

I. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO QUESTION TAG INTONATION AND COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING:

INTRODUCTION TO PART I:

In this first part, as suggested by the title, we shall focus upon theoretical considerations related to question tag intonation and the computer-assisted language learning. As a matter of course, understanding these two concepts is crucial in this research work since they constitute its key words. For this reason, this theoretical survey will be divided into two main parts that are: “question tag intonation” and “computer-assisted language learning”.

1.1 QUESTION TAG INTONATION:

For a better understanding of what the concept “question tag intonation” stands for, we shall first of all, deal with ‘intonation’ and ‘question tag’ separately; after that, we will see the implications of the combination of the two.

1.1.1 What is meant by “intonation” in the English language?

1.1.1.1 Generalities about “intonation”:

■ Definitions of ‘intonation’:

“Intonation” is one of the four main elements¹ of the English language pronunciation.

CROFT, in 1961, in the introductory part of his Practice Book on English Stress and Intonation for Students of English as a Second Language, shows clearly that ‘pronunciation’ and ‘music’ are similar in some ways. They both contain what is called “intonation”. In addition to that, according to The Cambridge International Dictionary of English, “intonation” is the degree of accuracy of the notes that are played as far as music is concerned. CROFT, however, outlines the definition of “intonation” in the English language pronunciation. He notes that: “*Intonation’ or ‘speech melody’, as it is sometimes called, refers to the way the voice rises or falls*

¹ They are: “articulation”, “stress”, “rhythm” and “intonation”

during phonation. From the point of view of a music scale, we say that a person's voice goes up and down while he is talking, in the sense that musical instruments play notes going up and down the scale. The 'notes' a person produces during speech are called pitchs or tones. (These are also expressed sometimes by the terms pitch levels, tone levels, intonation levels)." In short, Intonation is the melody of the language or the change of the musical pitch of the voice. From now on, our survey will focus on the intonation of the English language not on that of music.

Besides, HORNBY (1974), in his Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English defines "intonation" as the "*rise and fall of the pitch of the voice in speaking*". As a matter of course, no one speaks on a monotone, the voice changes continually in highness or lowness, and intonation refers to this variation of pitch within a phrase or a sentence. Therefore, an analysis of the intonation of a speaker aims at describing and codifying the use of changes of voice-pitch. When the latter rises, we are faced with a "rising intonation"; as opposed to this, we have a "falling intonation" when the voice-pitch falls. Furthermore, in the International Phonetic Alphabet (I.P.A), these two types of intonation patterns are marked with a diagonal arrow rising left-to-right (↗) and falling left-to-right (↘), respectively.

Still, intonation is unavoidable in English speech. Either people express what they mean in writing, and thus they are under no obligation to produce intonation; or they say it and have to use the right intonation. In fact, intonation conveys meanings which are not explicitly contained in the words used by the speaker themselves.

■ The place, importance and functions of 'Intonation' in the English language:

➤ Place and importance of "intonation":

Intonation patterns are on groups of words called "tone units"². These units break up spoken language and are said on a single breath. Consequently, together with sentences, tone units establish the main distinction between written and spoken language. In fact, in written language, the basic unit is the sentence; whereas in spoken language it is the tone unit.

According to an author, (COOK, 1971) "*An Englishman who hears a mistake in intonation does not react the same way as when he hears a*

² Also called "tone groups" or "intonation groups" or "sense groups"

grammatical mistake, he is prepared to make allowances for the foreigner's faulty grammar but does not make the same allowances for the foreigner's intonation. Instead, he will think not that the foreigner is making a mistake but that he possesses the wrong attitude."

Let us consider the following dialogue between two people: A and B.

DIALOGUE:

A: *You love him, don't you?* (With a falling intonation in the end)

B: *Well* (With a falling intonation)

A: *You love him, don't you?* (With a rising intonation in the end)

B: *You see, my parents obliged me to marry him.*

In this dialogue, A is quite sure that B loves the man ("him"), and then uses the falling intonation in the end of her question, meaning that she is just asking for a confirmation. However, B uses the falling intonation, plus some hesitation in her reply. So, A is no more sure about B's love for the man, hence her use of the rising intonation this time, meaning that she is asking a real question; hence, B's confession in the end of the dialogue.

This dialogue above best summarizes the principal role played by "Intonation" in the English language. It can be drawn that intonation constitutes a means of indicating the speaker's mental attitudes, emotions and feeling as well as a means of conveying his/her meanings. As such, it is not always "what people say" but "how they say it" that counts. In other words, pitch is used pragmatically in the English language.

Intonation may have several functions in the English language.

➤ **Functions of "intonation":**

CRYSTAL (1987) states that by means of 'Intonation', a speaker can:

- Express feeling, attitudes, and emotions notably: surprise, irony, anger, excitement, boredom, friendliness, gratefulness, reserve, urgency, casualness etc. He calls this the «**attitudinal or emotional function**». It is worth mentioning that different voice qualities are used for different attitudes; and at

the same time, the speaker may resort to different facial expressions, gestures and body movements as well.

- Emphasize information. It is referred to as the “**information structure function**”. In this case, intonation represents the speaker’s communicative intention to give special meaning to some words. It can signal to the listener what is to be considered as “new” information and what is already “given” or “known”. In addition to that, in conversation, intonation can convey to the listener what kind of answer is being expected from him.
- Help the listener to identify the speaker’s discourse types or genres (news reading, conversation, prayer, poetry reading, etc.). CRYSTAL uses the term “**textual function**” in this case.
- Help the listener to identify the occupations or social groups to which the speaker belongs (preacher, street vendor, army sergeant, and so on.). It corresponds to the “**indexical function**” (i.e. intonation marks the speaker’s personal identity).
- Mark a number of syntactic or grammatical contrasts such as the identification of phrase, clause and sentence or question and statement. This constitutes the “**grammatical function**” of intonation.
- Organise language into units or sequences (tone units) that prove to be easily perceived and memorised by the listener. This is what CRYSTAL identifies as the “**psychological function**” of intonation.

Consequently, the intonation pattern sets up a linguistic system with communicative functions. Moreover, the meaning of an English utterance or the information it conveys to a listener derives mainly from the intonation pattern used by the speaker. It is, for instance, possible to guess the speaker’s attitude without understanding any of his/her words.

■ **Some reviews: the basic variations of the English language intonation:**

In his book entitled English Pronunciation, Mc CARTHY (1960) affirms that: *“when the speech melodies³ of a language are subjected to analysis, it is generally found that there exist one or two fundamentals ‘tunes’⁴, each of which is used in*

³ Speech melody means intonation

⁴ Tunes or intonation patterns

➤ **The rising intonation** means the voice-pitch increases over time, and so the tone unit ends in a rise. It expresses doubts, mental reservations and carries with it a sense of incompleteness and non-finality. As such, a continuation of some sort is expressed by the rising intonation. So, the latter is especially heard in enumerations like:

(The final rise implies that there are still other possibilities like “five, six, ten, etc.)

- ↗

-Questions with question-words⁵ when the speaker wishes to show special interest:



⁵ Questions with question-words are also called Wh- questions.

On the other hand, another writer (ALLEN, Living English Speech, 1954) adds that: “*This tune*⁶ *is also used in its simple form for statements made as requests, for polite commands*⁷, *remarks of concern, sorrow, apology and almost any emotion that makes an objective statement less definite.*” Here, “*less definite*” stands for uncertain and doubtful.

