(239)   yào   zuò   gōngkè   ou
        must   do   homework   FW

    "Listen, you'd better do your homework."

(240)   bié   shēngqì   ou
        don't   angry   FW

    "Say, don't get angry, OK!"

Another type of sentence that often can serve as a warning is the conditional sentence (see section 23.1.3 of chapter 23). Thus *ou* often occurs with conditionals. For example:

(241)   nǐ   bu   lái   tā   jiu   shāng   –   xīn   ou
        you   not   come   3sg   then   wound   –   heart   FW

    "Let me tell you, if you don't come, s/he'll be hurt."

(242)   rúguo   tā   qù   Měiguó   wǒ   jiu   mà   tā   ou
        if   3sg   go   America   I   then   scold   3sg   FW

    "Let me tell you, if s/he goes to America, I'll scold him/her."

(243)   nǐ   chī   duō   le   jiu   dùzi   téng   ou
        you   eat   much   CRS   then   abdomen   hurt   FW

    "Let me tell you, if you eat too much, you'll have a stomachache."

Because of the semantic nature of *ou*, it is commonly found in the speech of an adult addressing a child. Similarly, because of the implication of concern and care on the part of the speaker, *ou* will not occur in the speech of an adversary or in impersonal speech or writing. Thus, for instance, it is perfectly imaginable for a parent to warn a naughty child by saying:

(244)   wǒ   yào   dǎ   nǐ   ou
        I   will   hit   you   FW

    "Let me tell you, (if you do this,) I will hit you."

On the other hand, though, it would be unimaginable or comical for one fighter to say (244) to another in a boxing ring or in a gang fight, because in these types of situations there is a lack of care and concern.

7.5 *a/ya*

A/ya performs the function of reducing the forcefulness of the message conveyed by the sentence; it is glossed as 'Reduced Forcefulness', or *RF*. Thus when *a/ya* is placed after an A-not-A question or a question-word question, it has the semantic effect of softening the query, in much the same way that the English preambles 'excuse me', 'by the way', and 'to change the subject' do, as observed by Chao (1968:804). The following examples illustrate A-not-A questions and question-word questions with the particle *a/ya*:[7]

(245)   shéi   a/ya ?
        who   RF

    "Who is it?"

(246)   nǐ   qù   nǎr   a/ya ?
        you   go   where   RF

    "Where are you going?"

(247)   nǐ   xǐhuan   bu   xǐhuan   zhèi   –   ge   chēzi   a/ya ?
        you   like   not   like   this   –   CL   car   RF

    "Do you like this car?"

(248)   nǐ   xiǎng   bu   xiǎng   tā   a/ya ?
        you   think   not   think   3sg   RF

    "Do you miss her/him?"

When one contrasts the questions (245)–(248) and the same questions without the final particle *a/ya*, the first impression one has is that the questions with the particle are much softer and thus tend to suggest kindness on the part of the speaker. This effect, of course, is derived from the meaning of *a/ya*, which reduces the forcefulness of the message conveyed by the utterance.