- (21) S0058: one salmon and one chicken wrap (.) we're doing quite well actually
 S0179: I told you we'd need this many
 S0058: mm mm (.) I'm getting quite full (.) you wanna finish the ham **do you?**
 S0179: not hugely (SEYD 301)

Example (22) can be interpreted as an instance of the aggressive function of question tags. Four people are talking about a student's room. They mention bad air and damp chairs that smelled bad. One of them says that nobody cares, and the other replies with a hint of irony that he knows he really does not care.

- (22) S0584: it was great when you --UNCLEARWORD everyone would just like pile in
 S0587: yeah
 S0584: it was a good room for that
 S0587: yeah
 S0643: yeah nobody really cares
 S0584: yeah you don't care **do you?**
 S0643: yeah know what you mean (SZAK 285)

pragmatic function	No. of instances
confirmatory	11
facilitating	10
informational	3
aggressive	1
TOTAL	25

Table 8: Pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *do you?*

4.2.3.3 Age, gender and regional distribution of *do you?*

Do you? is a question tag used mainly by older speakers. It is predominantly used by people aged 60+ (188 ipm) and 45 – 59 (122 ipm). On the other hand, there seems to be no significant difference between different dialects or between men and women. However, in my 25 examples, most of the speakers were younger, and only one speaker was older than

90. In the case of gender, there were slightly more females, which is again in conflict with the general findings. Nevertheless, these differences are probably given by the fact that my sample is small.

4.2.4 *Okay?*

4.2.4.1 The form of the anchor and the tag

Twenty-five examples including the question tag *okay?* were analysed in this section (see Appendix V). In one case, an imperative is used as an anchor (ex. 23a). In other two cases, a phrase is used (ex. 23b). The rest are declarative. Furthermore, only in example (23c), a negative polarity occurs in the anchor.

- (23) a. now **think of something** which sounds like that word **okay?** (SMGY 414)
- b. every day to school **okay?** (S52C 103)
- c. >>you **can't** attack me **okay?** (S6W8 208)

4.2.4.2 Pragmatic functions of *okay?*

As was already mentioned in 2.8, *okay?* is frequently used to determine whether the hearer understood what the speaker said and whether “the hearer has any objections to what was said” (Stenström et al. 2002: 178). This claim was confirmed in my 25 examples as the so-called proposal-evaluating function appeared in 17 cases. In example (24), a woman is having a beauty treatment at her friend's. The friend is explaining to her what she will do to make sure that she understands and is fine with it.

- (24) S0255: I was quite enjoying the pushing on it it's sort of like
 S0315: I'll be on you today with that
 S0315: mm (...) right a little bit of feeling there so what we'll do is we'll do some
 deep breathings **okay?**
 S0255: okay (SGAN 423)

Next in frequency is the continuation-checking function. By this, the speaker tries to involve the hearer in the story. It could be paraphrased by questions like “Are you following my

story?” or “Are you able to imagine this?” (Stenström et al. 2002: 175). It often occurs in a turn-medial position which could be illustrated by an example (25). The man is presenting his idea, and while doing that, he uses the continuation-checking function of *okay?* to help the speaker imagine what he is talking about and to make sure that she understands what he means.

(25) S0261: an example of getting around this is like Spotify or Netflix using subscription models **okay?** so they're providing people access to get around a music problem which was that they were making the content not getting money for it because it was getting pirated and the argument goes that because somebody is getting some money out of it that's better than getting no money out of it so it still gets pirated but more people pay a small amount to use it through a subscription model

S0262: yeah alright well (SGSY 464)

In two cases, I found the meaning of *okay?* to be challenging. In example (26), a woman is mad at her daughter because she swears a lot. The daughter is offended by her mother being mean to her because she thinks it is a problem to her only because they are recording it, and she does not want to look bad. Therefore, she ironically says that she will pretend to be someone else.

(26) S0202: are you going? are you having? aw will you fuck off?

S0215: swearing

S0202: mother shut up I always swear you're only telling me off cos these lot are here

S0215: I'm telling you off cos you're embarrassing me with your --
UNCLEARWORD

S0202: >>oh shut up well I'll pretend to be someone else then while you're here
okay?

S0215: just don't swear (SKB5 710)

Although Stenström et al. (2002: 179) claim that *okay?* cannot be used with a softening function, I think that in example (27), a softening function was used. A girl is talking to her sister, telling her about an exam she had. The sentence in the example is a paraphrase of what the examiner said. He gave her instructions and used an imperative sentence to do that.

Therefore, I think that the question tag *okay?* was used to soften his proposition and make it look less like a command.

- (27) S0435: and and one of one of the other ones was okay so now we've got your word
 S0436: uh
 S0435: now think of something which sounds like that word **okay?** then put it in a scenario with a word that rhymes with a number in in a sequence
 S0436: >>oh yes you said that (SMGY 414)

pragmatic function	No. of instances
proposal evaluating	17
continuation checking	5
challenging	2
softening	1
TOTAL	25

Table 9: Pragmatic functions associated with the question tag *okay?*

Unlike the other described question tags, the number of direct responses and no responses given to the question tag *okay?* is about the same. In 13 cases, direct response occurred. The rest stayed without a response. Moreover, 14 question tags are placed in a turn-medial position. The only conclusion that can be given here is that all the question tags that have a continuation-checking function occur in a turn-medial position.

4.2.4.3 Age, gender and regional distribution of *okay?*

Regarding the age, there are unfortunately many speakers whose age is unknown. Nevertheless, the most numerous group includes people between 35 and 44 (125 ipm). What is interesting is that young children who are less than 14 use *okay?* frequently (100 ipm). On the other hand, people 60+ do not use it as much (41 ipm). In addition, it seems to be far more popular among people from Ireland (368 ipm) or who live completely outside the UK (240 ipm). Finally, gender appears to have no significant impact on the distribution of *okay?*, but it is slightly more used by women (69 ipm females and 56 ipm males). In my sample, 17 speakers are women, and most speakers are 40 – 49.