- **The falling intonation** implies that the voice-pitch decreases with time; as a result, the tone group has a final fall. According to ALLEN (1954), it is used for definite remarks, orders⁸, and question-word questions to ask for information of a factual nature, and suggests a sense of completion, finality, and certainty.

Examples:

↘

- Wh-questions with no special intention: “What’s the name of your dog?”

↘

-Short complete statements: “I’m Leo Sony.”

↘

-Orders or exclamations like “Don’t forget!” exemplify the meaning conveyed by the falling intonation as being a plain statement of fact when there is no unspoken implication, or a complete statement not implying any continuation.

- **The falling-rising intonation** suggests the combination of the falling and then rising intonation in a single statement or sentence. It is also known as the “**wave intonation**” or “**dipping intonation**”. In such a case, the voice-pitch falls on the most important part of the sentence⁹ and rises again at the end. As we have already mentioned before, the falling intonation denotes certainty and

⁶ Rising intonation

⁷ Requests or polite commands with a rising intonation implies a continuation, namely giving the person addressed an option of not complying (JONES, The Pronunciation of English, 1980)

⁸ Orders or commands or imperatives with a falling intonation give no alternative to the person addressed but invite him/her to comply

⁹ Also called « the significant stress » (ALLEN, Living English Speech, 1954), i.e. the syllable or word that is of importance for the speaker’s meaning

finality; whereas the rising one refers to doubt, implied continuation or non-finality.

Examples:

↘ ↗

- “I think so” (it implies “but I’m not quite sure” (JONES, The Pronunciation of English, 1980)

↘ ↗

- “This is not what I meant”. (Implying “what I meant is something else”)

However, a sentence is often divided into two or more tone groups. Therefore, a speaker uses a falling-rising intonation when he/she makes a remark (falling intonation: ↘), hesitates¹⁰ (use of a pause: |), and then adds something to make it less definite (rising intonation: ↗). It is the case of:

- a remark which is followed by an “afterthought”¹¹ :

↘ ↗

E.g.: Mary is late, | as usual.

- a sentence followed by a qualifying clause especially a condition spoken hesitantly :

↘ ↗

E.g. : I prefer a blue one, if you get it.

So far, we have dealt with the three basic intonation patterns which are based on the theory of an author (OCKENDEN, 1986). Nevertheless, another writer (ALLEN, Living English Speech, 1954) points out an additional intonation pattern which consists in the combination of the rising to the falling intonation. ALLEN refers to this rising-falling intonation as “TUNE II + TUNE I”¹².

¹⁰ When there is no pause, the whole sentence constitutes a single idea. So, the use of the falling intonation is required.

¹¹ i.e. a clause or short phrase that the speaker adds to his/her remark after some time and the afterthought qualifies the remark.

¹² ALLEN uses the term “TUNE I” instead of the falling intonation and “TUNE II” for the rising.

➤ **The rising-falling intonation or the “peaking intonation”:**

This tone is used to convey strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise.

	↗	↘		↗	↘		↗	↘
E.g.:	It's true	;	It's impossible	;	He is honest			

When a sentence is divided into portions (complex sentence¹³ or enumeration), the rising tune is applied on the unfinished statements (or non-final portions meaning there is something more to follow) whereas the falling intonation (expressing finality) is used on the last statement (JONES, 1962, p. 289). Here are some instances in which this pattern is required:

- a statement followed by an explanation

E.g.: We came home | because it was raining.

- a conditional sentence when the condition is followed by the main clause¹⁴





E.g.: If you break a mirror, ↗ you'll have bad luck. ↘

- an alternative question

↗ ↘

E.g.: Shall we walk or shall we take the bus?

- Enumerations of things when the speaker has given all the possibilities

E.g.: There are apples and peaches and mangoes and pears.

¹³ A complex sentence is composed of a main clause and a dependent clause.

¹⁴ In such a case, the condition is often followed by a comma in writing, but a pause in speaking

In all, there are four types of intonation patterns in the English language, notably the rising, the falling, the falling-rising and the rising-falling intonation, each of which is used in a particular situation. We have also had a glance at the different functions of intonation. The most important of these consists in the use of intonation in order to reveal one's attitude. Nonetheless, intonation is not the only attitude signal. Apart from intonation, speaking quickly or slowly, the warm or dry quality of the voice, the use of strong stress, all constitute other vocal signals. The following paragraphs will deal with "stress" and the links between "intonation" and "stress" in the English language pronunciation.

1.1.1.2 "Intonation" and "stress" in the English language:

■ Notions of "sentence stress" and "word stress":

The Oxford Wordpower Dictionary defines "stress" as the "*force that you put on a particular word or part of a word¹⁵ when you speak*" (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 2006). From this definition, it can be drawn that there exist two kinds of stress: the one put on a word within a sentence and the one on a syllable or sound within a word. The last type is called "word stress¹⁶" whereas the first is "sentence stress¹⁷". Listeners perceive the degrees of stress as that of loudness.

➤ Word stress:

In the book entitled The Pronunciation of English, it is written that the degree of force¹⁸ with which a speaker pronounces a sound or a syllable is called its "stress" (JONES, 1980, p. 141). An important feature of spoken English is the use of stress within words. Every English word of more than one syllable possesses a syllable that is said louder than others. As a matter of fact, each syllable is not said with the same force or strength. In one word, a syllable is accentuated and uttered very loudly ("stressed" or "pronounced with strong stress") whereas the neighbouring syllables are said quietly ("unstressed" or "weakly stressed" or "pronounced with weak stress"). Therefore, a single word

¹⁵ A sound or syllable is the part of a word

¹⁶ Sentence stress : stress on words inside a sentence

¹⁷ Word stress : stress on a syllable inside a word

¹⁸ Force here means loudness

can bear two degrees of stress: “primary stress”¹⁹ and “secondary stress”²⁰. For the sake of reading, strongly stressed syllables will be shown by the mark ^ˈ placed at the beginning of the syllable, and secondary stress will be denoted by _ˌ (e.g.: eˌxamiˈnation). Word stress, which is sometimes called “lexical stress”, is static and objective i.e. there is only one way of stressing a specific word in a specific language. The term “lexical” suggests that the position of the stress plays a key role in understanding a word and in order not to generate confusion between two different grammatical words as it is shown by the following example:

E.g.: There are two ways of stressing the word “present”:

- ^ˈPresent: referring to a noun which means “a gift” or an adjective meaning “being in a particular place”
- Pre^ˌsent: a verb which means “to introduce”

➤ Sentence stress:

In a sentence, a specific word stands out above the others. The stress that is placed on a word within a sentence is referred to as the “sentence stress” or “focus” or “tonic” or “prosodic stress”. It is worth mentioning that, unlike word stress, sentence stress is dynamic and subjective i.e. the speaker has the choice of which word(s) to stress and add emphasis to, as the sentence stress can be placed on any word in a sentence to confer different meanings to the same sentence. As a matter of course, sentence stress varies according to the message the speaker intends to communicate. It may point to the new or unknown information in a sentence. Thus, the focus is put on the main information so that the listener will be able to recognize what is important in the utterance. In other words, the more important a word is, the stronger its stress will be. The following example illustrates the notion of “focus” and its specific meaning. To facilitate the reading, sentence stress will be printed in **bold type**:

E.g.: “*I didn’t say it*” can have four different meanings depending on the focus or point of emphasis:

- “**I**” someone else did.

