You've a daughter yourself?: A corpus-based look at question forms in an Irish radio phone-in

Anne O'Keeffe

1. Introduction

Questions are widely studied especially in institutional contexts where a pervasion of questions is characteristic of such genres, for example political interviews, doctor-patient exchanges, courtroom interactions, and teacher-pupil exchanges. The speaker who has professional/occupational status normally controls the development of the discourse through questioning (see Coulthard and Ashby 1975; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Blum-Kulka 1983; Drew 1985; Fisher and Groce 1990; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991 among many others). In other words, the doctor, the barrister, the interviewer and the teacher, respectively, decide whether to initiate an exchange, when to initiate it and with whom. Atkinson and Drew (1979) coined the term 'turn-type pre-allocation', which means that participants in institutional discourse, on entering an institutional setting, are normatively constrained in the types of turns they may take according to their particular institutional roles. As Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) tell us, this format typically involves chains of question-answer sequences, in which the institutional figure asks the questions and the witness, pupil or interviewee is expected to provide the answers. This format is pre-established and formative rules operate which means that participants can be constrained to stay within the boundaries of the question-answer framework. This is in contrast to casual conversation where roles are not restricted to those of questioner and answerer, and where the type and order of turns in a given interaction may vary freely (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998).

In the present study of an Irish radio phone-in, *Liveline*, it is proposed that, while the asymmetric conditions exist for pre-allocation of turns and while these norms of institutional discourse generally apply, there is, within the questions forms, widespread downtoning to be found at a lexico-

grammatical level. That is to say, the presenter's questions are softened very often and it is posited that this strategy is employed so as to downplay the presenter's power in the speaker relationship so as to facilitate a more symmetric pseudo-intimate interaction.

2. Previous research into questions

There is little consensus on the definition of questions. As Tsui (1992) points out, the term has been used as a semantic category, as an illocutionary act, or to refer to requests or verbal directives or simply as something that expects an answer. To illustrate the diversity, Quirk et al (1985) offer three semantic classes of questions based on the type of answer required, namely:

1) Questions requiring yes/no answers;
2) Wh-questions which require an answer from a range of possible answers, and
3) Alternative questions which expect a reply from two or more options presented in the question.

In a Conversation Analysis (CA) model, questions may be viewed as typically the first part of 'adjacency pairs' (after Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 296) where the production of the first pair is followed by the second matching pair, setting up a logical sequential relationship (for a criticism of this view see Tsui 1992; 1994).

The problem of question forms and discourse functions is addressed by many researchers. Bolinger (1957, quoted in Weber 1993: 4–5) says that:

> the Q[uestion] is an entity that is often assumed but seldom defined… the difficulty in definition betokens a complex which is not only made up of a number of ingredients, but whose ingredients may vary as to presence or absence or proportionate weight. If there were no such variation there would not be a complex in the linguistic sense.

Weber (1993: 4) tells us that the term *question* applies 'ambiguously to interactive function and morphosyntactic form' but she sees a correlation between morphosyntactic form and the communicative function of what she terms 'doing questions'. Tsui (1992) also offers a functional description of questions. She casts aside the 'expected answer' model provided by Quirk et al (1985) on the basis that it confuses issues of syntactic form and discourse

function (for example a 'declarative question' versus a request or an exclamatory question). Instead she characterizes any utterance which proposes an obligatory verbal response as an 'elicitation' irrespective of its syntactic form. This, she says, avoids the inconsistency of using syntactic criteria for some utterances and discourse criteria for others. Uwajeh (1996), in a detailed discussion on the difficulty of distinguishing questions clearly from certain other pragmalinguistic phenomena (such as 'summonsing'), concludes that 'communicative *context*, not sentence structure, is the ultimate basis for determining a sentence's communicated illocutive intent, and therefore for its possible classification as a question' (Uwajeh 1996: 108).

Sacks notes that in conversation a person who asks a question 'has a right to talk again afterwards' (1995: 49) and 'as long as one is in the position of doing the questions, then in part one has control of the conversation' (Sacks 1995: 55). However as Thornborrow (2001) points out, being in the role of answerer can limit the possibilities available to speakers (see also Drew 1992). Thornborrow notes that in many contexts for institutional interaction, such as courtrooms, police interviews, medical examinations etc., the role of the questioner is typically taken up by a participant whose institutional status is such that the range of actions they can take is generally much broader than the participant who is in the role of answerer (see also Atkinson and Drew 1979) and as a result this puts them in a stronger position to control the direction of the talk. Dillon (1981) makes the point that while the pursuit of questions in the classroom is akin to opinion-pollsters and cross-examiners, the purposes seem opposite: To stimulate thinking and speaking in the student and to delimit these in the respondent and courtroom witness. On the other hand, questioning practices of therapists and interviewers are the opposite of teachers while the purposes are similar: To enhance expression of thought. Teachers rely on questions to stimulate thought and discussion and many therapists and interviewers use questions sparingly or avoid them, lest they inhibit client thought and reduce expression.