5 Conclusion

Some of the main findings made by Tottie & Hoffmann (2006) were confirmed in this thesis. First, it was proved that the most frequently used question tag amongst English language speakers is *isn't it?*. Moreover, both components of this question tag are the most frequent in their own categories (*is* as a verb and *it* as a pronoun). Among other verbs, *do* and its past form *did* are the most frequent ones. Nevertheless, modal verbs such as *can*, *shall*, *must* or *ought* play their part in forming question tags as well.

In terms of pronouns, mainly personal pronouns occur in question tags. After *it*, the second place belongs to *you* followed by *they*. A peculiarity found during this research is the usage of *ya* as a variant of *you*. Besides the personal pronouns, the only different pronoun used is *there*, but it is used to a much lesser extent. Furthermore, in ten cases, the speaker did not use any personal pronoun at all. However, the reason behind it could be that the co-participant cut them off, and they did not have time to finish their utterance.

An interesting phenomenon that is not described in any of the literature that I used is the usage of the personal pronoun *it* in a question tag after anchors using *that* or *this* as a subject.

Confirming Quirk et al.'s (1985) and Biber et al.'s (1999) observations, declarative sentences seem to be the most frequent sentence type preceding the question tags. It was also shown that other sentence types like imperatives could precede them, but to a much lesser extent. Interestingly, fragmented utterances and phrases are often employed as an anchor. This is probably given by the nature of the informal conversations.

The fact that almost seventy-six percent of the canonical question tags are negative confirms the findings of Biber et al. (1999), who claim that mainly negative question tags are used as in conversation we tend to use more positive than negative sentences. In addition to the typical contracted negation, I found 13 cases that use a full negation with *not*. There are also two cases in which non-inverted word order is applied.

Another thing that I did not find in the literature is the cases in which another word follows the question tag. These words are usually vocatives, such as the name of the addressee, which emphasizes the facilitative function of question tags. Some of the other appended words are the vocatives *mum*, *darling* or the adverb *actually*.

The invariant question tags form thirteen percent of all question tags observed. The most frequent ones are *you know?*, *right?* and *innit?*. Interjections, such as *uh?*, *huh?* or *hm?*, were found to be used as invariant question tags as well.

In addition, I described a group of question tags called ‘*ain’t* group’. These question tags comprise the verb *ain’t* and a pronoun. It was shown that *ain’t* stands for *am not/is not/are not/has not/have not* as well as for *was not* (as the verb in the anchor).

Focusing on the pragmatic functions of question tags, the facilitating function is expressed the most. This relates to the fact that all the examples are taken from informal conversations where speakers often use this function. As González & Dehé (2020: 44) show, most question tags have the power to keep the conversation going and involve the addressee in it. The second place belongs to confirmatory question tags, which were most frequent with *do you?*. On the other hand, I found no instance of attitudinal function in the usage of *do you?*. However, the attitudinal function stands in third place because of its high frequency with *isn’t it?* and *innit?*. I found only three cases using an informational pragmatic function, and all of them were employed with the question tag *do you?*. Finally, in one case *do you?* was also found to have an aggressive function. It could therefore be said that *do you?* appears to have the most variable set of pragmatic functions compared to *isn’t it?* and *innit?*.

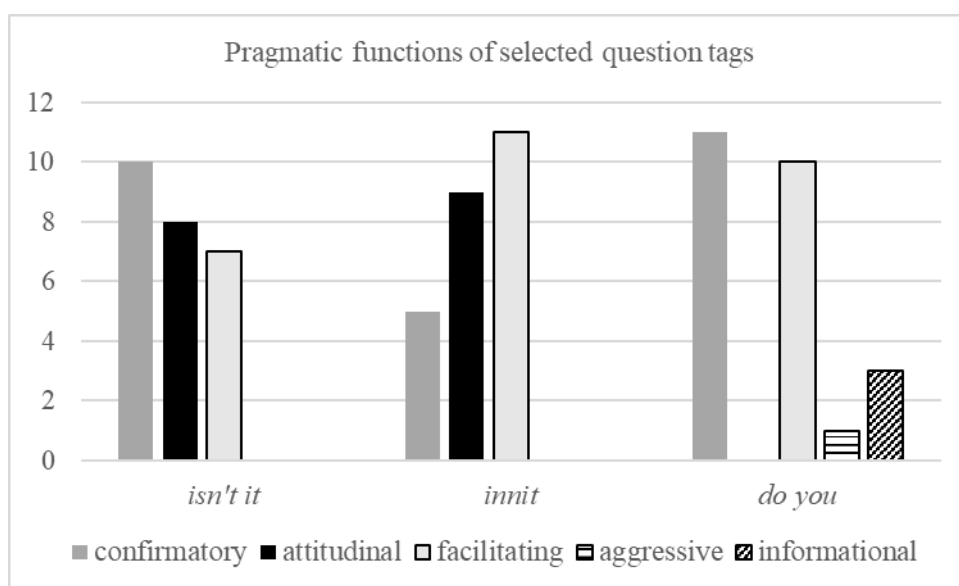


Figure 1: Pragmatic functions of the question tags *isn't it?*, *innit?*, and *do you?*

Direct responses following the question tags were studied as well. I found that direct response is given to seventy-five percent of question tags. The ones that stay without response are mostly question tags with attitudinal pragmatic function. This is connected to the fact that attitudinal question tags are usually placed in a turn-medial position, which occurs in twenty-seven percent of all cases. On the other hand, informational question tags always occur in turn-final position, and they always get a direct response.

As was mentioned in 2.6, *innit?* is an invariant question tag derived from *isn't it?* and some authors consider it to stay somewhere between canonical and invariant question tags. My research clearly shows it can be appended to any anchor, which makes it look like an invariant question tag. On the other hand, I was able to apply the pragmatic functions described with canonical question tags, which was not possible with *okay?*. This seems to confirm the fact that *innit?* takes characteristics from both canonical and invariant question tags. When we compare *isn't it?* and *innit?* it appears that their syntactic properties are similar. An essential difference is found in the socio-linguistic characteristic of these two question tags. Here I found an interesting and not expected finding. While the literature expects invariant question tags to be popular among young people, I found out that *innit?* is most frequently used by speakers aged 60+. On the contrary, *isn't it?* is popular among the group of much younger people. Besides that, it also appears that *isn't it?* is frequently used by female speakers, while *innit?* is more a male phenomenon.