¹⁹ Primary stress is placed on a strongly stressed syllable

²⁰ Secondary stress also called « intermediate stress » on a weakly stressed syllable

- “**didn’t**” I really did not say it
- “**say**” I did something else, for example: I wrote it.
- “**it**” I said something else, for example: I said eat.

Just as it is important to stress the correct syllable in a word, it is important to stress the correct word or words in a phrase or a sentence. In English, the accurate use of these two devices is needed if the speaker wants the listener to precisely understand the meaning of his/her words. Stresses as well as intonation, then, both help the listener understand the meaning conveyed by the speaker’s message. In order to avoid confusion between stress and intonation, the following section will highlight the relationship between these two phenomena.

■ The links between “intonation” and “stress” in the English language:

Though intonation and stress occur simultaneously in every phrase or sentence a person utters, pitch variations and stress degrees are two separate systems. An author states that: “*Often in English the heaviest stress occurs with the highest pitch. Many students of English, both native and foreign, consider these one and the same and refer to them simply as accent.*” (CROFT, 1961). Then, important pitch movement is heard on stressed syllables in the English language.



E.g.: It is **rain**ing.

In this example, on the one hand, the focus is on the word “raining”, and as the latter is made up of two syllables, the stress is placed on the first one. On the other hand, the sentence which is a mere statement of fact requires a final fall that coincides with the word “raining”.

The last example explains why people mix intonation with stress. However, their difference lies largely on the fact that intonation is not used to distinguish words while distinguishing words is the main function of stress. On the whole, intonation and stress are interrelated even though they are two different systems.

After having covered the survey on “intonation” in the English language, the following chapter will focus on “question tags”.

1.1.2 What is meant by “question tag”?

At first sight, the term “question tag” consists of two words: “question” and “tag”. Hence, for a better understanding of what is meant by “question tag”, it is essential to elicit the meaning of “a question” and “a tag” separately, first.

1.1.2.1 Generalities about “question”:

■ Definition:

CRYSTAL (1987) in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language defines a question as a sentence that asks for information or a response. Therefore, the speaker or writer usually asks a question because he/she does not know the answer. Nevertheless, the speaker may be aware of the response of his/her own question but expects the listener or reader to provide it in order to ask for confirmation or to check the listener’s or reader’s knowledge. Moreover, a question is put forward by using an interrogative sentence which can be either written or spoken. In written language, an interrogative sentence is marked by a “?” placed at the end of a sentence.

■ Question types:

In her C.A.P.E.N. dissertation, a researcher (RAFANOMEZANTSOA, 2007) is classifying questions according to the expected answers. RAFANOMEZANTSOA, then, points out three major classes of question: Yes-no question, Wh- question, and alternative question. We shall deal with these three question types with their respective intonation one after the other.

➤ Yes-No question and its intonation:

A yes-no question is a question or an interrogative sentence for which a “yes” or “no” answer is required, hence the name. Such questions are either affirmative or negative. In written language, an affirmative yes-no question is obtained by using a different word order plus a question mark.

E.g.: - Do you speak Japanese? Answers: Yes, I do or No, I don’t
- Have you been working hard? Answers: Yes, I have or No, I haven’t.

From these two examples, the form of an affirmative yes-no question is as the following (the mentions in brackets are not compulsory):

Auxiliary + Subject + (Other auxiliary) + (main verb) + (object) +?

A negative yes-no question or an interro-negative sentence is structured as follows:

Auxiliary + subject + not(/never) + (Other auxiliary) + (main verb) + (object) +?

Or

Auxiliary n't + subject + (Other auxiliary) + (main verb) + (object) +?

E.g.: Have we not met before? Or Haven't we met before? Answers:
Yes, we have or No, we haven't.

Nevertheless, a yes-no question can be formed by simply adding a question mark instead of a full stop at the end of an affirmative sentence, and this without changing anything else. Then, such a question can be asked without the use of syntactic structures. When spoken, the question will be combined with the rising intonation so as to distinguish it from a simple statement of fact which has a final fall.



E.g.: You speak **English**? Answers: Yes, I do / No, I don't

Many authors affirm that yes-no questions are spoken with a rising intonation. QUIRK, however, in his book entitled A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language gives the following statistics: "*In a collection of yes-*

no questions taken from the files of the survey of English usage, chiefly recorded unscripted spoken material, 430 questions ended in a rise and 290 in a fall” (QUIRK, 1985). This implies that, in general, yes-no questions have a final rise, yet a final fall is quite possible. Another writer (ALLEN, Living English Speech, 1954, p. 82) even adds that, on the one hand, the final rise in a yes-no question is employed to show great doubt or uncertainty or to point out that the question is being asked for the second time; on the other hand, a yes-no question ending with a falling intonation constitutes an insistent form to keep the listener to the point.

➤ **Wh- question and its intonation:**

As opposed to yes-no questions which begin with auxiliaries, wh-questions start with question words²¹; that is why they are also called “question word questions” in some books. As far as structure is concerned, the principle of forming a wh-question is the same as that of a yes-no question. The only difference in form lies on the use of a question word before the auxiliary²²:

Question word + auxiliary + Subject + (Other auxiliary) + (main verb)+ (object) +?

Apart from that, a simple “yes” or “no” is not the appropriate answer to a Wh- question which requires a piece of information from an open range of possibilities as a reply. Then, every question word is used for a specific piece of information, for instance:

- “Who” to ask for somebody’s name, identity, position
- “What” to ask for information about something
- “When” to ask for information about time
- “Why” to ask for reason

²¹ Question words are also called interrogative words and they all begin Wh- (who, what, whom, whose, where, when, which, why) apart from « how »

²² Sometimes the use of an auxiliary is not necessary. This is the case when the question word is the subject (How many people came at the meeting? not *How many people did come...)

- “Where” to ask for information about a place
- “How” to ask for information about manner

E.g.: When did she arrive? Answer: She arrived yesterday morning.

Besides, it is possible to form a negative wh-question i.e. an interrogative wh- question which contains negation in its phrasing.

Question word + auxiliary + subject + Not(/never) +(Other auxiliary)+(main verb) + (object) +?

or **Question word + Auxiliary n’t + (Subject) + (Other auxiliary) + (main verb) + (object) +?**

E.g.: Who aren’t hungry? Answer: Everybody is hungry

Last but not least, in many books the falling intonation is advised for question word questions. In spite of that, a writer hints that: “*In a collection of 858 wh-questions from the files of the survey of English usage, chiefly in recorded unscripted spoken material, 775 had a falling intonation.*” (QUIRK, 1985). This quotation tells us that wh-questions often have a final fall, but not all of them. Consequently, the use of rising intonation with wh- questions is not impossible. ALLEN says that: “*We frequently use Tune II²³ for question-word questions if our mental attitude to the question causes some personal element to be prominent*” (ALLEN, 1954, p. 75). By “*some personal element*”, he means some interest or sympathy. In other words, the rising intonation can be associated with wh- questions in case the speaker wants to express interest and invite the confidence of the listener.

²³ Tune II : rising intonation

➤ **Alternative question and its intonation:**

According to RAFANOMEZANTSOA (2007), an alternative question needs one answer from two or more options presented in the question. The listener, then, has to select his/her reply from the alternatives that the speaker provides in his/her question.

E.g.: Would you like tea or coffee or cocoa? Answer: I'd rather have coffee.

