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Preparing Future Court Interpreters
How Are Questions Phrased in Virtual Court Settings?

Summary: In the common law courtroom discourse, counsels use questions as strategic devices to present a carefully curated version of the case in court proceedings. Most of the existing studies focused on questioning in face-to-face courtroom interactions. However, little is known about questioning in interpreter-mediated remote communication. Drawing upon Hale (2004/2010)'s taxonomy of courtroom questions, this article reports the initial findings from a larger experiment research that assesses the accuracy of court interpreting in remote settings. The present study examines the less-investigated use of questions in simulated virtual courts and remote interpreting settings. Using the experiment method, this research collected collocation from 50 certified interpreters based in Australia. A total of 2,350 courtroom questions in English were transcribed and analysed. However, only 2,265 questions were found in Mandarin Chinese interpretations. Therefore, it is deemed necessary for future court interpreters working in remote settings to understand how questions are phrased, particularly the most prevailing question type in examination-in-chief and cross-examination for better accuracy. Findings have revealed that the less coercive question, such as interrogative, is a predominating choice for the examiner-in-chief. In contrast, the more aggressive question type, such as the declarative with tags, is prevalent in the cross-examination. The present study intends to inform future pedagogical practice.

Keywords: question types, court interpreting, remote interpreting, courtroom discourse

1. Introduction

The right to a qualified interpreter in courts is a matter of equity and access to social justice. In adversarial courtrooms, questions are strategic devices used by opposing counsels to present a favourable version of the case in court. The questioning technique, the lexical choice, the grammatical formulation, the semantic meaning, and the pragmatic force are meticulously crafted by counsels during courtroom examination. As such, it is sufficient to claim that questions used in courtroom examinations are symbolic of the subtlety and sophistication of the legal discourse. Therefore, knowledge about how questions are phrased in courts is important for future court interpreters. However, many scholarly discussions (see Berk-Seligson 2002, 2009, 2012, 2017; Hale 2004/2010; Gibbons 2003; Matoesian 2005) concentrate on face-to-face interactions. Little is about the same issue in virtual courts. Considering the existing gap in the knowledge, this study intends to explore how questions are phrased in virtual courts. To be more specific, this research article attempts to address the following research questions:

(1) What is the pattern of courtroom questions found in the English language during the remote court interpreting proceedings?
(2) What is the prevalent type of question in the examination-in-chief? and
(3) What is the prevailing question type in the cross-examination?

The present article comprises six sections. The introduction outlines the gaps in existing studies and demonstrates how this research will address these questions. It then presents a review of relevant literature in court remote interpreting, highlighting the specialised features of legal discourses and introducing Hale (2004)'s taxonomy of courtroom question types in English. Next, it leads to the research design, illustrating the research participants, procedures, materials, data collection methods and instruments, and methods used for data analysis. Since question types in English are the primary focus of this article, interpreting performance data related to the interpretations of original questions were analysed, and key findings were presented in the discussions. Last but not least, recommendations from the findings were made with the overall aim of informing future pedagogical practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Court Interpreting: A Brief Overview of Face-to-Face v. Remote Settings

Interpreting is widely recognised as a form of communicative interaction between different language communities mediated by interpreters conventionally conducted in face-to-face settings (see Berk-Seligson 2002, 2017, 2009, 2012; Hale 2004/2010; Lee 2009, 2015). However, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the increasing use of videoconferencing and other remote interpreting technologies, the provision of remote interpreting and its accuracy thus deserves growing scholarly attention, particularly in highly specialised situations such as courtrooms. The term *remote interpreting* refers to a situation in which the interpreter provides interpreting services without being physically present in the same location as the speakers (see Braun 2016). Differing from face-to-face interpreter-mediated communication, as found in several existing studies (see Braun 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Braun et al. 2018; Braun and Taylor, 2012; Hale et al. 2022), the remote option can bring a number of technical, administrative, and logistical challenges and barriers when interpreting service providers and users are not co-located in the physical environment in which the interpreting occurs. Such challenges and barriers may hinder communication in general settings and in court settings.