Regarding the fully invariant question tag *okay?*, I confirmed that it could be appended to any anchor. Besides declarative anchors, there were also fragmented phrases and one imperative anchor. Moreover, the anchors were both positive and negative. The assumptions of Stenström et al. (2002) were also confirmed, as the most frequent type of pragmatic function is proposal-evaluating supplemented by continuation-checking and challenging function. On the other hand, Stenström et al. (2002) claim that *okay?* cannot have a softening function, which I found not true. Interestingly, I also found out that *okay?* is primarily used in Ireland and places outside the UK.

The thesis also briefly inspected the socio-linguistic perspective. The overall distribution of question tags between men and women appears to be balanced. The age group 60+ is the most active one in using question tags.

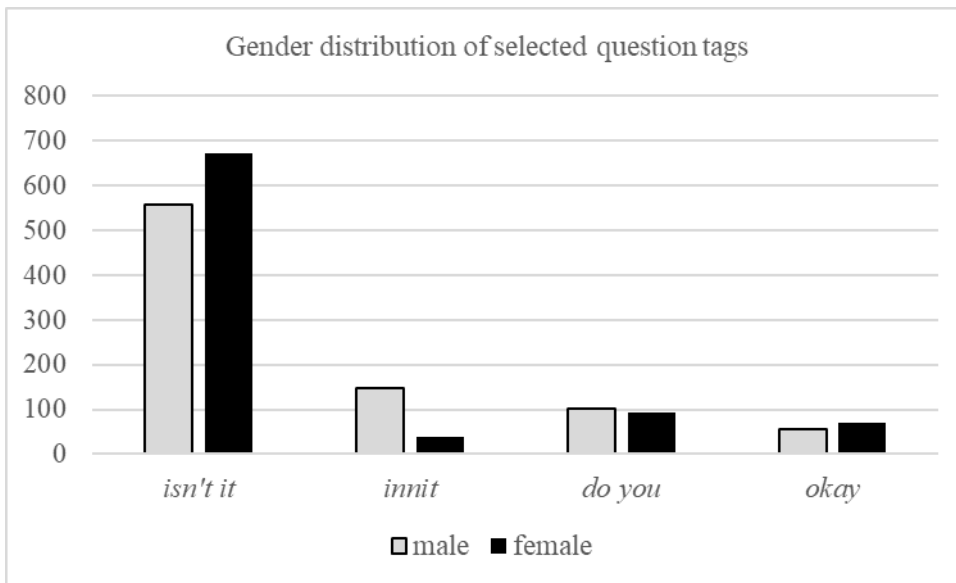


Figure 2: Gender distribution of the question tags *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?*, and *okay?*

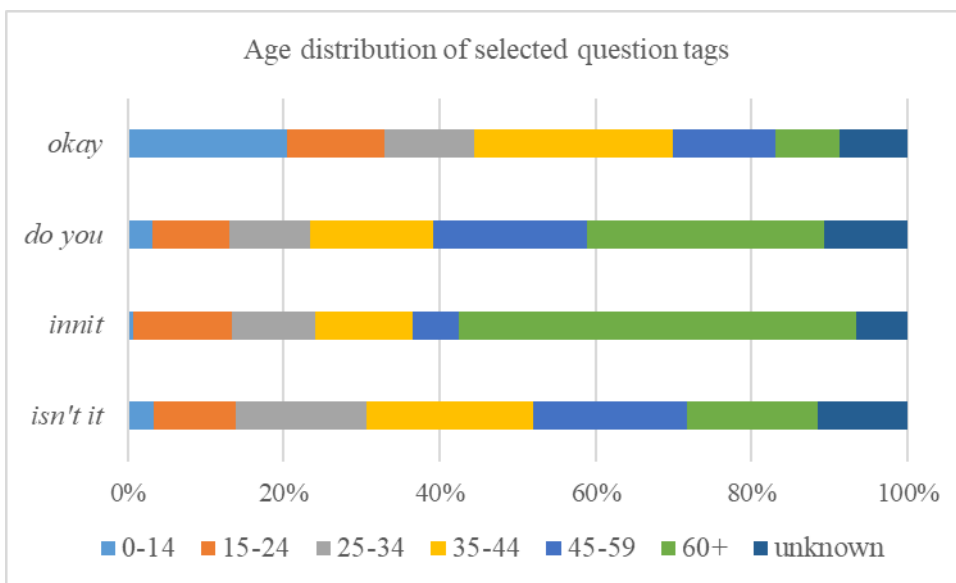


Figure 3: Age distribution of the question tags *isn't it?*, *innit?*, *do you?*, and *okay?*

To summarize, this thesis is hoped to have provided a better insight into the usage of question tags in present-day spoken English, including the connection to pragmatic functions and socio-linguistic characteristics.

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Sources and tools

Spoken British National Corpus 2014. Accessed through CQPweb, Lancaster University.
<https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/>

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Appendix II: Analysis of *isn't it?*

Appendix III: Analysis of *innit?*

Appendix IV: Analysis of *do you?*

Appendix V: Analysis of *okay?*

7 Appendix

7.1 Appendix I: Canonical question tags

pronoun	verb	polarity	example	reference	frequency
it	is	negative	it's terrible isn't it?	S49V 941	7 247
it	is	positive	yeah well it's not the right way is it?	SJB4 5458	1 595
they	are	negative	oh they're doing a barbeque aren't they?	STNX 588	1 263
it	was	negative	it was the big red one wasn't it?	SF2Q 1224	1 227
they	do	negative	uh they really teach you a lot of stuff don't they?	SCYY 391	1 226
you	do	negative	you mostly send text messages don't you?	SV2N 916	1 117
it	does	negative	it seems a bit silly doesn't it?	SUNM 396	956
you	do	positive	well you don't like the long drive do you?	S6AK 352	769
you	did	negative	you wanted to have your own money didn't you?	SVKF 55	586
he	is	negative	well he's funny when he's not performing isn't he?	S8RU 249	531
you	are	negative	you're going out for dinner with your parents aren't you?	SV4W 467	514
they	did	negative	but they sold off all the council houses didn't they?	S6YA 1072	496
you	have	negative	you've seen the cake haven't you?	SZAK 943	476
it	would	negative	it would be easier wouldn't it?	SL9V 3161	470
he	did	negative	your er your brother came with him as well didn't he?	SN98 592	442
you	can	negative	and you can fill the fridge up with bottles can't you?	SGCA 256	337
they	have	negative	so they've got some really cool stuff haven't they?	SCG9 458	326
you	would	negative	You'd be surprised if it was Terry Wogan wouldn't you?	SXNE 1758	321
it	does	positive	it doesn't feel real does it?	STEY 161	319