In this example, the speaker is offering the listener something to drink. He/she proposes three options from which the listener will have to make a choice. Owing to the enumeration of possibilities, the speaker makes use of the rising-falling intonation in an alternative question. In the present case, the first two options have a rising intonation (implying that there is still something more to follow), and the last alternative is spoken with a falling intonation (meaning finality i.e. that is all I have to offer you, so make your choice).

↗ ↗ ↘

E.g.: Would you like **tea** or **coffee** or **cocoa**?

In short, a question can be defined as an interrogative sentence or phrase that is used to find out information and that usually ends with a question mark²⁴. Question types have been classified in accordance with the expected answers: Yes-no questions, wh- questions, and alternative questions, each type having a particular intonation pattern.

The following section will be devoted to the study of the generalities about “tags”.

1.1.2.2 Generalities about “tag”:

■ **Definitions of “tag”:**

According to the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, “a tag” is “*a small piece of card*,

²⁴ A question mark is put at the end of a direct question like “Where is the post office?”. However, indirect questions (a question with an introductory part) do not need a question mark, viz: “Can you tell me where the post office is.”. The last question form is not covered in our survey since it is limited to direct questions.

cloth, etc. fastened to something to give information about it". For example, the little piece of cloth added to a blouse showing size is a tag. Hence, a tag is something small that is added to something larger.

CRYSTAL, however, in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language designates by "tag" an element attached to the end of an utterance (CRYSTAL, 1987). Some authors also refer to it as a "tag ending" and some of them call it a "question tag" (MURPHY, 2004)/ (HOUDART, 1983). In spite of all of these labels, a tag, as CRYSTAL hints, is a short phrase such as "aren't you?" or "do you?" at the end of a sentence that changes it into a question. ". So, in linguistics, a tag is an interrogative particle at the end of a sentence. The Cambridge International Dictionary (1995, p. 1485) specifies the circumstances in which a tag is used, notably "*to ask a real question*" and "*to get agreement*".

■ Variant form of tags:

According to the given definition, as far as the English language is concerned, the tag embodies with it such ideas as: "*don't you agree?*", "*isn't that true?*", "*am I right?*", "*don't you think so?*", "*isn't that so?*", "*right?*", "*alright?*", "*O.K.?*", "*eh?*". All of these ideas can be glossed by the invariable French expression "*n'est-ce pas?*" or "*¿no es verdad?*" in Spanish or "*vero?*" in Italian or "*sa tsy izany?*" in Malagasy. As a matter of course, foreign languages such as French, or Spanish, or Italian, and especially Malagasy, our mother tongue, own a fixed or invariable phrase for a tag. In other words, one phrase suffices for all situations in these languages. As opposed to them, English is a richer and more complex language since it possesses a wide range of tags with specific grammatical forms in addition to all of the invariable expressions above.

■ Tag forms:

In English, the grammatical tag is obtained by combining an auxiliary verb²⁵ with a pronoun²⁶, the first agreeing with the second. The tag is followed by a question mark.

<p>Tag = Auxiliary verb + Pronoun +?</p>

²⁵ Auxiliary verbs can be "to have" or "to be" or "do", "does", "did", or modal auxiliaries such as "can", "could", "may", "might", "must", "will", "would", "shall", "should", etc

²⁶ Pronoun here refers to subject personal pronouns like I, you, he, she, it, we, they

When the auxiliary verb is not negated, the tag is qualified as “positive”. Accordingly, when the auxiliary verb is in the negative form, the tag is referred to as being “negative”.

Examples:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| - does she? | Positive tag |
| - can't you? | Negative tag |

It is worth noticing that a tag is frequently used in informal spoken English. This supposes that the notion of contracted or shortened forms of negative auxiliary verbs is of prior importance while studying tags. Nonetheless, the tag may be used in formal English. In this case, the form of the negative tag is presented as follows:

Formal Negative tag = Auxiliary verb + subject pronoun + not?

Examples:

- do you not?
- may it not?

The following table shows the possible tag forms corresponding to a particular auxiliary verb (Standard 8 English Graded Exercises in Sentence Patterns and Structure by PATEL). The optional subject pronouns will be put between brackets.

AUXILIARY VERBS	POSITIVE TAGS	NEGATIVE TAGS	
		FORMAL NEGATIVE TAGS	CONTRACTED FORM OF NEGATIVE TAGS
Do/ does/ did for ordinary verbs	Do I (/you/we/they)? Does she (/he/it)? Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/ they)?	Do I (/you/we/they) not? Does she (/he/it) not? Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Don't I (/you/we/they)? Doesn't she (/he/it)? Didn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Have	Have I (/you/we/they)? Has she (/he/it)? Had I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/ they)? OR Do I (/you/we/they)? Does she (/he/it)? Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/ they)?	Have I (/you/we/they) not? Has she (he/ it) not? Had I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not? OR Do I (/you/we/they) not? Does she (/he/it) not? Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Haven't I (/you/we/they)? Hasn't she (/he/it)? Hadn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)? OR Don't I (/you/we/they)? Doesn't she (/he/it)? Didn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Be	Am I? Are you (/we/they)? Is she (/he/it)? Was I (/she/he/it)? Were you (/we/they)?	Am I not? Are you (/we/they) not? Is she (/he/it) not? Was I (/she/he/it) not? Were you (/we/they) not?	Aren't I? Aren't you (/we/they)? Isn't she (/he/it)? Wasn't I (/she/he/it)? Weren't you (/we/they)?

Can	Can I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Can I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not ?	Can't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Could	Could I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Could I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Couldn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
May	May I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	May I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Mayn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Might	Might I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Might I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Mightn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Will	Will I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Will I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Won't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Would	Would I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Would I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Wouldn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Shall	Shall I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Shall I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Shan't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
should	Should I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Should I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Shouldn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?

Ought to	Ought I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Ought I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Oughtn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Must	Must I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Must I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Mustn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Have to	Do I (/you/we/they)? Does she (/he/it)?	Do I (/you/we/they) not? Does she (/he/it) not?	Don't I (/you/we/they)? Doesn't she (/he/it)?
Had to	Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Did I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Didn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?
Need	Need I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?	Need I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they) not?	Needn't I (/you/she/he/it/we/you/they)?

Table 1: TAG FORMS

All in all, on the one hand, a question has been defined as an interrogative sentence which seeks an answer from the listener or the reader since it can be either written or spoken; on the other hand, a tag refers to a short phrase placed at the end of a statement. Now that these two notions have been pored over separately, the following paragraphs will highlight the meaning of a “question tag” which etymologically consists in the combination of the words “question” and “tag”.

1.1.2.3 **Question tag:**

■ **Generalities about “question tag”:**

➤ **Definition:**

Question tags are very common in spoken English.

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopaedia, explains what is meant by “question tag” along these lines: *“a question tag or a tag question is a grammatical structure in which a declarative statement or an imperative is turned into a question by adding an interrogative fragment (the tag). For example, in the sentence ‘You’re John, aren’t you?’, the statement ‘You’re John’ is turned into a question by the tag ‘aren’t you’. The term ‘question tag’ is generally preferred by British grammarians, while their American counterparts prefer ‘tag question’”*. ([http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag question](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag_question), 2006).

It can be drawn from this definition that a question tag is a kind of question that is made up of two parts: the statement and the tag.

Question tag = statement + tag

The notion of “tag” has been explained in the previous section.

➤ **Question tag statement:**

The question tag statement is either of a declarative²⁷ or imperative type.

²⁷ A declarative statement can be affirmative or negative.

Therefore, the use of an interrogative statement in a question tag is not grammatically correct. The following example is, then, erroneous:

Example: * Are you married, aren't you? But You are married, aren't you?
Or You are not married, are you?