Much work has been done on functional question types and their effectiveness in classroom discourse. Searle (1969, cited in Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 150) makes a basic but useful distinction between 1) *real questions* – those designed to inform the questioner about something s/he does not already know, and 2) *exam questions* – those which are designed to test the answerer's knowledge about something which the questioner already knows. Much research has been carried out into question types, functions, and their productivity as well as appropriate questioning

strategies for the classroom (see Perrott 1982; Long and Sato 1983; Brown and Wragg 1993; Farr 2002). Other studies look at specific types of questions: For example display questions (Banbrock and Skehan 1989), referential questions (Brock 1986) and echo questions (Lindstromberg 1988).

Merrit (1976) looked at questions in the context of service encounters within the CA model of question-answer adjacency pairs, where she sees them as integral to the coherence of the customer-request-server-response sequence. She finds that though there is adherence to the question-answer turn pre-allocation patterns, there are many question-question patterns and she finds that these vary according to the relationship between the two questions. Her analysis demonstrates the relationship of these patterns to the pragmatic interpretation of the customer-request as either a request for information or as a request for service. In a very different context, Pérez de Ayala (2001) looks at British MPs parliamentary questions and she argues that politeness strategies (after Brown and Levinson 1987) serve to facilitate 'institutional hypocrisy' in that face threat is core to the genre yet the linguistic devices must be such that they do not cause face threat. She finds that when a Member of Parliament flouts 'the rules' s/he is often obliged to reformulate the face threatening act with face redress. Yokota (1994) looks at questions in Japanese political discussion and argues that question-response sequences, though occupying considerable time, display no clear resolution nor true dispute. Her study shows how the general tendency to avoid overt control and overt conflict is reflected in the questioning strategies employed in the discourse, which she posits may be linked to a type of 'Japanese-like argumentation' (Yokota 1994: 353).

Many studies, according to Montgomery (1986), find that women use more questions than men, especially when the addressee is a man. For example, women were found to ask more questions than men when buying tickets at Central Station in Amsterdam, especially when the ticket seller was male (Brouwer et al. 1979, cited in Montgomery 1986: 161). In three separate studies of heterosexual couples based on 52 hours of tape-recordings, Fishman (1983) (cited in Montgomery 1986) found that women asked two and a half times more questions than men. Fishman sees this as a practical measure of the work these women are doing in keeping the conversations going. In Fishman's study, men produced twice as many statements as women. Women made 62% of all attempts to introduce topics but only 38% of these attempts achieved joint development. Conversely, nearly all the topics initiated by men (usually in the form of a statement) received conversational uptake. Thus on one hand, women responded more

positively to topics raised by men; and on the other hand they had to work harder to establish topics themselves. However, Montgomery notes that Fishman makes no distinction as to which type of questions were asked. As Montgomery points out not all questions are the same; some but not all will relate to topic development, and some might claim, confirm or challenge for example.

This study involves a detailed survey of a sub-corpus of questions from the Irish radio phone-in show *Liveline* (see below). It looks at questions syntactically and functionally within the context of their role-related use. It is proposed that their form and function play a crucial role in balancing the pseudo-symmetry within the presenter-caller dyad. In particular, we will focus on the subtle nuancing of question forms by the presenter using various lexico-grammatical strategies.

3. Data

Data for this study is drawn from an Irish radio phone-in show called *Liveline* broadcast every weekday on Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) between 1.30pm and 2.45pm[1]. The transcribed corpus comprises approximately 55,000 words (some of these data form part of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English[2]). The programme has been running for almost 18 years and according to recent research has an audience of 365,000,[3] almost 10% of the Irish population. Its longevity and prominence on Irish airwaves makes it rich for analysis on many levels. The data sample was taken from 1998 (when the programme was presented by Marian Finucane) and comprises 44 phone calls from a total of five programmes spread throughout that year. Topics for discussion meander from call to call and include, among others, the following miscellany: Female facial hair problems; tattoos; the peace process in Northern Ireland; ear-piercing in the old days; constitutional referenda, experiences of working aboard; cursory tales about sunbathing without sun block; reminiscences about boarding schools; warnings about the decline of fidelity and moral decay in general; things that can go wrong when working in Saudi Arabia and the growing trend of litigation in Irish society. Unlike many talk radio shows, the presenter in *Liveline* does not normally provide counselling and she generally avoids engaging in strong debate. Her role appears to be more that of conduit between the caller and the audience (see also O'Keeffe 2002; McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003; O'Keeffe 2003).