they	do	positive	older people don't normally like that sort of thing do they?	SQ2C 262	306
you	can	positive	yeah (.) you can't eat them too much can you?	SAHB 519	301
it	was	positive	oh that probably wasn't the best move was it?	S5EM 393	298
there	is	negative	there's loads of butterflies now isn't there?	SYRT 114	298
you	are	positive	you're not doing a very good job are you?	S9YC 536	294
it	did	negative	that took a long time didn't it?	S2GC 590	275
she	is	negative	she yeah she yeah she's working with children isn't she?	SQE6 362	268
they	are	positive	that those are not the buttons that you originally had are they?	S2UT 225	268
you	have	positive	you haven't got any cancer sausages left have you?	S7JG 2 716	258
they	were	negative	they were in Vietnam weren't they?	SL9V 2684	257
we	did	negative	yeah we went there for breakfast didn't we?	S26N 6 92	249
there	is	positive	your your riding (.) so there's nothing wrong with that is there?	S6AK 1220	246
she	did	negative	but she said your job was safe didn't she?	SWTX 177	244
I	did	negative	so I grabbed the that glass jewellery box didn't I?	S6W8 2413	244
you	did	positive	you didn't dress up did you?	S6UQ 319	238
he	does	negative	Superman messes up all the time too (.) doesn't he?	SHSD 143	236
it	were	negative	yeah it was fun weren't it?	SR7C 4	227
it	will	negative	yeah it will be good won't it?	SLH6 36	219
it	has	negative	one because York has only got one this year hasn't it?	SXAQ 224	213
we	do	negative	no er we need to feed the animals don't we?	SAZX 206	213
we	are	negative	we're having ragoût on Monday Tuesday and Wednesday aren't we?	SB9K 757	204
he	was	negative	thing ah it's difficult because he was young wasn't he?	SW6A 1783	203

we	have	negative	well we have been in Italy haven't we?	S4QF 668	192
you	would	positive	you wouldn't say it to her mum would you?	SQX2 557	182
he	has	negative	yes (.) he's got a good appetite actually hasn't he?	S8PW 414	168
we	do	positive	we don't have miners in our family do we?	SVLZ 439	163
she	does	negative	your mum always makes loads of food though doesn't she?	SBZ7 224	154
he	is	positive	for it? he's not in prison for it is he?	SG2Y 1660	153
she	is	positive	right she's not a person then is she?	SXC6 194	143
you	could	negative	you could google what they look like couldn't you?	S86J 1 39	139
they	will	negative	thinking though they'll make more money like this won't they?	SG7X 639	133
they	did	positive	about it (.) I mean they didn't speak to him did they?	SVH7 382	126
you	were	negative	yeah but you were away for a whole week weren't you?	SVD6 552	124
he	did	positive	yeah well Robin Hood didn't wear one of those did he?	S46J 4 18	118
it	do	negative	yeah I know time flies don't it?	SRF6 2 02	112
we	did	positive	mm I suppose we didn't think about that bit did we?	SCQF 1093	111
we	are	positive	we're not fit enough at the moment are we?	SMNC 520	102
she	was	negative	she was quite young as well wasn't she?	SL9V 2677	102
she	has	negative	but she's been better since she retired though hasn't she?	S7KK 1172	101
there	was	negative	there was also that other shop near there wasn't there?	SB9K 691	98
there	are	negative	uh well there's different things aren't there?	SF2F 2 71	94
you	will	negative	you'll probably be alright with that won't you?	SB32 3 32	94
we	have	positive	we haven't been anywhere since have we?	S2T6 1 959	91
they	would	negative	the Democrats would go up wouldn't they?	SA88 6 08	89

I	do	negative	I eat meat all the time don't I?	S7KK 1182	89
I	have	negative	I've got grubby trousers today haven't I?	SHTW 1544	89
we	were	negative	we we were struggling to put your coat on weren't we?	SB7R 710	88
he	does	positive	he doesn't seem to enjoy coaching anyway though does he?	SVP4 62	87
they	have	positive	well they haven't grown have they?	SLMK 3	85
she	does	positive	and she doesn't wanna come back to Bulgaria does she?	SQG4 1035	85
I	are	negative	I'm like a twelve-year-old boy aren't I?	S5LP 1 08	77
it	would	positive	it wouldn't be cheaper to do it would it?	S985 4 49	77
you	will	positive	you won't be able to hear the radio though will you?	SWLR 429	72
it	did	positive	that did not take long did it?	SR3K 1461	72
she	did	positive	well she didn't like it that much did she?	SZBV 389	64
he	has	positive	because he hasn't done anything wrong has he?	SM88 2950	63
they	can	negative	funny thing to have cos they can grow enormous can't they?	SR4E 2655	59
we	will	negative	well Thursday we'll be happy to stay in won't we?	S2DD 210	59
I	did	positive	black vest? I didn't wear a vest yesterday did I?	SEGU 302	57
I	do	positive	yeah one I don't wear the other one much do I?	S4QF 1960	56
I	have	positive	I obviously haven't discovered them all have I?	S5MM 940	56
we	shall	positive	right so let's put the toaster back in shall we?	SRYY 196	55
there	were	negative	there were lots of girls weren't there?	S7JH 2 066	51
we	could	negative	we could do with a few of those chairs couldn't we?	SFZ9 1 79	51
I	am	positive	I'm not a million pound businessman am I?	SDZC 418	50
you	could	positive	but you couldn't park much closer than this could you?	SKDA 285	50