Apart from “not”, there exist other words or expressions which imply negation, for instance “no”, “nobody”, “no one”, “nothing”, “never”, “hardly”, “scarcely”, “little”, “seldom”, etc. (SWAN and WALTER, 1997). As a result, a statement containing one of these expressions is known as “**a negative statement**”. As opposed to this, a statement that does not contain any sign of negation is called “**a positive statement**”.

Examples of question tags with correct statements:

- You speak Japanese, don't you? Affirmative or positive statement
- Mary shouldn't be late, should she? Negative statement
- Nobody phoned, did they? Negative statement
- Stop talking, will you? Positive imperative statement
- Don't lie, will you? Negative imperative statement

In addition to the statement form, the tense and modality of the statement verb need special considerations as well. Table 2 below will recapitulate the different verb tenses and their uses; while Table 3 will sum up the modals²⁸ and their uses.

²⁸ A modal or a modal verb is a verb that is used with another verb for expressing possibility, permission, intention, etc.

TENSE	AFFIRMATIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM ²⁹	USES
PRESENT SIMPLE	I/You/We/They + Verb ³⁰ He/She/It +(Verb + -s/-es) E.g.: I/You/We/They go He/She/It goes	I/You/We/They + do not +Verb He/She/It + does not +Verb E.g.: I/You/We/They do not go He/She/It does not go	.General or scientific truth .Situation which does not change .Habit .States of mind, beliefs, opinions
PRESENT PROGRESSIVE Or PRESENT CONTINUOUS	Subject + (to be in the present simple ³¹) + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I am going You/We/They are going He/She/It is going	Subject + (to be in the present simple) + not + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I am not going You/We/They are not going He/She/It is not going	.Action or event happening now .Event or change now developing .Future plans
PAST SIMPLE or PRETERIT	<u>Regular verb:</u> Subject + (Verb + -ed/-d) E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They laughed <u>Irregular verb</u> (See Appendix 1): Subject + 2 nd column of in the list of irregular verb E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They went	Regular and irregular verbs: Subject + did not + verb E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They did not laugh I/You/He/She/It/We/They did not go	.Completed action or event in the past .Used with definite past time expression such as yesterday, last week, two years ago, etc.

²⁹ The contracted form of a verb in the negative form is on the first auxiliary. The principle is the same as that of forming the contracted form of a negative tag (see pages 17 and 18)

³⁰ Verb: infinitive without to

³¹ To be in the present simple: I am; you/we/they are; he/she/it is

TENSE	AFFIRMATIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM	USES
PAST PROGRESSIVE or PAST CONTINUOUS	Subject + (to be in the past simple ³²) + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/ He/She/It was going You/We/They were going	Subject + (to be in the past simple) + not + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/ He/She/It was not going You/We/They were not going	.Past action or event interrupted by another .Past action seen as not complete
PRESENT PERFECT	Subject + (to have in the present simple ³³) + Past participle ³⁴ <u>Regular verb:</u> E.g.: I/ You/We/They have laughed He/She/It has laughed <u>Irregular verb</u> (See Appendix 1): E.g.: I/ You/We/They have gone He/She/It has gone	Subject + (to have in the present simple) + not + Past participle <u>Regular verb:</u> E.g.: I/ You/We/They have not laughed He/She/It has not laughed <u>Irregular verb:</u> E.g.: I/ You/We/They have not gone He/She/It has not gone	This tense connects the past with the present .Past experience i.e. action at some time before now, no particular time is given .Action or event in periods of time not yet finished .Effects of past actions which are noticeable now
PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE or CONTINUOUS	Subject + (to be in the present perfect ³⁵) + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/We/They have been going He/She/It has been going	Subject + (to be in the present perfect) + not + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/We/They have not been going He/She/It has not been going	.Events over periods of time up to now, focus on the duration .Effects of past actions which are noticeable now

³² To be in the past simple: I/She/he/It was; you/we/they were

³³ To have in the present simple: I/You/We/They have; She/he/It has

³⁴ The past participle of a regular verb is obtained by: Verb infinitive without to + -ed. The past participle of irregular verbs are in Appendix 1, 3rd column of the irregular verb list

³⁵ To be in the present perfect: I/You/We/They have been; She/he/It has been

TENSE	AFFIRMATIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM	USES
PAST PERFECT	Subject + had + Past participle <u>Regular verb:</u> E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They had laughed <u>Irregular verb:</u> E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They had gone	Subject + had + not + Past participle <u>Regular verb:</u> E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They had not laughed <u>Irregular verb:</u> E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They had not gone	Complete action or event that happened before another point in the past
PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE	Subject + had been + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They had been going	Subject + had + not + been + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They had not been going	.Effect of an earlier event or action noticeable at a point in the past .How long something was happening for up to a point in the past
FUTURE SIMPLE	Subject + will/shall ³⁶ + verb E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will go or I/We shall go	Subject + will/shall + not + verb E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will not go I/We shall not go	.Predicting a future event .Stating a decision or willingness
FUTURE PROGRESSIVE or CONTINUOUS	Subject + will/shall be + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will be going or I/We shall be going	Subject + will/shall not be + (Verb + -ing) E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will not be going or I/We shall not be going	Predicting a continuing future event

³⁶ The auxiliary “shall” is only used with the first person singular or plural i.e. I and We

TENSE	AFFIRMATIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM	USES
FUTURE PERFECT	<p>Subject + will/shall have + Past participle</p> <p><u>Regular verb:</u></p> <p>E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They will have laughed or I/We shall have laughed</p> <p><u>Irregular verb:</u></p> <p>E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They will have gone or I/We shall have gone</p>	<p>Subject + will/shall not have + Past participle</p> <p><u>Regular verb:</u></p> <p>E.g.: I/You/He/She/It/We/They will not have laughed or I/We shall not have laughed</p> <p><u>Irregular verb:</u></p> <p>E.g.: I/You/She/He/It/We/They will not have gone or I/We shall not have gone</p>	Something will already have happened before a certain time in the future
FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE or CONTINUOUS	<p>Subject + will/shall have been + (Verb + -ing)</p> <p>E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will have been going or I/We shall have been going</p>	<p>Subject + will/shall not have been + (Verb + -ing)</p> <p>E.g.: I/You/She/He/It /We/They will not have been going or I/We shall not have been going</p>	Something will already have happened before a certain time in the future, focus on the duration

Table 2 : VERB TENSES AND THEIR USES RECAPITULATION

MODAL	NEGATIVE FORMS	USES IN A DECLARATIVE STATEMENT	USES IN AN INTERROGATIVE STATEMENT
Can	Cannot / can't	.Stating an ability or inability (can be able to) .Giving the permission to do something (can be allowed to) or prohibiting from doing something .Stating a possibility or impossibility (can be possible that)	.Asking about ability .Asking for permission ³⁷ (can I/we ...) .Asking about possibility .Making offers ³⁸ (can I ...) .Making requests ³⁹ (can you ...)
Could	Could not / couldn't	.Could: past form of "can" .Stating a past ability ⁴⁰ .Stating a possibility .Making a suggestion	.Asking about ability .Asking about possibility .Asking for permission (can I/we ...) .Making offers (could I ...) .Making requests (could you ...)
May	May not/ mayn't	.Stating a present possibility or impossibility (may can be possible that) .Stating future possibility or impossibility (may be possible that) .Giving the permission to do something (may be allowed to) or prohibiting from doing something (may not cannot)	Asking for permission ⁴¹ (may I ...)