4. Analysis

For the purposes of a detailed analysis of questions in the 55,000 words of data, it was decided to construct a sub-corpus of 100 randomly chosen questions. This sample was arrived at by selecting every fifth question initially from the total corpus and then deleting at sequential interval until 100 questions remained for analysis (for example deleting every second question, then every third and so on). The sub-corpus of 100 questions was then scrutinized under the following headings:

1) *Type of question* (declarative, tag, wh- etc.)
2) *Speaker role* (presenter or caller)
   Note that to allow for a more refined analysis of questions, the presenter's role has been divided into three areas: *Conduit* (in the sense of 'go-between' or channel); *Manager and Arbitrator of topic*. *Conduit* refers to the presenter as (a) conduit between caller and audience in functions such as eliciting of facts; establishing and maintaining of common ground; building up a profile of the caller for the audience through questioning and (b) conduit between callers at a local level when there are two callers on the line, performing functions such as: Exhibiting fairness and minimising face-to-face confrontation. *Manager* entails organisational functions such as managing time; bringing about openings and closings; elaborating and shifting topics. The presenter's role as *Arbitrator of topic* involves higher order topic-related functions such as: Exploring/posing the other side of an argument in the interest of synthesis and bringing about self-directed resolution and reflection.
3) *Discourse devices or features* (features and linguistic devices such as formulations, discourse markers, hedging devices, ellipsis etc. were noted here).
4) *Call stage* (the position of the question within the call was noted e.g. opening; topic development; closing).

5. Results

Table 1 shows the range of question types found across the 100 questions sampled and figure 1 shows the distribution of these types:

Table 1. Distribution of question types in 100 question sample

| Type	Example	
Yes/no	Presenter:	Is it true that you figure it's associated with all sorts of seedy things like venereal diseases or prostitution or that kind of thing?
Wh-	Presenter:	What age is he ah Breda?
Alternative	Caller:	Am I I was it watching her that was the sign of the menopause or was it that ah was it the bright tie?
Tag	Presenter:	… that's the point isn't it?
Declarative	Presenter:	… You figure that this is partially the cause of disillusionment with the political system?
Double Question	Presenter:	How did you know? Did the bush telegraph tell you?
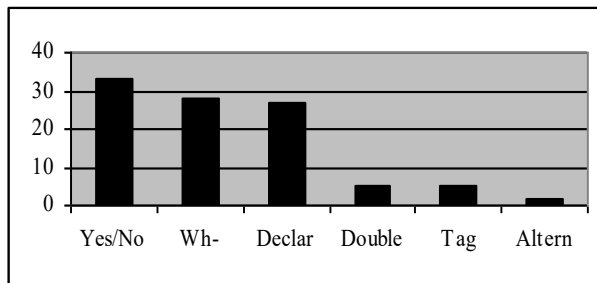
Figure 1. Distribution of question types in 100 questions (results shown as percentages)

As we can see, there is a relatively equal distribution between yes/no, wh- and declarative question types accounting for 33%, 28% and 27% of questions in the 100 item sample, respectively. The remaining lower frequency results relate to double questions (5%) (these were counted separately so as to check if they served a discrete function, see below) tag questions (5%) and alternative questions (2%). We note that in the 100 randomly chosen questions, 93 were from the presenter and seven were

from the caller. Let us now collate the general findings for each question type:

5.1 Yes/no questions

Of the 33 instances of yes/no (hereafter Y/N) questions in the sample, only one is asked by the caller and this is to seek advice (on the topic of removing tattoos):

(1)
 Presenter: The only thing is you don't have to show your shoulder when you're looking for job.
→ Caller: No you don't am if he'd a nice white shirt on or <presenter laughs> will it show through?
 Presenter: ⌊Do you think that the will it show through? <laughs >. Obviously that's what on your mind…

Of the 96% of Y/N questions asked by the presenter, we find the following distribution of roles within which the presenter is positioned at the time of asking:
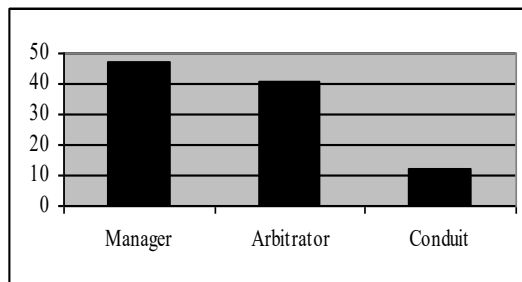

Figure 2. The percentage role distribution of presenter's Y/N questions

In total only 12% of the Y/N questions have negative polarity, as exemplified in extract 2:

(2)

They are taking about Northern Ireland and the forthcoming constitutional referendum.

Presenter: Yeah but can I just make the point to you that I just made to somebody else earlier on if and it's a very big if I know if the people North and South vote yes to this agreement.

Caller: Yeah.

→ Presenter: Won't that be the most subversive thing that has been done to both sets of extremes?