it	will	positive	that won't be a problem will it?	SQVW 450	50
they	would	positive	they wouldn't sell beer in the coffee shop would they?	SPVY 331	50
it	has	positive	but and it hasn't worked the other way around has it?	SQBK 13	49
we	can	negative	we can tell mommy that now can't we?	SYEF 705	49
he	was	positive	so --ANONnameM wasn't on the bus was he?	S8BQ 2629	47
I	can	positive	I'm stuck there I can't do anything else can I?	S7RA 174	47
he	would	negative	he would be he would be a nice husband wouldn't he?	S5LP 7 95	46
he	will	negative	oh he'll be retired by then won't he?	S8BQ 669	45
I	was	negative	I was oh I suppose I was quite young wasn't I?	SNA4 2646	44
it	should	negative	should be alright to leave though shouldn't it?	S38V 2 463	41
it	can	positive	Well I imagine it can't be too heavy can it?	S33B 3 79	41
she	has	positive	yeah I mean she hasn't been around has she?	S5XD 3754	40
you	were	positive	you weren't robbed then were you?	S4JC 3 63	40
they	were	positive	so they weren't very happy with that were they?	SGMT 2090	39
I	could	negative	actually I could put them on our the cupboards couldn't I?	SF7M 251	39
she	will	negative	true cos she'll be back in a year won't she?	SFMJ 449	38
they	will	positive	it is worrying cos then people won't do it will they?	S8PW 1353	38
it	could	negative	so that could be any time or place couldn't it?	SVNZ 162	38
they	can	positive	people then can't be mean to you can they?	SMW8 81	37
he	do	negative	I mean? cos he lives for his work don't he?	S4HW 1304	35
we	would	negative	but then we would probably have to do that wouldn't we?	SVBG 105	33
she	was	positive	well grandm- grandma wasn't particularly religious was she?	S2XJ 9 07	32

they	could	negative	they could do a table tennis club couldn't they?	S7FK 1466	32
it	can	negative	the beach can be quite busy can't it?	S3JF 1 527	31
I	can	negative	okay so I can turn that over can't I?	S84P 4 47	30
we	can	positive	can't actually buy sleeping tablets can we?	SZBV 264	30
he	were	negative	yeah cos he was a fantastic engineer weren't he?	S6AK 812	30
it	must	negative	that must be awful mustn't it?	SNYG 1396	30
I	should	negative	looks good (.) I should probably go shopping with him shouldn't I?	SRYY 130	29
I	shall	positive	I'll try harder next time shall I?	S52C 1 84	27
we	will	positive	we won't have time to do that after Sunday will we?	SRRQ 768	25
there	was	positive	clean those uniforms? because there wasn't dry cleaning was there?	SK82 1 91	25
he	can	positive	I mean he can't be responsible for his father can he?	SG7X 339	25
he	can	negative	he can take it back can't he?	S7TT 1 685	24
he	will	positive	well he won't cut it low will he?	S2T6 3 549	24
we	should	negative	we should draw these curtains now shouldn't we?	SGN8 221	24
she	would	negative	have she would have met all those years ago wouldn't she?	SA69 8 18	24
I	will	negative	you know I'll always be scared of him won't I?	SPG4 1421	23
she	do	negative	see things she knows you're following her though don't she?	SYHW 44	23
they	should	negative	yeah but they should instruct you shouldn't they?	S2DD 419	20
she	will	positive	she won't have any more kids though will she?	SLLC 221	19
they	must	negative	oh they must be twins mustn't they?	STJD 4 32	17
we	had	negative	went (.) I mean we'd just got the car hadn't we?	SF8D 2289	17
I	would	negative	black and yellow I'd look like a bee wouldn't I?	S38F 7 79	16

we	would	positive	that day we wouldn't see each other at all would we?	SGN8900	16
they	could	positive	other people around the table just couldn't believe it could they?	SP6E 345	15
he	would	positive	then he wouldn't be able to move would he?	SHXJ712	15
there	are	positive	there aren't very many of them are there?	SY4E917	15
I	was	positive	er I wasn't supposed to pick up any cards was I?	SAUR4321	15
I	had	negative	I'd already tried ringing them a few times hadn't I?	S2KP1139	14
she	would	positive	well she wouldn't go on holiday without her child would she?	S2KP1215	14
we	could	positive	yeah we couldn't possibly have got to most places could we?	S26N 530	14
he	could	negative	I suppose he could put them in the shed couldn't he?	S8BQ1425	14
you	should	negative	if you're a linguist you should know already shouldn't you?	S2LC416	14
it	do	positive	it don't make sense do it?	SD65 2	13
they	had	negative	everybody had got the same type of thing hadn't they?	SD65 625	13
she	were	negative	cos I remember she was pretty old school weren't she?	S68E 289	13
she	can	positive	she can't sing can she?	S6W83647	13
I	would	positive	I wouldn't be talking in front of the TV would I?	SGMM261	13
there	will	negative	go on Amazon there'll be one on there won't there?	S2DD459	12
we	were	positive	yeah we weren't looking for any particular are a were we?	S2DD1422	11
I	will	positive	-- ANONnameM but I'll never see him again will I?	S4HW997	11
I	should	positive	I shouldn't laugh should I?	S7GJ 4247	10
there	has	negative	well there's always been trouble hasn't there?	SNYG522	10
you	had	negative	you'd all gone out hadn't you?	SBBC45	10
it	might	negative	oh I could use armour lock that might help mightn't it?	STH51578	10