The term *court interpreting* refers to an interpreter-mediated interaction in domestic and international judicial settings, including hearings and trials in courts and tribunals (see Coulthard 2017; Hale 2004/2010; Mikkelson 2016; Stern 2011, 2018; Stern and Liu, 2019). Research in court interpreting is essentially interdisciplinary. By field of study, it involves forensic linguistics (e.g. Charrow et al., 2015; Coulthard 2017; Gibbons 2003; O'Barr 2014; Stygall 2012), sociolinguistics and pragmatics (e.g. Doty 2010; Harris 1995; Jacobsen 2003, 2004, 2008), and interpreting studies (e.g. Berk-Seligson 2002/2017, 2009, 2012; Hale 2004/2010; Hale et al. 2017, 2022). By language pair, existing literature on legal discourse and court interpreting includes Spanish (e.g. Berk-Seligson 2002; Hale 2004/2010), Chinese (e.g. Liu 2020; Xu et al. 2020), Korean (e.g. Lee 2009, 2015), Danish (e.g. Jacobsen 2012), Polish (e.g. Biernacka 2019), Swedish (e.g. Wadensjö 1998/2013, 2001), and other languages. As stated by many scholars in the field (see Angermeyer 2015; Hale 2004/2010; Ng 2018, 2022), the provision of court interpreting for people with limited proficiency in the official language of the justice system is a critical matter of access and equity. The significance of court interpreting is of paramount importance. On the one hand, there is a high requirement for the accuracy of court interpreting, as insufficient or inadequate court interpreting may have devastating ramifications for judicial

outcomes, which may result in the loss of personal property, liberty, and even life (Brunson 2022), as well as the public perception of justice, social trust, and judicial credibility.

On the other hand, as widely acknowledged by many scholars (see Charrow et al. 2015; Doty 2010; Jacobsen 2003, 2004, 2008, 2012; Liao 2012, 2013; Shi 2011, 2018; Stygall 2012; Wagner and Cheng 2011), the complexity of forensic linguistic features that embedded in the institutional functions of language in the courtroom are further compounded by the diversity of subjects, specialised knowledge covered by the law, and the legal tradition and culture. For example, Australia is a common law country that operates under the adversarial system, in which evidence is collected, presented, questioned, and evaluated during courtroom examinations, whereas in Mainland China, the inquisitorial system is used in most of the court proceedings (Liao 2012, 2013). In adversarial courtrooms, questions are found to serve strategic purposes, which are often employed by opposing counsels to present a more favourable version of facts for their desirable judicial outcomes (see Finkelstein 2011; Solan 2020). In contrast, questions in the inquisitorial system are primarily asked by the presiding judge to fulfil certain procedural functions (see Jolowicz 2003; Koppen and Penrod 2003). Considering the differences in the speaker role, the function of courtroom questions, and the justice system, it is deemed necessary to examine language-specific issues related to how questions are phrased and interpreted from the source European language and the non-European language.

The next section will elaborate on question types in English, which provides the conceptual ground for the understanding of question types in remote settings.

2.2 Questions in the Courtroom: Hale (2004)'s Taxonomy

As mentioned in Section 2.1, in the adversarial courtroom, questioning techniques are meticulously chosen, and questions are strategically employed in a ritualised institutional setting. The term *question* is defined as a particular query assigned to lawyers' turns in the adjacency pair (Hale 2004/2010). From the definition, two characteristics of a courtroom question can be found: (1) any turn initiated by the lawyer and (2) addressing the witness in the interrogative form. In general, as identified by forensic linguists and scholars in interpreting studies (see Gibbons 2003; Loftus 2019; Matoesian 2005; O'Barr 2014), questions are used by counsels to elicit desirable responses from the witnesses as a strategic device to influence the jury verdict. In other words, the function of questions is often at the disposal of lawyers to attain a more favourable representation of

facts and arguments in different stages of court proceedings. However, depending on the intention of the questioner and the type of examination in court proceedings, different types of questions may carry different pragmatic functions. Therefore, the awareness and knowledge of questioning strategies and the pragmatic functions of questions used in courtroom examinations are important for professional interpreters to provide adequate interpreting services in accordance with the professional code of conduct. The purpose of the examination-in-chief and the cross-examination differed in the language strategies and questioning techniques employed by counsels in courts. Based on the typology proposed by Hale (2004/2010), during each court process, the types of questions can be generally divided into two main categories: (1) Information Seeking Questions (ISQ), which involved Wh- questions and modal interrogatives, and (2) Confirmation Seeking Questions (CSQ), which comprised declaratives with and without tags and polar interrogatives, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Question types based on Hale (2004/2010)