Caller: Am it's to the extremists possibly yes yes am I am beginning to have my doubts I mean Stan yesterday said that the Unionist people would reject it.

Here we see the presenter's use of a negative form as a hedging device. The presenter could have used the affirmative form (*that will be the most subversive thing that has to been done to both sets of extremes*) but she obviously wished to be tentative in her assertions. Hedging is also evident in the first line of the above extract when she uses the metastatement *Yeah but can I just make the point to you* which is superfluous to her pre-allocated rights as presenter.

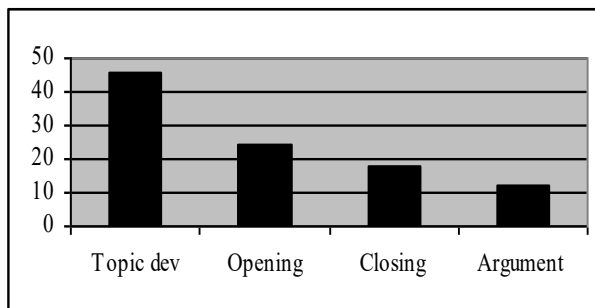Figure 3 provides the breakdown for where in the call the Y/N questions cluster.4

Figure 3. Call distribution of Y/N questions

Here we see that yes/no questions cluster with the topic development stage of a call. It could be suggested that because such questions just require confirmation or denial, they are least intrusive and most expeditious and therefore most suited to when the presenter is in managerial or arbitrator roles (as has been seen to cluster with yes/no questions, see Figure 2 above). In other words, these questions are more convergent than divergent and so they suit situations where the presenter does not want to distract from the flow of conversation with a more divergent question type. We find also that

they are less face threatening than other forms and that, as the following examples show, they are either very concise syntactically (extracts 3 to 5) and function as quick classifiers or agreement seekers or, if they are elaborated, they include hedged language devices (examples 6 to 7):

(3)

Presenter: From his girlfriend?

(4)

Presenter: Near your neck?

(5)

Presenter: And aren't they grand?

Here we find hedged structures such as 'is it true that you figure' and vagueness markers such as 'seedy things' and the vague category marker 'or that kind of thing':

(6)

Presenter: *Is it true that you figure* it's associated with all sorts of seedy *things* like venereal diseases or prostitution *or that kind of thing*?

Here the less hedged question would have been 'did you have problems relating to females having been to a boarding school?'

(7)

Presenter: *Did you find it wo= girls* very alien beings when you came up in contact with them?

5.2. Wh- questions

Of the 28% of wh- questions in the sub-corpus of 100 questions, just two are asked by the caller (7.1%). Both function to seek clarification. The remaining 92.9% of wh- questions are asked by the presenter and Fig. 4 presents the role distribution for these:
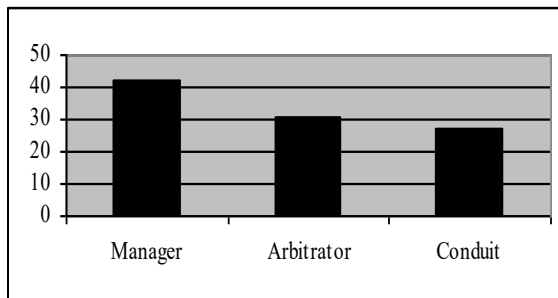
Figure 4. The percentage role distribution of presenter's wh- questions

Here we find that 42% of wh- questions cluster around moments when the presenter appears to be in managerial role. 31% occur when she is in arbitrator of topic role and 27% when in conduit role. An analysis of the call context is shown in fig. 5 below:
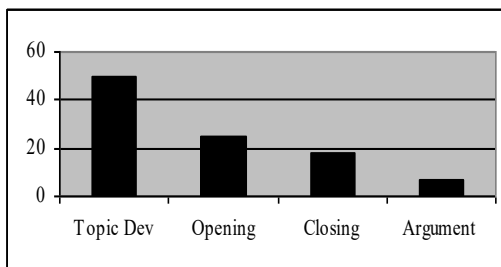

Figure 5. Call context distribution of wh- questions

As we see, 50% of all wh- questions are found at the topic development stage when the call is well underway. However, 43% cluster at openings and closings so we cannot deduce much from this result. Most notably, all of the argumentative contexts (7% in total) are caller questions.

In terms of linguistic features, wh- questions appear in most prototypical form as the examples below show. They are largely unhedged (except with irony or humour) and function within the discourse generally to seek facts and this may be why we find they cluster with discourse markers to quite an extent as they have an important organisational role in the unfolding discourse (as exemplified by 'well' and 'and' in extracts 9 and 10 respectively):

(8)

Presenter: *Well* why in the name of God was he talking to him in French at the beginning of it?

(9)

Presenter: *And* tell us the story what happened?