you	might	negative	you might be alright mightn't you?	SDMJ 976	9
you	should	positive	I mean you shouldn't really eat it like this should you?	S7GJ 953	9
she	could	negative	she could take that on the plane couldn't she?	SHTW 43	9
I	might	negative	there so I might find more out on Saturday mightn't I?	SWTX 942	9
he	had	negative	her husband had beat her up or something hadn't he?	SGAX 296	8
you	had	positive	bet you'd never s- said that to each other had you?	S3LE 406	7
they	might	negative	never quite know with dogs they might be jealous mightn't they?	SR4E 1362	7
they	should	positive	they shouldn't do that should they?	S7TT 2206	7
he	must	negative	he must be seventy mustn't he?	SF3V 180	7
he	should	negative	well he no he should compromise as a man shouldn't he?	SPG4 2082	7
ya	do	negative	looking for anything out of that you know that don't ya?	S7SU 404	7
there	would	negative	oh manzana yeah it would be manzana up there wouldn't there?	SG56 216	6
there	were	positive	well there weren't crisps really were there?	S7KK 1354	6
she	had	negative	yeah well she'd had two bad nights hadn't she?	SKZX 101	6
I	could	positive	I couldn't stand anybody hugging me or touching me could I?	SCWJ 553	6
ya	are	negative	You're gonna draw a bone aren't ya?	S8LG 1535	6
they	was	negative	when we came this morning the gates were shut wasn't they?	S355 1711	5
he	could	positive	well he couldn't find anyone could he?	SF2Q 1699	5
there	must	negative	think it's there must be something behind there mustn't there?	SAAF 314	5
we	had	positive	in cos we hadn't seen her for a while had we?	S7TT 802	5
	was	negative	four hundred and fifty de- degrees oh that was hard wasn't?	SW6K 1692	5
ya	do	positive	n't like nuts in -- UNCLEARWORD you don't like nut do ya?	S3JF 1238	5

it	had	negative	yeah that had been there quite a while hadn't it?	SYHW 732	4
he	should	positive	well he shouldn't 've taken drugs then should he?	S2RD 56	4
there	have	negative	there's just been two numbers haven't there?	S84P 4 80	4
we	might	negative	we might go to Dubrovnik or Split I suppose mightn't we?	SWZA 910	4
we	should	positive	we shouldn't sit together on this next Ryanair flight should we?	SR8V 666	4
she	can	negative	she can make an apple crumble can't she?	SKL5 446	4
she	should	negative	yeah she should be alright shouldn't she?	SZJ7 3 17	4
I	were	negative	I'm winning yeah I was winning back there weren't I?	S6W8 5132	4
I	had	positive	I better not say anything on tape had I?	SBTC 1330	4
ya	would	positive	you wouldn't be able to have made it would ya?	SF2Q 1957	4
she	could	positive	she couldn't have exactly been a pumpkin could she?	SA2B 200	4
they	might	positive	mm (.) mm so things might be working out for you might they?	SD65 1 7	3
there	did	negative	all over -- ANONplace (.) there used to be windmills everywhere didn't there?	SG4J 7 99	3
there	does	negative	know (.) there seems to be a difference in attitude doesn't there?	SCQS 213	3
we	was	negative	we was talking about that earlier wasn't we?	SPHU 723	3
it	is	negative (not)	but that's kind of worse is it not?	SASQ 432	3
you	must	negative	you must have put it back on mustn't you?	SXWR 328	2
you	was	negative	was really sort of impressed by the surroundings then wasn't you?	SN98 7 44	2
you	was	positive	no you never were very fond of that one was you?	SN8K 1654	2
he	had	positive	cos he hadn't actually retired had he?	S7A6 4 95	2
there	should	negative	yes there should be a balance shouldn't there?	SYJK 244	2
she	must	negative	spend a lot of time out in the rain mustn't she?	SE3W 141	2

she	had	positive	she hadn't seen her for six months as well had she?	SZRJ 228	2
she	must	positive	that she found out so she mustn't have gone must she?	S9ZL 604	2
she	should	positive	shouldn't be in the way should she?	SHDM 401	2
you	are	negative (not)	you are quite unruly are you not?	SY2B 829	2
it	does	negative (not)	oh it always includes a drink does it not?	SN98 20	2
	did	negative	she got dunked in a swimming pool didn't?	SBTC 1861	2
ya	can	negative	but he obviously you can tell he's immature can't ya?	SMSW 386	2
ya	have	negative	really? You've all got double beds though haven't ya?	SK8T 108	2
ya	could	positive	you couldn't come and look at my boiler tomorrow could ya?	SJNJ 1435	2
it	have	negative	I've told you about our plan to adopt haven't it?	SBTC 1282	1
you	is	negative	That's s- similar to me and you isn't you?	SB4D 2193	1
they	ought	negative	ought to learn about all the main religions really oughtn't they?	SK82 258	1
they	had	positive	they hadn't met – ANONnameM's generation yet had they?	SJHL 2434	1
he	might	negative	well he might've been at sea mightn't he?	SXDQ 488	1
he	do	positive	mean --ANONnameM -- ANONnameM don't even write to us now do he?	SP5U 334	1
he	were	positive	everybody had got the same type of thing hadn't they?	SXWR 604	1
there	can	negative	there can only be one bedroom can't there?	SWZA 1113	1
we	must	negative	we must talk about that a lot mustn't we?	SVBN 227	1
I	must	positive	well I mustn't say that must I?	SPG4 3395	1
you	do	negative (not)	but you only really need a bit of wire do you not?	SDXW 269	1
you	were	negative (not)	cos you were with the top-up fees were you not?	SFNQ 1469	1
they	do	negative (not)	and everyone gets to see this do they not?	SAUR 1912	1

I	can	negative (not)	I can take some more cards without moving can I not?	SAUR 3350	1
I	was	negative (not)	oh but I was just here was I not?	SMYJ 634	1
we	are	negative (not)	rest we're losing resources with the alternative are are we not?	SAUR 1516	1
	is	negative	Well yeah it is really slippery isn't?	S8J6 304	1
	would	negative	yeah taking them down carefully outside would be better wouldn't?	SF6K 159	1
	are	negative	you're a bit of a chef you are aren't?	ST82 1297	1
it	could	positive	(.) yeah probably that but it couldn't've been 3 D could it so?	S4VJ 61	1
there	will	positive	there'd be nobody else hanging around then will there so?	SYEF 992	1
ya	had	negative	anyway better go look (.) hadn't ya?	S5TE 617	1
ya	were	negative	you were like that weren't ya?	SG87 471	1
ya	will	negative	differ cos I know you'll have loved it won't ya?	SG87 183	1
ya	are	positive	sum up you you're not going for a cigarette are ya?	S7SU 1174	1