³⁷ When asking for permission, "can" and "could" are used with the first persons (singular and plural): "I" and "we"

³⁸ When making offers, "can" and "could" are used with the first person (singular and plural): "I" and "we" as well

³⁹ When making requests, "can" and "could" are used with the second person (singular and plural): "you"

⁴⁰ "Was/were able to" imply that somebody did something in a specific situation while "could" is used for past ability in general

⁴¹ When asking for permission, "could" is more formal if compared with "can"

MODAL	NEGATIVE FORMS	USES IN A DECLARATIVE STATEMENT	USES IN AN INTERROGATIVE STATEMENT
Might	Might not / mightn't	<p>.Might: past form of "may"</p> <p>.Stating a present possibility or impossibility (might be possible that)</p> <p>.Stating future possibility or impossibility</p>	Asking for permission (might I ...)
Will or 'll	Will not / won't	<p>.Stating future happenings and situations</p> <p>.Stating a will or an intention</p> <p>.Stating a decision</p> <p>.Promising</p> <p>.Stating a possibility (will can)</p> <p>.Stating a probability or a prediction</p>	<p>.Asking about future happenings and situations</p> <p>.Making requests (will you...)</p> <p>.Asking about a decision or a promise</p> <p>.Making offers (will I...)</p> <p>.Making requests (will you ...)</p>
Would or 'd	Would not / wouldn't	<p>.Would: past form of "will"</p> <p>.Stating a will (would like) or a preference (would prefer would rather)</p> <p>.Stating imaginations</p> <p>.Stating a past habit (would used to)</p>	<p>.Inviting⁴² (would you like...)</p> <p>.Making offers (would you like...)</p> <p>.Making requests (would you ... /would you mind + Verb + -ing ...)</p> <p>.Asking for permission (would you mind if I/we ...)</p>

⁴² In the interrogative form, "would" is not used with the first person "I" and "we"

MODAL	NEGATIVE FORMS	USES IN A DECLARATIVE STATEMENT	USES IN AN INTERROGATIVE STATEMENT
Shall ⁴³ or 'll	Shall not/ shan't	.Stating future happenings and situations (shall will) .Stating a strong determination or an obligation (shall must)	.Asking about future happenings and situations .Making offers (shall I ...) .Making a suggestion
should	Should not / shouldn't	.Should: past form of "shall" .Stating the right thing to do or giving advice or a recommendation or an opinion .Criticising	Asking for advice or recommendation or opinion or for the right thing to do
Ought to	Ought not to / oughtn't to	.Stating the right thing to do or giving advice (ought to should) .Criticising	
Must	Must not / mustn't	.Stating an obligation or a necessity or a prohibition .Stating a probability (must = will) .Prohibiting from doing something (must not cannot may not)	Asking about obligation

⁴³ Mostly used with "I" and "we"

MODAL	NEGATIVE FORMS	USES IN A DECLARATIVE STATEMENT	USES IN AN INTERROGATIVE STATEMENT
Have (got) to 've or 's (got) to	Do not have to / don't have to	Stating an obligation or a necessity	Asking about obligation
Had to or 'd to	Did not have to / didn't have to	.Had to: past form of "have to" .Stating an obligation or a necessity in the past	Asking about obligation in the past
Need	Need not / needn't to	Stating a necessity or the inexistence of necessity	Asking about necessity

Table 3 : MODALS AND THEIR USES RECAPITULATION

In a question tag, the statement is separated from the tag by means of a comma “,”. In the next section, we will examine which tag form agrees with which statement and the different question tag intonations and their answers.

■ **Some reviews: question tag basic structures and intonations in the English language:**

A question tag is a special construction in English. However, in addition to the grammatical rules related with question tags, their intonation plays a major role in understanding their real meaning. We shall first account for question tag structures and the way of answering the question tags, then afterwards the implications of their intonation.

➤ **Question tag structures:**

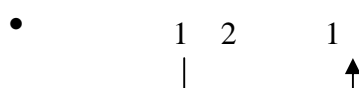
Many grammarians⁴⁴ state that, in general, a positive statement has a negative tag and vice versa. Therefore, the basic rule of forming question tags is presented as follows:

Question tag = Positive statement + Negative tag
Question tag = Negative statement + Positive tag

A tag is made up of an auxiliary verb and a pronoun. An auxiliary verb in the statement correlates with some auxiliary verb in the tag. The subject in the tag is a pronoun which correlates with the subject of the statement.

- **Tag auxiliary:** it agrees with the tense and the modality of the verb in the preceding statement. In other words, the verb used in the tag matches the auxiliary verb in the statement. Thus, the auxiliary verb in the statement is repeated in the tag. If there are two or more auxiliaries in the statement, only first one will be used in the tag (WOOD, Dictionary of English Grammar Based on Common Errors, 1986). Moreover, the stress is put on the tag auxiliary. In the following examples, the stressed word in the tag will be printed in bold type.

• Example: It can be true, **can't** it?



⁴⁴ Grammars : HOUDART, MURPHY, PATEL, QUIRK, WALTER, etc.

As opposed to the preceding example, if the statement employs no auxiliary verb but an ordinary verb, then the auxiliary “do” in its appropriate form⁴⁵ is used in the tag. The following table will illustrate what has been said about tag auxiliary:

AUXILIARY USED IN THE STATEMENT	STATEMENT	CORRESPONDING TAG AUXILIARY	NOTES
Auxiliary : be	You are from Scotland	aren’t ...	
Auxiliary : be	I am late	aren’t ...	“*amn’t I” is grammatically correct, but it is not generally used. Native speakers prefer “aren’t I”. However, “am I” is possible.
Auxiliary : be	Sue is not smoking	is ...	
Auxiliaries: have / be	Gary has been to Rome.	hasn’t ...	There are 2 auxiliaries, so the first one is used. In addition, “have” is the suitable tag auxiliary if the statement verb is in the perfect tense
Auxiliaries: can /have / be	He can’t have been present	can ...	There are 3 auxiliaries. Only the first one occurs in the tag
Auxiliary: do	We didn’t go to church last Sunday	did ...	“Did” is the appropriate auxiliary form used with the simple past tense.
Modal: can	They can play the piano	can’t ...	
No auxiliary	You eat meat	don’t ...	
No auxiliary	He had a bath	didn’t ...	“Have” is both an auxiliary and an ordinary verb. Here it is used as an ordinary verb.

Table 4: SOME EXAMPLES SHOWING THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE STATEMENT VERB AND THE TAG AUXILIARY

⁴⁵ “do” and “does” with the present simple tense whereas “did” with the simple past tense.

- **Tag pronoun:**

The tag pronoun, more precisely the subject personal pronoun used in the tag, refers to the subject of the statement. These pronouns are respectively applied in the following cases:

- ✓ **“I”**: first person singular, used for the person who is speaking or writing in referring to himself or herself.
- ✓ **“You”**: second person singular or plural, referring to the person or people spoken to.
- ✓ **“She”**: third person singular, used for a female subject and sometimes when referring to a country, pets, a car, a ship, etc.
- ✓ **“He”**: third person singular, used for a male subject.
- ✓ **“It”**: third person singular, referring to a thing or an animal.
- ✓ **“We”**: first person plural, used for talking about the speaker or writer and one or more other people.
- ✓ **“They”**: third person plural, referring to people or things.