5.3 Declarative questions

Of the 27 declarative questions in the sample, 93% are asked by the presenter. Only two are from the caller. All but two of the 27 questions were affirmative in polarity. The profile of presenter roles from which these questions were asked is as shown in fig. 6 below:
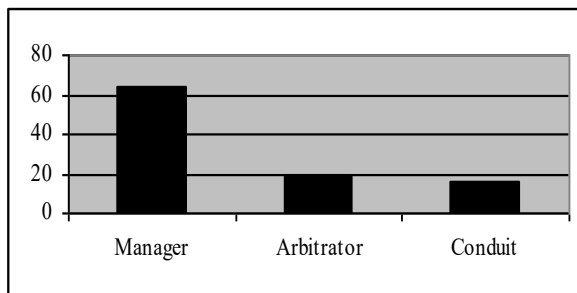

Figure 6. The percentage role distribution of presenter's declarative questions

The distribution of contexts within which these declarative questions were asked is shown below:
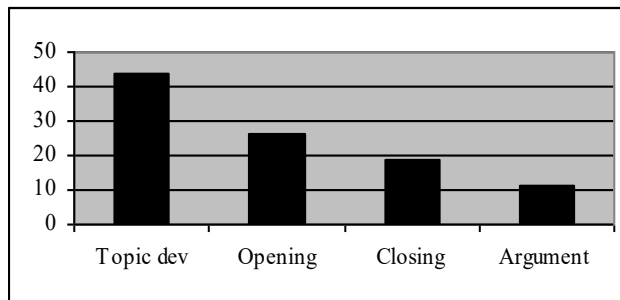
Figure 7. Call distribution of declarative questions

We note both caller questions were in argumentative contexts (that is two out of three questions in this context).

From the figures above, we see that declarative questions are high functioning especially within a managerial role for the presenter. We find that the potential face threat of this presenter position is offset in two main ways 1) through the use of formulations, and 2) through the use of the redundant reflexive pronoun *yourself* (we look at this feature in greater detail in section 7.2 below).

Let us now example in detail the role of formulations as mitigators in declarative question forms in the data. Formulations are broadly defined as attempts by the speaker to summarize or paraphrase what he/she has heard or is saying (see Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 350; Heritage and Watson 1979: 124; Heritage 1985; Iacobucci 1990: 93). Heritage (1985) has identified some specific types of formulations that occur with marked frequency in the institutional context of news interviews. Iacobucci (1990) examines formulations in the context of service encounters (specifically a corpus of telephone calls to a telephone company relating to billing troubles). She finds that they can serve in a relational manner to help expedite the call more successfully, and that they can also be used strategically to redirect the talk and so attain a task goal.

O'Keeffe (2003) illustrates how formulations are used in *Liveline* as *endearment agents* aiding the reduction in institutional power differential between the presenter and caller. Below is a typical example, where the presenter provides a formulation of the caller's reason for calling, which the caller then verifies:

(10)

	Presenter:	Now we go on from weighty matters of state to weighty matters of sport and ah sport on television in particular. John good afternoon to you.
	Caller:	Hello Marian. How are you?
→	Presenter:	You won't be seeing the match this weekend?
	Caller:	Yeah Yeah I believe that's the case I won't be seeing it live anyway on the television…

The presenter's widespread use of formulations and the callers' expectation that this will be the case is an institutional norm for *Liveline* according to O'Keeffe (2003). It contributes to the setting up of a more symmetrical power semantic between the presenter and the caller as it simulates a pseudo-familiarity between the speakers as the following extract illustrates:

(11)

	Presenter:	Hello Michelle how are you?
	Caller:	Hi yeah.
→	Presenter:	You're a relieved woman?
	Caller:	Oh we are I am God.

5.4. Double Questions

80% of double questions are asked by the presenter. A profile of how the presenter's role relates to asking double questions is provided in the graph below:
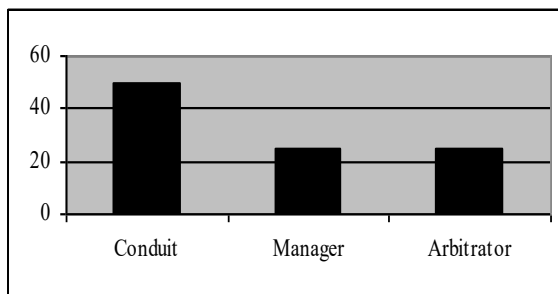

Figure 8. The percentage role distribution of presenter's double questions

In terms of polarity, we find that they are all affirmative and that they are found in the following contexts within calls:
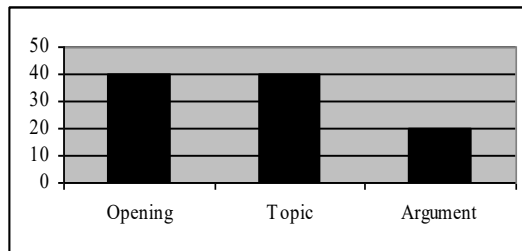
Figure 9. Call distribution of double questions