7.2 Appendix II: Analysis of *isn't it?*

Example	Reference	Pragmatic function	Polarity	Position	Direct response	Anchor	Gender	Age
it's so good isn't it?	SD9 2170	attitudinal	positive-negative	turn-medial	no response	declarative	female	19-29
bit worrying isn't it?	SZ98 388	facilitating	positive-negative	turn-final	response	phrase	female	19-29
it's awful isn't it?	SN4 N 713	attitudinal	positive-negative	turn-final	no response	declarative	female	50-59
that's harsh isn't it?	SNM N 395	facilitating	positive-negative	turn-final	response	declarative	male	40-49

it's something on that side isn't it?	SB4 D 10 36	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	male	50-59
you because your half of hearing is done in your brain isn't it?	S2UJ 689	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	30-39
polite that's that is a good joke isn't it?	S7FU 57 3	facilitating	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	male	30-39
erm (.) possible yeah (.) but that's yeah that's the idea isn't it?	SXR R 97 6	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	19-29
you're really connected to the story isn't it?	S5DJ 483	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	19-29
they're addictive as well I suppose that's the thing isn't it?	S3DA 45 2	attitudinal	pos - neg	turn - medial	no response	declarative	female	19-29
cos it's like the same format for different schools isn't it ?	SC67 139 9	facilitating	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	19-29
I think it's unlikely isn't it?	SJAW 97	attitudinal	pos - neg	turn - medial	no response	declarative	male	60-69
it is nice isn't it?	SG5 6 42 8	attitudinal	pos - neg	turn - final	no response	declarative	male	50-59
so it's the people in between who suffer isn't it?	S8PW 20 19	facilitating	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	30-39
no not at the moment money isn't it?	SQG 4 59 6	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	phrase	female	19-29
there's no clouds though typical English weather isn't it?	SVZ B 97 4	attitudinal	pos - neg	turn - medial	no response	phrase	male	19-29
ah right well it's the cheapest meat as well isn't it?	SNA 4 26 6	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	30-39
-- UNCLEARWORD it's just more orangey isn't it?	SXX N 44 8	confirmatory	pos - neg	turn - final	response	declarative	female	40-49

my go isn't it?	SR3 K 29 34	confirm atory	pos - neg	turn - final	respo nse	phra se	mal e	30- 39
it's crap isn't it?	SWU 3 16 3	facilitat ing	pos - neg	turn - final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	30- 39
very well -- ANONnameF hasn't she ? (.) yeah well it's true isn't it?	SPG 4 16 37	attitudi nal	pos - neg	turn - final	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	30- 39
no (.) well this is the third da y isn't it?	S33 N 25 5	confirm atory	pos - neg	turn - final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	30- 39
it's so horrible isn't it ?	SGH Z 67 8	attitudi nal	pos - neg	turn - final	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
I think the worst thing is is th ose that haven't tried isn't it?	SRF V 90 1	facilitat ing	pos - neg	turn - final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	19- 29
eleven wee- it was today isn't it?	S87R 54	confirm atory	pos - neg	turn - final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29

7.3 Appendix III: Analysis of *innit*?

Example	Refe renc e	Pragm atic functio n	Polarity of the anchor	Posit ion	Direc t respo nse	Anc hor	Ge nde r	Ag e
yeah (.) like my sister's p upil innit?	SQP N 12 70	confir matory	positive	turn- final	respo nse	phra se	fem ale	40- 49
it when's it you have to g o back? after Easter innit?	SF8 D 62 2	confir matory	positive	turn- final	respo nse	phra se	mal e	70- 79
mm that's good innit?	SDH B 27 84	facilita ting	positive	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	60- 69
is a lecturer so he had to l ike wing work off (.) ridi culous innit?	S2C 9 46	attitudi nal	positive	turn- medi al	no respo nse	phra se	mal e	19- 29
that's for a pregnant wom an that's a bit too much innit?	S26 N 28 7	attitudi nal	positive	turn- medi al	no respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	70- 79

>>oh yeah that's a bad bit there innit?	SZQ9362	facilitating	positive	turn-final	no response	declarative	male	70-79
>>it's gonna be reem innit?	SB49148	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	male	40-49
oh terrible innit?	SVUC54	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	phrase	female	60-69
yeah I was just looking at that that's terrible innit?	S5J8258	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	male	11-18
that's really weird innit?	SL8N1436	attitudinal	positive	turn-medial	no response	declarative	male	70-79
it's a lovely car innit?	S5PW1651	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	60-69
it is innit?	SU8C75	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	male	70-79
oil you put is is up to TE you know personal taste innit?	SR8N166	attitudinal	positive	turn-medial	response	declarative	male	30-39
no that's weird innit?	SW6K105	attitudinal	positive	turn-medial	response	declarative	male	60-69
>>pre dinner order innit?	SZ8H467	confirmatory	positive	turn-final	response	phrase	female	60-69
it's like everything else innit?	SL8N1347	attitudinal	positive	turn-medial	no response	declarative	male	70-79
oh it's awful innit?	SJSS392	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	19-29
but looking at them (...) oh that's erm a big one innit?	S34649	confirmatory	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	40-49
mental innit?	SEPP2535	attitudinal	positive	turn-final	no response	phrase	male	30-39
yeah it's awful innit?	SZNG949	facilitating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	male	70-79

that is mine innit?	SN9 8 27	confir matory	positive	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	60- 69
it's really comfy innit?	STG P 10	attitudi nal	positive	turn- medi al	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
it's a bit dark innit?	SXC B 12 21	attitudi nal	positive	turn- medi al	no respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	30- 39
bit sad innit?	S9Z L 14 1	facilita ting	positive	turn- medi al	respo nse	phra se	mal e	11- 18
yeah that's nice innit?	S64 H 37 42	facilita ting	positive	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	80- 89