Apart from these subject personal pronouns, **“there”** is also susceptible to appear in the tag if the sentence begins with it.

Example: There’s a bee in the room, **isn’t there**?

In addition, the pronoun **“it”** is used to refer to **“this”** and **“that”**.

Example: This is yours, **isn’t it**?

Similarly, **“it”** is used as the tag pronoun providing the statement subject is **“nothing”**. It is worth noticing that **“nothing”** possesses a negative meaning, implying as such a positive tag auxiliary.

Example: Nothing was broken, **was it**?

In the same way, it is convenient to replace the indefinite pronouns such as **“everyone”**, **“everybody”**, **“everything”**, **“someone”**, **“somebody”**, **“something”**, **“anyone”**, **“anybody”**, **“anything”**, **“no one”**, and **“nobody”** by the

pronoun “**they**” though these indefinite pronouns all take a singular verb. We assume that the reason for this confusion is that there is no neutral third person singular in English to cover both genders, he and she.

Example: Somebody told you the news, **didn’t** they?

- **Question tag structures: some exceptional cases**

The following constitute specific instances that break “the rule of thumb” applied in forming a question tag.

- ✓ In the affirmative form of the present tense, if the subject is “I”, the auxiliary “be” changes to “aren’t ” instead of “*amn’t”.

- ✓ “Have” is at the same time an auxiliary verb and an ordinary verb. Therefore, “have” and “do” are susceptible to replace it in the tag. When it means “to possess”, there are two possibilities: “have” and “do” can both be used as the tag auxiliary. With “have got”, however, the tag auxiliary is but “have”. Besides, “have” behaves as a pure auxiliary when used with the past participle of a verb. In the other cases, “do” is employed instead of “have” in the tag. For instance, “have” is an ordinary verb in the following expressions: “to have a rest”, “to have dinner”, “to have a dispute”, “to have a dream”, etc.

- ✓ The question tag statement can either be declarative or imperative. “**Will you?**” is the tag associated with imperatives as BOLINGER (1977) puts it: “***Will** is the only permitted auxiliary form in tag following imperatives... As far I can ascertain, it is true that **you** is the only pronoun occurring in tags following an imperative. In other words, although an indefinite someone and a reflexive himself are possible, a following will he is not.*” Therefore, “Eat the meat, **will** you?” and “Don’t stop singing, **will** you?” are correct question tags. Considering the basic structure of question tag, however, a positive statement is followed by a negative tag. Hence, a positive imperative statement may be tagged negatively, viz: “Eat the meat, **won’t** you?” is correct as well.

✓ When the statement begins with “**Let**”, the corresponding tag auxiliary is “**shall**” (MURPHY, 2004), viz: “Let me⁴⁶ help you, **shall** I? or “Let’s⁴⁷ go for a swim, **shall** we?”.

✓ The statement of a question tag can be a compound sentence, i.e. a sentence composed of two independent clauses⁴⁸ or complete sentences connected to each other with a coordinating conjunction⁴⁹. In this case, as the number of sentences or clauses largely relies on the number of verbs, there exist two verbs in the statement. Consequently, the choice of the auxiliary verb and pronoun to be used in the tag depends on the speaker.

Examples:

- Joe waited for the train, but the train was late, didn’t he? (The tag concerns the first clause. The verb “waited” is stressed here.)
- Joe waited for the train, but the train was late, wasn’t it? (The tag is related to the last clause, then the focus on the auxiliary “was”).)

✓ The statement of a question tag can be a complex sentence which is made up of an independent clause⁵⁰ and one or more dependent clauses⁵¹ connected to it. It is important to state that the role of the dependent clause is to provide extra information or more precisely to modify some words in the main clause. Therefore, supposing the statement to be tagged is a complex sentence, the auxiliary verb and the pronoun corresponding to those existing in the main clause are normally used in the tag. Sometimes, the tag may refer to the dependent clause as well. Again, in such a case the choice is up to the speaker.

⁴⁶ “me” is the object pronoun corresponding to the subject pronoun “I”

⁴⁷ “’s ” = us, the object pronoun corresponding to the subject pronoun “we”

⁴⁸ A clause: a division of a sentence, containing a verb with its subject

⁴⁹ Coordinating conjunction = coordinator (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So : FANBOYS)

⁵⁰ An independent clause, also called the principal proposition or the main clause, is one making a statement without the help of any other clause. In short, it is a complete sentence.

⁵¹ The dependent or subordinate clause cannot stand alone as a sentence, but they can be added to an independent clause to make a complex sentence. It begins with subordinating conjunctions or subordinators such as “after”, “because”, “if”, “when”, “while”, “before”, “that”, etc.

Examples:

- You will be careful when you cross the road, won't you? ("You will be careful" is the main clause.)
- It makes no difference how many friends I have, does it? ("It makes no difference" is the main clause; "no" is a negative word, hence the positive tag.)
- He didn't come to the party because he felt rather ill, didn't he? (the negative tag refers to the independent clause "because he felt rather ill" which is positive).
- Mend that chair yourself since you're so clever, aren't you? ("Mend that chair yourself" is an imperative main clause. Here, the tag correlates with the dependent clause "since you're so clever").

✓ According to BALL and WOOD (1986) in their Dictionary of English Grammar Based on Common Errors, in colloquial English, the negative in a dependent clause introduced by **"that"** is often transferred to the main clause after verbs like "to suppose", "to imagine", "to think". Hence, the sentence "You haven't heard the news" becomes "I don't think (that) you have heard the news". As a matter of course, the tag correlates with the "that clause", not the main clause. BALL and WOOD refer to this phenomenon as the **"transferred negative"**. The tag is as such positive, correlating with the negation in the main verb "don't think". The question tag is then presented as follows: "I don't think you've heard the news, **have** you?"

✓ There are occasions when the speaker presents her/his opinion and then asks the listener for his opinion. For instance, **"I don't like coconut, do you?"** English question tags are normally stressed on the auxiliary verb, as we have mentioned before, yet in the present circumstance, the pronouns "I" and "you" are stressed. BALL and WOOD, op. cit., calls this **"a false tagging"**. In French, this would be expressed with "et toi?". As it is indicated by its name, "a false tagging" is not really a question tag. Hence, it can operate outside the positive-negative and negative-positive framework.

Example: I like watching thrillers, do **you**?

✓ In normal conversation a form of tag is frequently heard in English when one person wishes to pass a truculent, sarcastic, ironic, confrontational or incredulous comment on another person's remark. . This is done by repeating the remark and adding a tag, both being positive or negative. (ALLEN, Living English Structure, 1989). Question tags of this type are called “unbalanced tag questions”.

Examples: - Liz: You are lazy.

- Jane: **I'm** lazy, **am** I?

- John: I just won't go back!

- Jill: Oh, **you won't, won't** you?

- **Short answers to question tag:**

As for RAFANOMEZANTSOA (C.A.P.E.N. Dissertation, 2007), a question tag is a question of a yes-no type. Hence, it can be answered with “yes” or “no”.

I.S. PATEL et al. in Standard 8 English Graded Exercises in Sentence Patterns and Structure account for the answers to question tags. They insist on the fact that question tags are used to ask for agreement, and they also wrote: “*Note that when the answer YES is expected, the first part of the sentence⁵² is Positive⁵³ and the second part⁵⁴ Negative ... Note that when the answer NO is expected, the first part of the sentence is Negative and the second part is positive.*” (p. 63). Therefore, a negative tag supposes a positive response, while a positive tag supposes a negative answer.