Information Seeking Questions (ISQ)	▪ Wh- questions
	▪ Modal interrogatives
Confirmation Seeking Questions (CSQ)	▪ Declaratives with tags
	▪ Declaratives without tags
	▪ Polar interrogatives

For the purpose of this study, a taxonomy of question types in English is first established to pave the ground for further analyses. In this study, the classification of English question types is based on Hale (2004/2010). According to her, the questions fall into one of three broad grammatical categories: interrogatives, declaratives and imperatives, under which there are a number of subtypes. All the types of questions in English found in the data are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. English question types based on Hale (2004/2010)

Type	Sub-category	Example from the data (interpreting inaccuracies included)
Interrogatives	Modal interrogatives	Can you indicate to the court why did you put them into 11 bags?
	Wh- interrogatives	And how much did you earn for the security job?

	Forced choice interrogatives	Did you or did you not use the money your mom gave you?
	Polar interrogatives	Mr. Han, is that true that you used the Glucodin to cut down the drugs so you can sell them?
Imperatives	Imperatives with politeness markers	Please tell the Court your full name, your age and your address.
	Imperatives without politeness markers	Just answer the question.
Declaratives	Positive or negative declaratives	So $20 per hour.
	Reported speech declaratives	Mr. Han, I asked you to explain what happened to the $20,000 you alleged your mom gave you.
	Positive declaratives rising intonation	So you took all of them in one go?
	Negative declaratives rising intonation	You're not sure about that?
	Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag	Now Mr. Han, you got an apprenticeship in a panel beating company. Is that correct?
	Positive declaratives with negative ratification tag	You told the Court you spent all of the money. Didn't you?
	Positive declaratives with positive tag	You are lying about it, are you?
	Positive declaratives with negative tag	You had separated into small bags were drugs that you were selling, weren't they? (including original grammatical inaccuracies)
	Negative declaratives with positive tag	There was no $20,000 that you alleged your mom gave you, was there?
	"I put it to you" declarative	I put it to you that the money was from selling the drugs.

As shown in Table 2 above, the interrogatives are divided into four sub-types: modal interrogatives, Wh- interrogatives, forced choice interrogatives, and polar interrogatives.

Modal interrogatives are denoted as a type of interrogative questions that involve the use of modal verbs. A modal verb is a type of verb that contextually indicates a modality, such as a likelihood, ability, permission, request, capacity, suggestion, order, obligation, or advice. Modal verbs are often found to form the base form of another verb that constructs semantic content. Depending on the propositional content the modal verbs are sought to express, five main types of modal verbs used in the modal interrogatives are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Modal verbs in modal interrogative questions

Modal verbs in interrogative questions	Examples from data
Modals denoting ability	can and could
Modals expressing permission	can and may
Modals for likelihood	will, might, may, can, and could
Modals denoting obligation	must, have to
Modals for giving advice	should

As shown in Table 3 above, there are five main types of modal verbs used in the interrogative questions: ability-denoting, permission-expressing, likelihood, obligation-denoting, and advice-giving.

The Wh-interrogatives are defined as interrogative questions involving the use of the words "when", "where", "what", "why", "who", and "how". In the data of this study, the Wh-interrogatives are among the most frequently used types of questions in the courtroom to solicit perceived versions of information that build up the material facts of the case presented in the court. It is also revealed in the data that the use of Wh-interrogatives is more frequent in the examination-in-chief than in the cross-examination.

The forced choice interrogatives, also known as closed option questions, are described as the format for responses that require respondents to provide an answer, usually yes or no, in courtroom interrogation. The intention of this questioning technique is to force respondents to make judgments about each response option and avoid any ambiguity possible in the argument developed by counsel against the opposing party.

The polar interrogatives, also known as yes/no questions, refer to the form of a question that expects an affirmative-negative response. A typical example of a polar interrogative question is a yes/no question in the courtroom. In this study, the main differentiator between the forced choice interrogatives and the polar interrogative lies in the use of the format "will/are/would/can/did you or will/are/would/can/did you not" in forced choice interrogatives, whereas a simple "will/are/would/can/did you" format is present in polar interrogatives.

