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## QUESTION TYPOLOGY IN KENYAN TV ARGUMENTATIVE TALK SHOWS

**Loice W. Mwai**

*Kenyatta University (Kenya)*

*wamaithaliz@gmail.com*

**Geoffrey M. Maroko**

*Machakos University (Kenya)*

*gmaroko@mksu.ac.ke*

**Daniel O. Orwenjo**

*Technical University of Kenya (Kenya)*

*orwenjo@gmail.com*

**Emily A. Ogutu**

*Kenyatta University (Kenya)*

*eatogutu@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** The argumentative talk on radio and TV has become a popular feature of media discourse in Kenya. Question-answer sequences as the talk unfolds through the joint participation of co-participants in the talk have emerged as a means to put argumentative talk into effect. Yet, the nature of questions and their categorization remain little understood. Given the recursive nature of question-answer sequences, this paper investigates question typology that sets apart argumentative talk shows from other types of talk. The data consists of transcripts from two Kenyan TV argumentative talk shows: *Checkpoint* on KTN and *Opinion Court* on Citizen TV. A question classification scheme by Schirm [2008] was used to discuss the incidence and usage of questions in argumentative talk shows. Findings revealed that clashing, rhetorical, classic clarifying, and opinion-eliciting questions were the most frequently used types in the data sets. It was also noted that different question types served unique rhetorical purposes leading to the conclusion that argumentative talk shows on TV exhibit recursive interactional resources qualifying it as a genre.

**Keywords:** media, question typology, genre, generic features, argumentative talk shows.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The argumentative talk show is emerging as an opinion-shaping genre in Kenyan political discourse. It usually involves a moderator and opposing teams with occasional recourse to the audience. One main rhetorical device the moderator employs to shape the dialogue in talk shows is the strategic use of questions. Schirm [2009] recognizes the importance of questions as a means of persuasion and the expression of poignancy. She further avers that questions in interactive texts have not only been used since the time of Aristotle but have also generated research interest over the years.

Questions can be defined formally (e.g., by syntactic, semantic or intonational criteria or combinations of all) or one can define them functionally (in pragmatic, speech act sense), by identifying what they accomplish in interaction. Question-answer exchanges are common examples of the basic unit of social interaction referred to as adjacency pairs [Sacks, 1992; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973]. The adjacency pair consists of two utterances made by different people in a fixed sequence such as one asking a question and the other one responding to it. In general, by asking a question the speaker positions himself/herself as lacking certain knowledge. This is referred to as the ‘K-’ position. Simultaneously, it implies that the addressee is knowledgeable, which is referred to as a ‘K+’ position. Questioning therefore brings into play an epistemic gradient between interlocutors, which then makes a response to the question relevant. The speaker then having received and accepted the answer, moves from a ‘K-’ position to a ‘K+’ position, which he/she should indicate with an acknowledging response [Jagtiani, 2013]. In the talk shows under study, hosts elicit information through a question-answer sequence on behalf of the wider audience; hence, the wider audience may be treated as the addressee lacking certain knowledge or information. The main objective of this paper is to therefore analyze the question typology that sets apart the argumentative talk show genre on Kenyan TV stations from other genres. It further discusses the function of each category of questions towards the achievement of the communicative goal of the given talk shows: *Opinion Court* on Citizen TV and *Checkpoint* on KTN.

Questions have been classified differently: on their formal or structural properties [Quirk, et al., 1985] as well as on their functions [Schirm, 2008], therefore different typologies exist. Quirk et al. [1985] classify questions into three major types on the basis of their form. The first type is the WH-questions, which invite a reply from an open range of options. They are often marked by the presence of an interrogative word (e.g. what, which, when, why, how) that specifies the element the answer is to be oriented to. For example, in the question ‘Why is the government against dialogue?’ The word ‘Why’ expects a response relating to reason rather than manner or place. Second are the Yes/No questions, which expect an answer that confirms or negates what the questioner asks. Third are alternative questions, also called choice questions that expect, as the reply, one of the options contained in the question itself. The Yes/No questions provided by Quirk et al. [1985] are further divided into subclasses. The first subclass involves inversion of the subject and the operator (e.g. ‘Does he go to school?’). Inverting the subject and the operator gives rise to the characteristic syntactic form of Yes/No questions in English. The second class involves adding rising intonation to declarative statements (e.g. ‘He goes to school?’). This question is marked in the sense that the speaker poses the question in anticipation of a confirmation [Strivers, 2010].

The third subclass is the tag questions (e.g. You go to school, don't you?/ You don't go to school, do you?). The tag question is appended to a statement. The yes/no questions have a different orientation that gives rise to negative Yes/No questions [Quirk et al., 1985; de Ruiter, 2012]. The negative questions are framed in a way that shows the bias of expectation to a given response. In the following contrast:

Are you taking exams?

Aren't you taking exams?