In structure, we find the following combinations Wh- + Y/N; Y/N + ellipted declarative and non-finite wh- echo + ellipted declarative. These double question combinations seem to be as a result of real-time conversation where the speaker asks a question and then another more honed one immediately afterwards as a by-product of his or her thought process or possibly as a result of attention to face threats. They are generally divergent in function and this may explain why we find them in opening, topic development and argumentative contexts and not near closing sections of the call. Below is an example where the informality of second question in the sequence downtones the directness of the first one:

(12)
   Wh- + Y/N:
   Presenter: How did you know? Did the bush telegraph tell you?

5.5. Tag questions

Like double questions, tag questions account for just 5% of the sample. In terms of role, they cluster with manager and conduit roles equally 40% of the time and are used in the arbitrator role just 20% of the time.
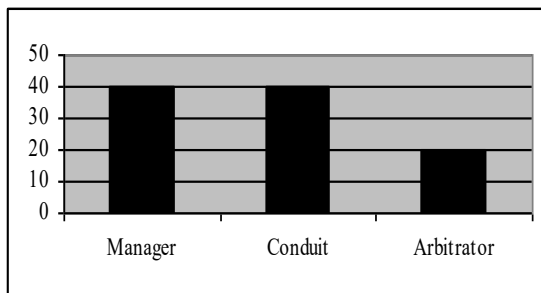
Figure 10. The percentage role distribution of presenter's tag questions

In terms of call context, we see that the majority of tag questions occur during the main flow of the call in the topic development stage.

Figure 11. Call distribution of tag questions

Here is an example:

(13)
    The presenter and caller are talking about meningitis.

→ Presenter: Eh that's the point isn't it? that you you know it just all
                  happened so incredibly quickly.
    Caller: it takes goes very quick through them i= it just runs through
                  them you know.

5.6. Alternative questions

Only two examples of alternative questions exist in the sample of 100 questions, one from the presenter and one from the caller. For example:
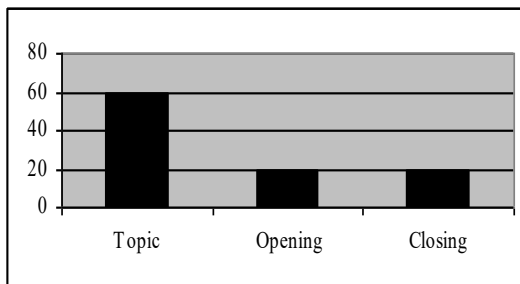
(14)
    Presenter: And in terms of changing a climate or an atmosphere ah within the course and within the community within society do you believe it's a legislative requirement or ah a debate requirement?

5.7. An overview of results

When we collate all of the role-related results we get an interesting picture:
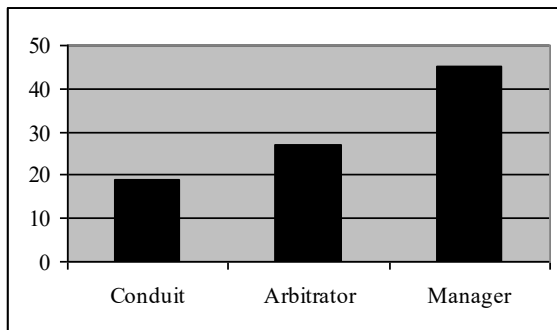

Figure 12. Overall role-related results presenter's questions

Almost 50% of all presenter questions (49.4%) are of a managerial nature. However, perhaps more surprisingly, just over 48% of them are non-managerial (i.e. conduit + arbitrator).

    When we collate the overall results for the call position distribution of questions, we find the following profile:
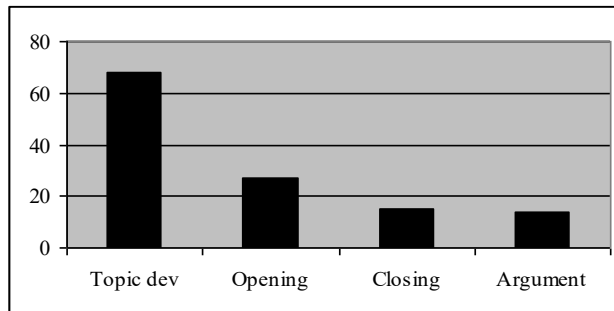
Figure 13. Call position distribution of presenter's questions

Here, most tellingly, we see that most questions are asked at points around the development of topics, 68% in total. Indeed, when we combine call openings and topic developments (which are closely related), we see that questions asked in these 'setting up' stages account for 95% of all questions. This suggests that the body and closing stages of the call have substantially fewer questions. The fact that questions are not distributed with relative homogeneity throughout the call stages indicates that the presenter uses questions at organisational moments but that thereafter, there is a handing over to the caller who tells her/his story and so on. This suggests that once the presenter is happy that common ground has been reached between caller, presenter and audience, and that the topic has been established, she relinquishes her questioning rights for the most part. In doing so, she stimulates conditions more closely associated with casual conversation. In this way, the turn pre-allocation norm which we usually associate with institutional discourse is downtoned. Ultimately, by reducing the managerial input, the presenter heightens the simulated intimacy and pseudo-relationship within the dyad.