The other type of question found in the data of this study is the imperatives. The Interrogatives are further divided into two sub-types: the imperatives with politeness markers and the imperatives without politeness markers. A politeness marker is defined as an expression added to an utterance to reveal deference or a request for cooperation (Tajeddin and Pezeshki, 2014). The most widely used examples of politeness markers, in general, are "please" and "if you would not mind". According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), there were broadly four types of politeness markers: finite modal verbs, modal adjuncts, comment adjuncts, and yes/no tags, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Politeness markers in imperative questions based on Halliday (1998)

Politeness marker	Examples from data
Finite modal verbs	Will, would, could, should, might, must
Modal adjuncts	Probably, possibly, just
Comment adjuncts	I think
Yes/no tags	He's gone, hasn't he?

As shown in the table above, it is found in this study that politeness markers are often used to make a request, provide advice, issue a command, or give an instruction in the imperative mood of the questions. It is also found in our data that imperatives, with or without politeness, are often deemed as linguistic devices to instruct witnesses to cooperate in legal proceedings.

Another form of question found in the data is declaratives. A declarative is a yes-no question that takes the form of a sentence and is often spoken with a rising intonation (Nordquist 2020). Declarative is usually an expression of a fact or an opinion. Statements can be either positive or negative. In this study, declaratives in our data can be further divided into ten sub-types: (1) positive or negative declaratives, (2) reported speech declaratives, (3) positive declaratives rising intonation, (4) negative declaratives rising intonation, (5) positive declaratives with a positive ratification tag, (6) positive declaratives with a negative ratification tag, (7) positive declaratives with a positive tag, (8) positive declaratives with a negative tag, (9) negative declaratives with a positive tag, and (10) the "I put it to you" declarative. The term *tag question* is defined as a question converted from a statement by an appended interrogative formula (Hale, 2004/2010).

As shown in Table 2, there are two noteworthy question forms: one is the "I put it to you" declarative, and the other is the reported speech declarative in the data. In this study, on the one hand, the term "I put it to you" declarative is defined as a statement in questions prefaced by the "I put it to

you" clause. According to Hale (2004/2010), "I put it to you" is a legal formula commonly used by counsels in cross-examination to present a version of facts that contradicts what has been proposed by the witness being examined and to pre-empt what will be presented in his/her case by his/her own witnesses. By using this type of question, it is thus implied that the witness might not be truthful or tell the whole truth in front of the court. Therefore, the illocutionary force of this type of question is stronger as compared with other question types.

On the other hand, the term *reported speech declaratives* is described as an instance when the lawyer has to repeat a question and does so in reported or indirect speech (Hale 2004/2010). In linguistics, the term *reported speech* is a 'representation of an utterance as spoken by some other speaker, or by the current speaker at a speech moment other than the current speech moment' (Spronck and Nikitina 2019, p.122). In the data of this study, the high frequency of occurrences related to this type of question is more closely associated with the propositional content of the question than with the form of the question. As noted by Hale (2001), this type of question is deemed as a highly coercive type of question that manifested an explicit exhibition of power on the part of the lawyer, as the witness is reminded that s/he is only permitted to speak in response to specific questions and reprimanded for not answering relevantly.

The existing studies largely have concentrated on how questions are phrased in face-to-face interpreter-mediated courtroom interactions. Little has been explored about how courtroom questions are phrases and interpreted in remote settings. This study intends to investigate how questions are phrased in videoconferencing technology-enabled remote interpreting. Particularly, it focuses on the pattern of courtroom questions by identifying the prevalent type of question in the examination-in-chief and in the cross-examination.

3. The Study

The present study reports initial findings from a larger experimental research that assesses the accuracy of court interpreting in remote settings. The experiment was conducted with 50 certified interpreters remotely on the videoconferencing platform Zoom. The language combination was English and Mandarin. The script and video of a simulated trial used for the experiment was part of a more extensive mixed-method research study. The script and video materials in this project were used with permission from the chief investigators. The simulated trial featured a Chinese-speaking suspect who was accused of selling

drugs in a common law courtroom. The original questions were asked in English. Following the completion of questions and responses from the defendant, the cross-examination by the crown prosecutor took place. The participants interpreted original questions in English into Mandarin Chinese. The mode of interpreting (simultaneous v. consecutive) and the condition of interpreting (via an audio link v. via a video link) varied.

