

ASKING QUESTIONS

Zheng Shen

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**the materials presented here are translated and modified from Yimei Xiang's answer on zhihu.com*

**THE TALK IS OVER,
ANY QUESTIONS?**

SHOULD I ASK A QUESTION IN A CONFERENCE?

- Does my question **closely** related to the content of the talk?
 - If not, maybe wait a bit, not after the question period.
- Can my question be formulated and asked in a timely manner?
 - The question period of a conference talk is very short. You probably can't think as you ask. So formulate your questions first.

HOW **NOT** TO ASK A QUESTION?

- Being irrelevant and taking forever
 - Your jokes are not that funny.
 - Don't just express your love for the talk. It's awkward.
- Showing off
 - Don't do: "I have a book titled *Blahblah* published in 1989 based on my fieldwork in blahblah. In chapter 3 I mentioned..."
- Not being clear because it's not clear in your head.
- Mumble
 - ask your question clearly and with appropriate volume.
- Being too aggressive
 - use things like 'I was wondering if you could explain/elaborate on...'
 - if the answer is not to your satisfaction, say 'thank you, maybe we can talk later.' and move on

FOUR KINDS OF QUESTIONS

- Clarification question
 - asking the presenter to explain an argument again
 - e.g. *I might have missed this but how do you explain the simple/complex double genitive asymmetry in (2)?*
- Data question
 - telling/asking the presenter about a relevant/related phenomena
 - e.g. *even though names like Chomsky are not so good being used in possessive, names like Lasnik are perfect. I wonder if your account can extend to this.*

FOUR KINDS OF QUESTIONS

➤ Reasoning question

- pointing out the gaps in reasoning/logic of the argumentation, or that certain assumptions are redundant or unmotivated, or that the conclusion is too strong, or that the theory makes wrong predictions.
- e.g. *If you take Pesetsky 2013's system for case, then the double genitive facts do not have to rely on the presence of D in Serbian, which seems to be your major point.*

➤ Comment

- helping the presenter by pointing out phenomena that can be explained by their theory, pointing out additional theoretical implication.
- e.g. *I think your theory can also be applied to blahblah.*

WHAT MAKES A QUESTION A GOOD QUESTION?

- Clarification and Data questions are less helpful for the presenter. They can be asked when no one else wants to ask a question.
- Reasoning questions and comments are very helpful for the presenter.
- You can combine clarification/data questions with reasoning+comment.
 - e.g. *If I understood correctly, you account for ... by proposing ... and you can also account for... But wouldn't you also predict ...?*
 - e.g. *In some languages 1st and 2nd person possessive pronouns also behave differently and accounting for is is very difficult. But your analysis might be able to offer a more elegant solution.*