7.4 Appendix IV: Analysis of *do you?*

Example	Refe renc e	Pragm atic functio n	Pol arit y	Posit ion	Direc t respo nse	Anc hor	Ge nde r	Ag e
yeah probably yeah well you don't listen back to these things do you?	SRV R 15 6	inform ational	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	50- 59
mm (.) I'm getting quite full (.) you wanna finish the ham do you?	SEY D 30 1	inform ational	pos- pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
you don't like -- UNCLEARWORD do you?	SB9 K 64 5	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	19- 29
but you don't feel old yourself do you?	SHT W 7 02	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	60- 69
yeah you don't care do you?	SZA K 28 5	aggress ive	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	19- 29
yes yeah but you don't know do you?	S9W Z 45 9	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- final	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	40- 49
don't want it don't want it do you?	SQG 4 11 90	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	40- 49

>>you don't have an ashtray do you?	S7J H 87 6	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- medi al	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	19- 29
what it's like without oh and you don't need much do you?	S2Q U 64 7	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	50- 59
but you don't know that's all it is do you?	SH4 V 13 64	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	60- 69
>>yeah (.) well you need some water on them I suppose do you?	SR4 E 29 23	confir matory	pos- pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	90- 99
you don't mind do you?	SLN B 34 0	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
gonna cut it you don't have to spend thirty billion do you?	SD6 5 12 76	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	50- 59
be thinking about other people all the time when you're travelling do you?	SB4 D 22 22	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	50- 59
you don't have hot summer fruits when you're feeling poorly do you?	SV WU 431	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- medi al	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
so you do all the cooking do you?	S35 U 59 4	informa tional	pos- pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	60- 69
>>oh god you don't do you?	S5X D 31 4	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- medi al	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	30- 39
you don't know what goes on do you?	SZN G 11 21	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	60- 69
and I was like well you don't eat your pig do do you?	S2L C 86 5	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- medi al	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	11- 18
and you never expect that to be that bad do you?	SD6 5 89 6	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- medi al	respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	60- 69
don't wanna be pulling up in anything too old do you?	S4K W 3 24	facilita ting	neg -pos	turn- medi al	no respo nse	decl arati ve	fem ale	19- 29
you don't have to go to bed early tonight or anything do you?	SM M7 117	confir matory	neg -pos	turn- final	respo nse	decl arati ve	mal e	50- 59

you don't know what they're doing to your computer really do you?	SNY G 16 59	facilitating	neg -pos	turn-final	response	declarative	male	70-79
you don't need it do you?	SWG 138	facilitating	neg -pos	turn-medial	response	declarative	male	30-39
>>well you don't need six bedrooms do you?	SB3 2 68 8	confirmatory	neg -pos	turn-final	response	declarative	female	40-49

7.5 Appendix V: Analysis of *okay*?

Example	Reference	Pragmatic function	Polarity of the anchor	Position	Direct response	Anchor	Gender	Age
what are you eating? right you have one of those okay?	SJK D 1 2	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	19-29
>>you can't attack me okay?	S6 W8 208	propositional-evaluating	negative	turn-medial	response	declarative	male	30-39
so what we'll do is we'll do some deep breathings okay?	SG AN 423	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	30-39
now think of something which sounds like that word okay?	SM GY 414	softening	positive	turn-medial	no response	imperative	female	11-18
three you have to keep one of them (.) okay?	S6 W8 512 7	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn-final	no response	declarative	female	30-39
every day to school okay?	S52 C 1 03	continuation-checking	positive	turn-medial	no response	phrase	female	19-29
problem erm but erm well we collectively have done fifteen minutes so okay?	SQ6 3 32 3	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn-final	response	declarative	female	60-69

people got their faces ripped off okay?	SM GY 106 6	challenging	positive	turn - medial	response	declarative	female	19-29
delivery of whatever product in that media digitally online to whatever audience okay?	S63 L 1 5	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - final	no response	declarative	male	40-49
na do this is if you think of it as a verb okay?	S63 2 37 07	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - medial	no response	declarative	female	19-29
I'll pretend to be someone else then while you're here okay?	SK B5 710	challenging	positive	turn - final	response	declarative	female	19-29
well look two birthday people can go first if they want okay?	SB B2 150 8	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - final	response	declarative	male	40-49
right (.) what have you got here? oh look children's activities okay?	SF UT 174	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - medial	response	phrase	male	30-39
about to Sage is gonna have two things going for him okay?	SZ AP 547	continuation-checking	positive	turn - medial	no response	declarative	female	40-49
sorry I thought I was one of those two okay?	SHJ E 1 152	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - medial	no response	declarative	female	11-18
it's gotta be served at Starbucks okay?	SW Y3 183 8	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - medial	no response	declarative	male	11-18
this is conditioner (.) okay?	SE8 8 78 7	propositional-evaluating	positive	turn - final	response	declarative	female	60-69
of getting around this is like Spotify or Netflix using subscription models okay?	SG SY 464	continuation-checking	positive	turn - medial	no response	declarative	male	40-49

n't have to ask you then I'll get you new slippers okay?	SH6 W 2 05	propos al- evaluat ing	positive	turn - me dial	respo nse	dec lara tive	fe ma le	40- 49
the vanilla mixture (.) next to it (.) okay?	S52 7 36 3	continu ation- checki ng	positive	turn - me dial	no respo nse	dec lara tive	fe ma le	30- 39
I watch it with my mum okay?	SG HZ 599	propos al- evaluat ing	positive	turn - me dial	respo nse	dec lara tive	fe ma le	19- 29
you don't need to be in fights at school okay?	ST6 R 8 65	propos al- evaluat ing	positive	turn - fina l	no respo nse	dec lara tive	fe ma le	40- 49
sometimes it does cross my mind okay sometimes it crosses my mind okay?	S59 W 5 76	continu ation- checki ng	positive	turn - me dial	no respo nse	dec lara tive	ma le	50- 59
to try and r- raise some finance in some m- some manner okay?	STL Z 3 51	propos al- evaluat ing	positive	turn - fina l	respo nse	dec lara tive	ma le	40- 49
eventually it would then mean that we could buy it off you (.) okay?	SLL C 6 0	propos al- evaluat ing	positive	turn - fina l	respo nse	dec lara tive	fe ma le	50- 59