The audio recordings of courtroom examinations in English and their interpretations into Mandarin Chinese were initially transcribed using voice recognition software. The machine transcriptions were further checked by the researcher to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions.

4. The Data

The data reported in this article involved 4,615 questions, including 2,350 questions in English and 2,265 interpretations of these questions into Mandarin Chine. By type of courtroom examination, 1,250 English questions and 1,225 Mandarin Chinese interpretations were found in cross-examination questions; and 1,100 English and 1,034 Mandarin Chinese interpretations were found in examination-in-chief questions, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Questions in total

Questions	English in the original utterances	Mandarin in the interpretations
Examination-in-chief	1,250	1,225
Cross-examination	1,100	1,034
Total	2,350	2,265

The numbers in Table 5 indicate that original questions in English were omitted in the Mandarin Chinese interpretations during examination-in-chief and cross-examination. Therefore, it is deemed necessary for future court interpreters working in remote settings to understand how questions are phrased, particularly what is the most prevailing question type in examination-in-chief and cross-examination for better accuracy. With this aim in mind, the following sections are dedicated to discussing question types in English to inform future pedagogical practice.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Question Types in the Source Language

As discussed earlier, it is unveiled that the type of question was related to the type of examination. The distributions of question types in the examination-in-chief and the cross-examination with their occurrences are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Question types in the original speech

Type	Sub-category	Examina-tion-in-chief	Cross-examination
Interrogatives (1550)	Modal interrogatives	100	100
	Wh- interrogatives	750	250
	Forced choice interrogatives	0	0
	Polar interrogatives	300	50
Imperatives (50)	Imperatives with politeness markers	50	0
	Imperatives without politeness markers	0	0
Declaratives (700)	Positive or negative declaratives	0	0
	Reported speech declaratives	0	100
	Positive declaratives rising intonation	0	50
	Negative declaratives rising intonation	0	50
	Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag	50	50
	Positive declaratives with negative ratification tag	0	0
	Positive declaratives with positive tag	0	0
	Positive declaratives with negative tag	0	150
	Negative declaratives with positive tag	0	100
	"I put it to you" declarative	0	200
Total	2,350	1,250	1,100

In Table 6, among a total of 2,350 questions in English during examination-in-chief and cross-examination, the most prevailing question type is interrogatives, accounting for 1,550 (65.96%) , followed by declaratives amounting to 700 (29.79%) and imperatives, accounting for 50 (4.25%).

5.2 Question Types by Type of Examination

Among a total of 1,250 English questions asked in the examination-in-chief, the most prevalent question type, as shown in Table 7, is interrogatives, accounting for 60%, followed by declaratives (36%) and imperatives (4%). In the sub-category of interrogatives, the most prevailing question type is Wh-interrogative. In the sub-category of declaratives, the top three question types are polar interrogatives with 300 (66.67%), modal interrogatives with 100 (22.22%), and imperatives with politeness markers with 50 (11.11%). In the sub-category of interrogatives, the prevailing question type is the positive declarative with the positive ratification tag.

Table 7. The distribution of question types in the examination-in-chief by occurrence

Type	Sub-category	Examination-in-chief
Interrogatives (1150)	Wh- interrogatives	750
	Polar interrogatives	300
	Modal interrogatives	100
Imperatives (50)	Imperatives with politeness markers	50
Declaratives (50)	Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag	50
Total		1,250

In Table 8, among a total of 1,100 English questions asked in the cross-examination, the most prevalent question type is the declarative with 700 (56%), followed by the interrogative with 400 (44%). In the sub-category of declaratives, out of the 700 declaratives, the dominant question type is the "I put it to you" declaratives with 200 (28.57%), followed by positive declaratives with a negative tag reporting 150 (21.42%), reported speech declaratives with 150 (21.43%), negative declaratives with positive tags with 100 (14.29%), and equal numbers of declaratives such as positive declaratives rising intonation, negative declaratives rising intonation, and positive declaratives with positive ratification tag. In the sub-category of interrogatives, out of the 400 interrogatives, the top three question types are Wh-interrogatives with 250 (62.5%), modal interrogatives with 100 (25%), and polar interrogatives with 50 (12.5%).

