

Lesson #6

Business Talk *Asking Questions*

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Business Talk Asking Questions

WARM-UP:

Intonation

What is it? How does intonation influence the way we perceive and received information?

Consider: You're happy. (**falling intonation**)

You're happy? (**rising intonation**)

Intonation and questions

Indicate whether the intonation is rising or falling in the following sentences:

It's hot today. Falling

Is it hot today? Rising

What is the weather like today? Falling

When does the game start? Falling

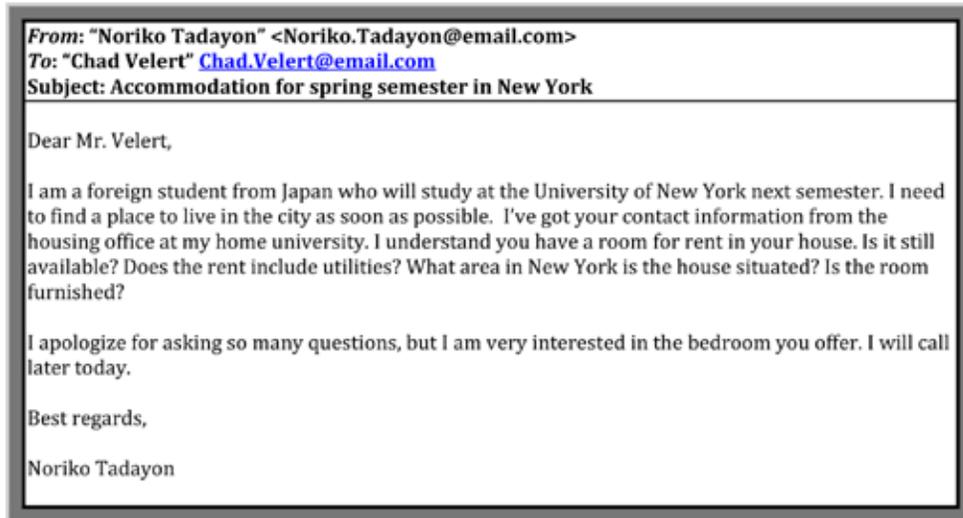
Typically, the intonation in English rises in 'yes/no' questions and falls in 'Wh-' questions.

I'd like to find out some more information please.



Business Talk Asking Questions

A business email..



Later on the phone...

- Noriko:** Hello Mr. Velert, this is Noriko. How are you?
- Mr. Velert:** Hello Noriko! I'm good, thank you. How are you? I received your message about the room for rent. It is still available. Are you interested? Do you want to see it?
- Noriko:** Most definitely! How much is the rent? Does the rent include utilities? Is there a deposit?
- Mr. Velert:** The utilities are included in the rent, and there is a one-month deposit. The rent is \$850.
- Noriko:** Oh, that's expensive!
- Mr. Velert:** Not for New York! It is actually very reasonable. The neighborhood is very quiet, and you have shops, restaurants and a laundromat only a stone's-throw away.
- Noriko:** When are you available to show me the room?
- Mr. Velert:** Well, I'm free tomorrow. What does your day look like? How about 2pm?
- Noriko:** I'm free at 2pm. I have your address. I will see you then! Have a good day.
- Mr. Velert:** See you tomorrow. Have a good day as well.



Work on the Texts

1. What is the meaning of the following:

- Will (email, line 2)
- Utilities (email, line 5)
- A stone's throw away (phone conversation, line 11)

2. How many different types of questions can you find in these two texts? Which questions may only elicit a 'yes' or a 'no' as an answer?

3. Which words or expressions can be stressed using intonation in the second text? What differences can a different intonation / stress make?

LESSON

Asking questions and answering

There are many ways to ask a question. The structure will be different depending on the context – i.e. whether it is formal or informal. There are also two types of questions: **yes/no questions** and **open-ended questions**. Open-ended questions always require more information than 'yes' or 'no' to provide an acceptable answer to the question.

Examples: Are you cold? => **Yes**, I am / **No** I'm not.
Do you have brothers and sisters? => **Yes**, I do / **No** I don't.
How are you? => I'm fine / I'm doing well / I'm not doing well / etc.
Where do you live? I live in the USA / India / Brazil / etc.

When 'be' is the main verb of the answer, it is also used in the question. Those questions are always 'yes/no' questions.

Examples: Is he happy? => Yes, he is / No, he isn't.



LESSON (cont.)