Expecting answer Yes	Positive statement	+ Negative tag
Expecting answer No	Negative statement	+ Positive tag

The same book says, however, that there is still a possibility of having contrary answers. As a matter of fact, a question tag, being a kind of yes-no question should be answered according to the truth of the situation. As such, the answer reflects the real facts, not necessarily the question.

⁵² The first part of the sentence stands for the statement.

⁵³ A positive statement means not negative

⁵⁴ The second part of the sentence : the tag

Examples:

- You will come with me, **won't** you? Answers: No, I won't or Yes, I will. (The answer depends on the answerer whether he/she is willing to come or not)
- The earth is bigger than the sun, **isn't** it? Answer: **No**, it **isn't**! (The reality is that the sun is bigger than the earth hence the answerer's contradiction. The answerer hints her/his strong disagreement by stressing: "no" and "isn't".)

Moreover, BALL and WOOD affirm that when a negative statement seeking confirmation is followed by a positive tag, agreement is expressed by "no". A common error is to say "yes" meaning "I agree with your negative statement." Therefore, the answer "yes" implies a disagreement with the statement.

Example: You don't like singing, **do** you? Answers: No, I don't (i.e. I agree with you, I don't like singing) and Yes, I do (i.e. I disagree with you, I like singing)

As it is shown in all the above examples, the auxiliary verb in the tag reappears in the short response in the same tense. So, the tag is repeated in the short answer but in a reversed manner (... , do they? Yes, they do. Or No, they don't). Moreover, contractions are not needed with the answer "yes", but they are required for negative answers.

➤ **Question tag intonations and their specific meaning:**

A question tag involves a statement followed by a tag, which is a mini-question. In general, therefore, the speaker, while using a question tag, asserts something (in the statement), and then invites the listener's response by means of the tag.

On the one hand, the statement, which constitutes the first part of a question tag, is normally spoken with a falling tune as it is a mere assertion. Nevertheless, providing the speaker's voice goes up while making the assertion, it means that he/she is not sure of what he/she is saying. On the other hand, being defined as a yes-no question, a question tag implies a final rise considering

what has already been said about the English language intonation. BALL and WOOD (1986), however, say that each tag takes a rising or falling intonation according to whether the speaker seeks an answer to a question or expects agreement and/or disagreement. As a matter of course, the meaning of a question tag depends on how it is said. As a result, question tag intonations can be classified in four groups notably the statement and the tag both on a rising intonation, the statement and the tag both on a falling intonation, the statement on a falling intonation with a rising tag, and the statement on a rising intonation with a falling tag.

The following section will be devoted to the analyses of the speaker's state of mind according to the question tag intonation he/she uses.

- **Statement and tag both on a rising intonation:**

The previous survey on the English language intonation has made the implications of the rising tune explicit. In fact, the speaker while uttering the statement with a rising tune is unsure of his/her assertion and shows to the listener that his/her sentence is not complete yet, hence the addition of the tag ending to the statement. The tag has also been defined as a mini-question. Therefore, when spoken with a rising tune, the tag transforms the question tag into a real question that expects the answer "yes" or "no" from the listener. In short, while using the rising tune in the statement and the tag, the speaker has doubts about his/her assertion and expects the listener to answer the question he/she is asking according to the truth of a situation.

Example:

↗ ↗

You are French, | **aren't** you? Answer: No, I'm not.

- **Statement and tag both on a falling intonation:**

The use of a falling intonation shows that the speaker is certain of what he/she is saying. In other words, the latter has no doubt about the truth of his/her assertion. By combining the statement with a falling tag, the speaker is not asking a question to the listener as he/she already knows the answer. In this case, the speaker is expecting the listener's agreement or disagreement. As indicated in the previous section entitled "answers to

question tag”, the positive-negative question tag expects the answer “yes”, and vice versa the negative-positive, “no”. Yet, the listener will respond to the question tag according to the truth of the situation.

Examples:

↘	↘	
Cathy can swim,		can't she?
		<u>Answer:</u> Yes, she can. (agreeing)
		<u>Answer:</u> No, she can't. (disagreeing)

↘	↘	
He isn't listening to the radio,		is he?
		<u>Answer:</u> No, he isn't. (agreeing)
		<u>Answer:</u> Yes, he is. (disagreeing)

- **Statement on a falling intonation with a rising tag:**

In this case, the speaker makes an assertion, which at first he/she assumes to be true, but the rising tag changes the whole sentence into a question. Indeed, the speaker then says something, and after some reflexion he/she hesitates about the truthfulness of the remark and asks his/her listener to clear up the doubt. The answer to the question tag uttered in this way depends on the truth of the situation.

Example:

↘	↗	
She doesn't live in Liverpool now,		does she?
		<u>Answer:</u> Yes, she does.

- **Statement on a rising intonation with a falling tag:**

When pronouncing the statement with a rising intonation, the speaker is quite unsure of what he/she is saying. In addition, he/she hints that his/her sentence is not finished yet, but there is something more to come. Hence, the addition of the tag ending to the sentence. Spoken with a falling voice pitch, the tag incites the listener to agree with the speaker's statement. Moreover, the final fall indicates the end of the speaker's sentence. In such a case, if the statement is positive, the listener expresses agreement with “yes” as answer; and as opposed to that, if the statement is negative, “no” is the expected short answer which expresses agreement.

Examples:

↗ ↘

You don't like fish, | do you? Answer: No, I don't. (agreeing)

↗ ↘

Our parents had a dispute yesterday, | didn't⁵⁵ they? Answer: Yes, they did.

A question tag has been defined as a special construction in English in which a declarative statement (i.e. affirmative or negative remark) or an imperative statement (i.e. affirmative or negative command) is turned into a question by adding a tag. A question tag is mainly used in colloquial spoken languages to make a remark or a command less direct. According to HAYCRAFT and LEE in their book entitled It Depends How You Say It, the question tag intonation plays a major role in understanding the real meaning of the question tag (HAYCRAFT and LEE , 1980). The following table will sum up what has been said previously about the different meanings of question tag intonations according to the speaker's state of mind:

⁵⁵In the statement, « had » (simple past form of "to have") behaves as an ordinary verb, so the corresponding tag auxiliary is "didn't" (simple past form of "do" in the negative).

STATEMENT		TAG		MEANING OF THE QUESTION TAG
RISING INTONATION	FALLING INTONATION	RISING INTONATION	FALLING INTONATION	
Remark		Tag		The speaker is uncertain of his remark, so he seeks the listener's assurance that his remark is correct. It is a real question.
Remark			Tag	The rising intonation makes the remark tentative, but the falling tag shows that the speaker is quite confident that his listener will not contradict.
	Remark		Tag	The remark is obviously true and the tag a polite phrase to invite the interest of the other person. The speaker makes a comment or gives his opinion and expects the listener to agree with him.

STATEMENT		TAG		MEANING OF THE QUESTION TAG
RISING INTONATION	FALLING INTONATION	RISING INTONATION	FALLING INTONATION	
Affirmative command		Tag: will you?		The continuing rise is used to make the command less abrupt and friendlier.
	Affirmative command	Tag: will you?		To make the command less abrupt and less direct.
Negative command			Tag: will you?	To soften the command
Affirmative command			Tag: won't you?	This type of intonation is used as a kind of reminder: the speaker wishes to be sure that his listener does not forget something.

Table 5: QUESTION TAG INTONATIONS AND THEIR DIFFERENT MEANINGS