Table 8. The distribution of question types in the cross-examination by occurrence

Type	Sub-category	Cross-examination
Interrogatives (400)	Wh- interrogatives	250
	Modal interrogatives	100
	Polar interrogatives	50
Declaratives (700)	"I put it to you" declaratives	200
	Reported speech declaratives	100
	Positive declaratives rising intonation	50
	Negative declaratives rising intonation	50
	Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag	50
	Positive declaratives with negative tag	150
	Negative declaratives with positive tag	100
	Total	1,150

5.3 Question Types by Order of Occurrence

The distribution of question types in the examination-in-chief and the cross-examination with their frequencies and percentages are shown in Table 9 by order of occurrence. The data have revealed two main findings: (1) the most commonly used type of question in both examination-in-chief and cross-examination is the Wh-interrogatives, as it presented the lawyer with more agency to maintain complete control of the evidence obtained from the witnesses, (2) question types differ according to the type of examination.

It is also unveiled that there is no one-to-one correspondence of question type in cross-examination and examination-in-chief. In the examination-in-chief, the predominant type of question is interrogative, whereas that in the cross-examination is declaratives, particularly the high frequency of the "I put it to you" declaratives employed by the crown prosecutor to impose more power and exert more control. In the cross-examination, some of the more aggressive or controlling types of questions are deemed insignificant by the interpreters, such as "I put it to you that" declaratives, reported speech declaratives, positive declaratives rising intonation, negative declaratives rising intonation, positive declaratives with positive ratification tag, positive declaratives with negative tag, and negative declaratives with positive tag.

Table 9. Question types in English by order of occurrence

Examination-in-chief questions	Cross-examination questions
1.Wh- Interrogative = 750 (60%)	1.Wh- interrogatives = 250 (21.74%)
2.Polar interrogatives = 300 (24%)	2."I put it to you" declarative = 200 (17.39%)
3.Modal interrogatives = 100 (8%)	3.Positive declaratives with negative tag = 150 (13.04%)
4.Imperatives with politeness markers = 50 (4%)	4.Modal interrogatives = 100 (8.70%)
	5.Reported speech declaratives = 100 (8.70%)
5.Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag =50 (4%)	6.Negative declaratives with positive tag = 100 (8.70%)
	7.Polar interrogatives = 50 (4.35%)
	8.Positive declaratives rising intonation = 50 (4.35%)
	9.Negative declaratives rising intonation = 50 (4.35%)
	10.Positive declaratives with positive ratification tag = 50 (4.35%)
Total = 1,250	Total = 1,150

On the one hand, declaratives with tags generally comprise a very small percentage (4%) of the questions in examination-in-chief, while these in the cross-examination amount to a more noticeable percentage of 26.09%. On the other hand, some of the types that appeared in high percentages in the examination-in-chief, either have lower occurrences in the cross-examination or are hardly featured at all. For example, polar interrogatives form 24% of examination-in-chief questions and only 4.35% of cross-examination questions.

5.4 Question Types and Pragmatic Considerations

According to the taxonomy of questions introduced at the beginning of this chapter, questions are grouped into two broad categories, Information Seeking Questions (ISQ) and Confirmation Seeking Questions (CSQ), and the difference between examination-in-chief and cross-examination became more apparent. As shown in Figure 1 below, the great majority of questions in the examination-in-chief (72%) is ISQ, seeking information rather than providing it, with only 28% being CSQ. By contrast, in the cross-examination, 63.64% are CSQ and 36.36%, ISQ (700 vs. 400). Although ISQ comprises the majority of questions in the examination-in-chief, CSQ is more apparent in the cross-examination.