6. Lexico-grammatical features of questions

Let us look qualitatively at some of the lexico-grammatical features that have come out of the quantitative analysis of questioning structures.

6.1. Hedging

Hedging is an interactional strategy that speakers and writers avail of in communication, and they do so in a variety of ways and for different reasons (for various definitions see Fraser 1975; 1980; Holmes 1984; Markannen and Schröder 1997; Farr and O'Keeffe 2002). It can involve downtoning, approximating or boosting utterances through lexico-grammatical choices. We find frequent examples of this when the presenter chooses structures that are pragmatically softened versions of more direct forms:

In extract 15 below we see the use of a declarative plus question tag (marked in that it is a positive tag). Here the more direct form of question would have been, typically, *Are you a medical doctor*?:

(15)
    Presenter: Welcome back to the programme. Dr Nora Donnelly is that a medical doctor, *it is?*

In the following example, we see a display question[5] being hedged with an approximator *I gather*:

(16)
    Presenter: Now you've a few other craft shops other craft shops *I gather*?

In the next example, the approximator *you figure* is used in conjunction with *partially* to downtone the question for the listener and in the subsequent example, we see the use of *so to speak* again used to approximate and hedge the force of the utterance:

(17)
    Presenter: … *You figure* that this is *partially* the cause of disillusionment with the political system?

(18)
    Presenter: And asking her to to to keep the secrets *so to speak*?

Here we see along with hesitation the use of hypotheticality in a very hedged declarative question form.

(19)
    Presenter: Yeah.You You You refer to the conc= to the idea that one hears quite a bit you know like this this would be my view on the

> matter and this would be my ah preference and this is the way how I would chose to behave but I don't wish to impose that on anybody else.

Here the presenter uses other-attribution to hedge:

(20)
> Presenter: Well eh not having your mother there to tell you what to do or what not to do *some people might regard as a benefit?*

Farr and O'Keeffe (2002) note another lexico-grammatical pattern that is prevalent in the *Liveline* data. They found that questions with *would* (inverted and "wh-") were one of the significant patterns that emerged from their investigation of the use of *would* in the institutional contexts of *Liveline* data and university teacher trainer-trainee interactions. They note in particular the frequency of second person singular questions which are hedged using *would*.

They found that *would* was often used by the power role holder in both datasets to transpose questions into a hypothetical band and in so doing, to defuse potential threat to face. In other words, the speaker (presenter/trainer) chooses the least threatening option on the pragmatic continuum (Givón 1984). In the example below from *Liveline*, the presenter is talking to a well-known Irish barrister. She has the option and the discourse rights to ask the following prototypical question: *Do you knowingly take spurious cases*?, but she transposes this to the opposite end of the pragmatic continuum and asks *if you think a case is spurious would you take it*? This allows room for the caller to decide whether he will answer the question directly, from a personal stance, or from a professional or hypothetical stance. He chooses the latter (*every barrister, a lot of barristers*) and interprets the *you* in the presenter's question as generic.

(21)
> → Presenter: …if you think a a case is spurious would you take it?
> Caller: Well I mean ah the answer is yes every barrister is obliged to take a case in an area in which he professes to be competent and he's not supposed to be say I just don't like the look of my client ah I won't take the case…

6.2. Reflexive pronouns

In the one hundred question sample, it was found that there are a number of examples of the use of redundant reflexive pronouns in question forms (for example 'do you've a daughter *yourself*?'). These appear to serve as downtoners by personalizing the question:

```
This is because you had side effects yourself?        Umhum yeah.
always are.        How are you fixed yourself for nightclubs and the
This is because you had side effects yourself?        Umhum yeah.
    Yeah yes I do you've a daughter yourself?        I have Emm
e involved in the medical profession yourself?        I am yes.
these tourists.        You do this yourself I take it?        I h
        And what are you doing with yourself nowadays?        I hav
arian.        You were a boarder there yourself?        I was a boarder
```