In most cases, the verb 'do' is used to ask questions (when it includes a verb other than 'be'):

Examples: Do you live in a city? => Yes, I live in a city / No, I don't live in a city.

Where do you go to school? => I go to school in my hometown.

Here is a table showing you how to conjugate and use 'do' with the negation:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| I do / I don't | We do / We don't |
| You do / You don't | You do / You don't |
| He-she-it does / He-she-it doesn't | They do / They don't |

This one shows how to use 'do' when asking questions:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Do I...? Don't I...? | Do we...? Don't we...? |
| Do you...? Don't you...? | Do you...? Don't you...? |
| Does he-she-it...? Doesn't he-she-it...? | Do they...? Don't they...? |

In order to ask specific information, special interrogative words can be used:

WHAT: to emphasize the object of the action.

Example: What do you generally eat for lunch? => I generally eat a sandwich.

WHO: to emphasize the subject of the action.

Example: Who is your boss? => Mr. Stevens is my boss.

WHERE: to emphasize the location of the action.

Example: Where do they live? => They live in McLeane

WHEN: to emphasize the moment of the action.

Example: When does she come back from work? => She comes back around 7pm.

WHY: to emphasize the reason of the action.

Example: Why do you play the lottery? => I play because I want to be a millionaire.

HOW: to emphasize the circumstances of the action.

Example: How is the weather today? => The weather is nice.



Exercises

1. Find the questions in the list that best fit one of the following sentences:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| a) I'm fine. | 1. What time is it? |
| b) In Boston | 2. How are you? |
| c) It's 2pm. | 3. Do you like football? |
| d) This is Samantha. | 4. Where does he live? |
| e) No I don't. | 5. Are they in the area? |
| f) Yes, they're here. | 6. Who is this? |

2. Circle the correct forms of 'do' in the following questions and answers:

- a) Does/do/doesn't/don't the American flag have stars and stripes?
Yes, it does/doesn't/do/don't.
- b) When do/does the American people vote for the President?
- c) Do/does/doesn't/don't the President sign the bills voted by Congress?
Yes, sometimes he do/does/don't/doesn't.
- d) What does the Supreme Court do?
It guarantees the constitutionality of laws.

3. Find the correct interrogative (what / when / who / where / why / how) in the following questions about Noriko and Mr. Velert's room for rent:

- a) _____ is the room available? It is available on January 3rd.
- b) _____ is Noriko going to study? He is going to study at the University of New York.
- c) _____ does Noriko look for a room to rent? He is looking for a room to rent because he is coming to study in New York next semester.
- d) _____ expensive is the room in Mr. Velert's house? The rent for the room in Mr. Velert's house is \$850.

4. Build a question with the following words:

- a) Do / Mr. Velert / have a house / ?
- b) How / do / Noriko and Mr. Velert / communicate ?
- c) Where / do / Noriko / live ?
- d) Why / do / Noriko / look for an apartment / ?

5. Group activity: develop and perform the following scenarios with classmates.

- a) You're at a bazaar and try to negotiate the price of different items of your choice you would like to buy. Create a conversation with the vendor.
- b) Mystery person: students chose the name of a famous person, write it on a piece of paper, and stick it to the back of one of their classmates. When all students have a name on their back, they have to ask each other questions about that person to figure out who they are.



Exercises (cont.)

6. Follow-up on the text

Noriko went to visit the room for rent and he liked it. Imagine a follow-up email to Mr. Velert in which he decides to arrange details for his move into the room. You may use some of the vocabulary below. You could start by asking Mr. Velert more information about the laundromat in the neighborhood.

| | | |
|------------|-------------|----------------|
| to inquire | a direction | an appliance |
| to move in | a lamp | a bed |
| to pack | furniture | a box |
| to unpack | a payment | a check |
| to tidy | a truck | a confirmation |
| to wonder | a direction | a couch |
| to plan | a lamp | a desk |

Wind-down

For a VOA News article related studying in the USA and funding options:

<http://blogs.voanews.com/student-union/2010/11/12/a-month-of-financial-aid-discussions-exploring-funding-options/#more-1277>

Here are a few questions on the text:

- Are public universities usually cheaper in the USA?
- Do some schools offer financial aid to foreign students?
- Does the State Department offer some financial help?

Add your story to the 'Stories from the trenches' Students can share their own story of going and studying abroad / their plans for going and studying abroad.

Article in 'Wind down': Student Union Blog (VOA)

Photos: Clip Art