The findings are consistent with Hale (2004/2010), as the prevailing rules of evidence in the common law courtroom that limited the use of leading questions in the examination-in-chief, but permitted their use in the cross-examination.
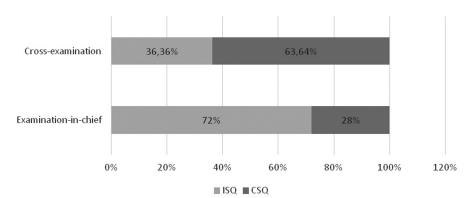
Figure 1. The distribution of information- and confirmation-seeking questions

The discussions above also indicate that different question types carried varying pragmatic functions. In terms of pragmatic functions, three major characteristics are found in the data: level of control, tone, and illocutionary point and force. The level of control describes the constraining effect a question could have on the respondents by limiting the choice of expected answers. The tone refers to the level of politeness associated with questions, as reflected by prosodic features in the data. The illocutionary point refers to the propositional content of a speech act, such as requests, commands, and suggestions. The illocutionary force portrays the strength of the utterance, depending on the lexical choice, the tenor of the situation, the power status of the speaker in relation to the hearer, and the availability of extralinguistic institutional resources for the utterances.

From the data, the questions used by the examination-in-chief were less coercive, with a friendlier tone to achieve the cooperation of the witness, as compared with a more antagonising tone and an aggressive force to confront the witness in the cross-examination.

6. Conclusion

The present study reports initial findings from a larger experiment research that assesses the accuracy of courtroom interpreting in remote settings. As a matter of access and equity, the accuracy of court interpreting in remote settings is of

paramount importance. In the adversarial courtroom, questions are not merely questions. They are often found to carry strategic functions to attain a favorable representation of facts for a more desirable outcome. However, regardless of such significance, question are frequently omitted or mistranslated by interpreters. Thus, it is considered necessary to understand how courtroom questions are phrases in remote settings in order to prepare future court interpreters who will work in remote settings with better accuracy while rendering different types of questions from English into Mandarin Chinese.

With regards to the importance of the strategic use of questions in courtroom, this article concentrates on the analysis of question types in English based on Hale (2004/2010)'s taxonomy. In particular, this study intends to address two questions: (1) what is the pattern of courtroom questions found in the English language during the remote interpreting? and (2) what is the prevalent type of question in the examination-in-chief and in the cross-examination respectively?

In response to the first question, our data have revealed that imperative, interrogative, and declarative are the most prevailing question types in English. In response to the second question, our data have indicated that (1) the interrogative question is a prevailing choice of question form in the examination-in-chief, as it invited an open statement that positioned the lawyer in control of the flow of the information; and (2) the declarative with or without tags is a preferred option in the cross-examination. From the currently available data, it seems to suggest that the pattern of questions in remote settings is the same as that in face-to-face settings.

Regarding the pragmatic function, it differs according to a wide range of factors, including the intention of the speaker, the level of control, the tone of voice, and the illocutionary point and force. In regards to the illocutionary force and the force, questions used in the cross-examination are generally more coercive, controlling and confrontational, as compared with less constraining or aggressive questions found in the examination-in-chief. From the data, it is found that questions initiated by the examiner-in-chief are sought to present a favourable and convincing version of facts from the interrogative side in a non-confrontational way that invites open narratives from the witnesses, whereas the questions used by the cross-examiner are aimed at challenging the evidence already provided by the witnesses and even discrediting the witnesses to weaken the case presented by the opposing side.

It has been thus argued that the choice of questions and the questioning strategy and techniques used at the disposal of counsels may have implications for the judicial outcomes in the adversarial courtrooms of common law coun-

tries, as oral evidence is primarily presented in the form of questions initiated by counsels to elicit desirable answers from the respondents in the courtrooms. Therefore, it is deemed important to raise the interpreters' awareness of the type of questions used in the courtroom for better accuracy in remote settings.

However, due to the limited scope of this article, this article only reports initial findings from original English question data. Follow-up research is required to further compare the original questions with their interpretations. Such research can be particularly helpful in the specialised training practice of court interpreters in remote settings with regard to the awareness of linguistic and cultural differences that may implicate the interpreters' efforts to attain pragmatic equivalents of courtroom questions. Moreover, with more available data in further analyses, more insights from data analyses will become available. For example, triangulated findings from questionnaire and interpreting performance data may add more interesting insights into the accuracy of interpretations of question types and other stylistic features embedded in courtroom questions and answers in remote settings (see other survey-based studies, Yi 2022).

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