Figure 14. Concordance lines of yourself in corpus of *Liveline*

This feature is also commonly found in the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE) as the sample concordance lines illustrate:

```
 r why not.  Are you going on holidays yourself Joe?        That's |
  This is because you had side effects yourself?        Umhum yeah.
    Okay.        +do do you see that yourself that am to "build on
 ng to the end now if you had to give yourself two pieces of advice
mit to it maybe.        Have you kids yourself have you?        I
opriate? Me= have you learnt languages yourself?        No.
s that something you had thought about yourself?        Am yeah but
            this and realised yourself that this is?
        And what are you doing with yourself nowadays?        I
seconds        Do you want to do it yourself like?
```

Figure 15. Concordance lines of *yourself* in the Limerick Corpus of Irish English

6.3. Vocatives

Another pervasive feature of questions in the radio data is the use of first name vocatives by the presenter to hedge the force of the utterance. In the example below, the vocative is neither syntactically nor semantically required and its clause-final placement is in line with its being used as an interpersonal device to redress the power balance (see McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003 and O'Keeffe 2003 for a detailed treatment of vocatives in casual conversation and radio phone-in).

(22)
    Presenter: What age is he ah *Breda*?

McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) found that vocatives commonly occur in the contexts of irony, banter, and humour between friends in casual conversation and that this was also the case in radio phone-in. In the following extract from *Liveline*, we see the reciprocity of vocatives in the question forms playing a heightening role in the banter and badinage in which both the caller and the presenter are complicit.

(23)
→ Presenter: How are you on nightclubs *Joe*?
→ Caller: Am nightclubs? What are they *Marian*?
    Presenter: <chuckle> well now as a menopausal swinger like yourself…

6.4. Latching

Latching is the interactive collaborative activity where a turn is completed by another speaker. It is a feature associated with casual conversations between intimates. However, we find that a number of questions are formed through latching in the *Liveline* data. This serves to integrate rather than impose questions on the caller. Latch questions are also economical and efficient (and usually ellipted), but are also convergent and collaborative:

(24)
    Caller: … we have to ask ourselves what all this is for you know wh=
            what our what kind of society we want to make out of all this
            am growth and I think if we don't do that the danger is w= we
            finish up where we don't want to go.
→ Presenter: Which is where?

Here we find a similar example which also involves an overlap (marked with ⌊):

(25)
    Caller: You know. And I I have seen these uh Saudi guys in their full
            garb and I've heard the remarks they're made about the the
            Westerners. And it's not nice.
→ Presenter: ⌊ Which which were?

In the following example, we see latching and collaboration where the presenter is working towards an awkward question to a female caller with facial hair problems. The question and answer merge and we see how repetition is used as scaffolding in lines 4 and 5:

(26)
(+ indicates an interrupted utterance)

Presenter:	And what did you do on big occasions say like your wedding day or important days in the family+
Caller:	Ah.
Presenter:	+before yo=
Caller:	I gave a quick dry shave+
Presenter:	Quick dry shave.
Caller:	+and I'd be grand.

7. Conclusion

In this study we have looked in detail at a sub-corpus of 100 questions from the Irish radio phone-in *Livelive*. The quantitative and qualitative analysis provides us with many insights into the manner in which questions, the presenter's 'power tool', are patterned in form and function to redress the exogenous asymmetry within the dyad. While questions are pervasive, we found that they are clustered at organisational episodes of openings and topic development. We also noted that they function in non-managerial contexts when the presenter is in the role of conduit or arbitrator. Overall, we can say that even though the power structure between the presenter and the caller in radio phone-in clearly favors the occupational status of the presenter, she skillfully manages to redress this inequity by simulating intimacy more commonly associated with symmetrical dyads. This is achieved largely through lexico-grammatical choice. It is argued that the questions, rather than having an institutional 'edge', have in fact an *endearment agency* helping to subvert the power semantic of the situation.

Notes

1. L-CIE is a one-million word corpus of contemporary spoken Irish English. It is a genre-based corpus with data from a range of contexts and speakers in Ireland (excluding Northern Ireland). Details of L-CIE can be found at http://www.mic.ul.ie/lcie

2. Source: JNLR/MRBI radio figures released February 2003, quoted in Oliver (2003).

3. *Topic dev* refers to topic development stage in a call where the reason for calling the show is being developed. *Opening* refers to the opening sequence of the call and *closing* indicates the closing sequence of turns in a call. *Argument* refers to argumentation episodes.

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[2] L-CIE is a one-million word corpus of contemporary spoken Irish English. It is a genre-based corpus with data from a range of contexts and speakers in Ireland (excluding Northern Ireland). Details of L-CIE can be found at http://www.mic.ul.ie/lcie

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[3.] *Topic dev* refers to topic development stage in a call where the reason for calling the show is being developed. *Opening* refers to the opening sequence of the call and *closing* indicates the closing sequence of turns in a call. *Argument* refers to argumentation episodes.

[5] A display question refers to when the person who asks the question already knows the answer; these question types are typically associated with classroom contexts, see Banbrock and Skehan 1989; Farr 2002.