■ Types of Interrogative Sentences

An interrogative sentence has the function of trying to get an answer from the listener, with the premise that the speaker is unable to make judgment on the proposition in question. Interrogative sentences can be classified from various points of view.

The most basic approach to the classification of interrogative sentences is to sort out the reasons why the judgment is not attainable.　Two main types are true-false questions and suppletive questions (interrogative-word questions).

True-false questions are asked because whether the proposition is true or false is not known. Examples:　*Asu, gakkō ni ikimasu ka?* 'Are you going to school tomorrow?'; *Anata wa gakusei?* 'Are you a student?'　One can answer a true-false question with a yes/no answer.

The speaker asks a suppletive question because there is an unknown component in the proposition, and that the speaker is unable to make judgment.　The speaker places an interrogative word in the place of this unknown component, asking the listener to replace the interrogative word with the information on the unknown component.　Examples: *Kyō wa nani o taberu?* '<u>What</u> are we going to eat today?'; *Itsu ano hito ni atta no?* '<u>When</u> did you see him?"　"Eating something" and "having met him" are presupposed, and the interrogative word expresses the focus of the question. To answer a suppletive question one provides the information on what the unknown component is.

In addition to these two main types, there are alternative questions, which are placed in between the two main types as far as the characteristics are concerned.　Examples are *Chūka ni suru? Soretomo washoku ni suru?* 'Shall we have Chinese food or Japanese food? and *Jimusho wa ikkai desu ka, nikai desu ka?* 'Is the office on the first floor or on the second floor?'　They are close to true-false questions in that there is no interrogative word used, but they are also close to suppletive questions in that one cannot answer choice questions with an yes/no answer.　There remains a question whether this type constitutes one sentence, or whether it is a sequence of multiple sentences.

The second method of classification is to see whether the predicate at the end of a true-false question is in the negative or affirmative.　By this classification there are affirmative questions and negative questions. A true-false question is designed to ask the listener whether the proposition is true or false, and there is no logical difference between an affirmative and negative questions on this point. However, negative questions have their own characteristics.

In a sentence, *Dare ka inai kanaa* 'Isn't there anyone?' the questioner strongly hopes that there is someone.　*Konna koto itte okorarenai kanaa* 'I wonder if I would be reprimanded if I said such a thing' expresses the speaker's strong uneasiness.　One characteristic of negative questions is that the speaker's emotion, such as desire and uneasiness, is strongly expressed.

Another characteristic of negative questions is that the questioner has some degree of prediction. *Ame, futteru?* 'Is it raining?' is an affirmative question which is used when the speaker has no idea whether it is raining or not. On the other hand,　*Ame futtenai?* 'Isn't it raining?' is a negative question that the questioner asks when s/he predicts there is a strong possibility that it is raining, although s/he does not know whether it is actually raining.　Negative questions anticipate the establishment of judgment that is contrary to the sentence form.　The form, *nodewanaika*, has a similar function.

Third, ordinary questions are differentiated from the *noka* questions by the existence or non-existence of *no(da)* at the end of the sentence. *Noka* questions do not simply ask whether the proposition is true or false, or to fill in the (unknown) component; they demand explanation of the situation in relation to the situation in which the question is asked, as in *Kimi, tabako suu no?* 'Do you smoke?' and *Oya, doko e itte kita no?* 'Oh? Where have you been?' One may say, *A, kimi mo iku no?* 'Ah, are you going, too?' in response to *Watashi ga ikimasu* 'I'll go,' where one parrots the immediately preceding utterance for verification. Suppletive questions often take the form of the *noka* question. It is almost a requirement to use the *noka* question when one wants to ask for the reason, as in <u>*Naze*</u> *kinō yasunda no?* 'Why were you absent yesterday?' The *noka* question is also used when the focus of the question is other than in the predicate, as in *Tsukareta kara yasunda no?* 'Were you absent because you were tired?'

→モダリティ Modality (2-H), 疑問形式の用法 Usages of Interrogative Forms (2-H), ノダ― 説明のモダリティ *Noda*: Modality of Explanation (2-H)

● References

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Noda, Harumi (1997) *No(da) no kinō* (Functions of *No*(*da*)). Kurosio Publishers.

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