The first question is neutral with regard to speaker expectations, but the negative question signals that he or she is hoping for a positive answer but not really expecting one. For this reason, negative questions may be conducive, i.e., they may indicate that the speaker is predisposed to the kind of answer he wishes [Quirk et al., 1985]. Respondents then can either comply with or resist these constraints. According to Raymond [2003] and Strivers [2011], where Yes/No responses occur, such responses are called *type-conforming* since they are predominantly produced as answers to polar questions. Generally, the type conforming to Yes/No responses can stand alone or they can occur in turn-initial position with further components added, for example: 'Yes, we can dialogue.' Departures from such responses are done for certain interactional purposes and have different sequential consequences. On the other hand, *non-conforming* responses to a polar question occur when a respondent provides an explanation instead of responding with a Yes/No answer. These questions were evident in our data under negative debating questions. Heritage's [2002] study of news interviews records that interviewers' negative questions are posed "under the auspices of an ideology of 'neutrality'" [Heritage, 2002, p.1430], but in reality, they allow for the interviewer to project an expected answer.

Questions that occur in talk shows can be described using four parameters as advanced by Ilie [1994, 1999] and Schirm [2008]. These are the role and competency of the participant asking the question, as well as the standardness and the sequential place of the question itself. As far as the role of the person asking the question is concerned, questions in talk shows can be asked by either the moderator or a guest. Sequential place refers to the place of the question within the turn sequence it occurs in. A question is the result of competency if it is within the role of the person asking it, while it is not if it does not fit this role. A question is standard if it is asked because of a gap in the knowledge of the person asking it, and if this person expects an overt verbal answer; otherwise, it is nonstandard. The strength of this taxonomy is that it recognizes the differences between the two participants in the moderated talk shows, the characteristics of these roles, and the communicative functions of the question type in the conversation.

The discourse function of questions is "to seek information on a specific point" [Quirk et al., 1985, p. 804]. However, there are questions that do not seek information and there are statements that do [de Ruiter, 2012]. In this context, it needs to be mentioned that the syntactic form of questions cannot always be taken to indicate its pragmatic function. For example, there are formal statements like 'You are married' that request information and formal questions like 'Are you kidding?' that do not. Hence, it is questionable to call all utterances 'questions' in the interrogative mood sense of asking something. In an almost similar vein, Strivers [2011] notes that there are several ways (syntactically, lexically, intonationally and by content) to indicate that an utterance is a question. Pragmatic functions of questions can also be identified, by establishing what they accomplish in interaction. It therefore follows that in order to be sure of what counts as a question and what its pragmatic functions are, all available information needs to be taken into account. It is this view of questions that this study adopted so that assigning the question type was dependent on

their form, content as well as their communicative function in their context of use. This dimension was partly justified by Kuhlen's [2012] argument that the type of question used in broadcast talk depends on the local interaction and the nature of the communicative activity.

Schirm [2009] presents a typology of questions that may be used to shape the rhetorical structure of talk shows while Swales [1990; 2004] argues that such typicality of language use defines a genre. In the Kenyan talk show context, therefore, what are the features of the various kinds of question types? What roles do these questions serve in the argumentative talk shows? Focusing on three participant roles, namely the talk show hosts, the panellists and the wider audience, this paper discusses the question types that characterize the Kenyan argumentative talk shows and their attendant pragmatic roles in a bid to delineate the generic features of talk shows.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1. Corpus

The corpus was made up of transcripts of two Kenyan TV talk shows presented in the year 2014. These are *Opinion Court* on Citizen TV and *Checkpoint* on KTN. Two broadcasts of each of the programmes were recorded. *Opinion Court* is normally presented on Thursdays from 9:40 p.m. and runs for about 45 minutes, while *Checkpoint* is presented on Sundays and runs for 60 minutes. This means that a total of 4 broadcasts were recorded, resulting in 210 minutes of conversational data sets. The recordings constituted the linguistic data that was analyzed to describe the question typology in the Kenyan TV argumentative talk shows.

### 2.2. Methodology

To capture the four interactional episodes in the TV programmes, one of us used a digital audio recorder to record and upload talk shows onto a computer for storage. This would also allow for repeated replays during transcription of the data. Transcription of each of the talk shows recorded was done using standard orthography transcription combined with notational conventions that follow the model developed by Jefferson [1974]. This Conversational Analysis model captures the verbal and prosodic details of speech, such as in-breaths, cut-offs, simultaneous speech, and pauses, insofar as they became analytically relevant. The researcher then shared the transcriptions with the three of us in a consultative meeting meant to both listen to the recordings and assess the accuracy of the transcriptions. This exercise allowed us to raise and resolve any minor transcription errors.

The next line of engagement was on how we would code the question typologies in the two data sets. We agreed to adopt and adapt a typology by Schirm [2008] which broadly classifies questions into dispute-directing, argumentative and clarifying ones. Under each broad class, there are other subclasses. We summarized these dimensions in Table 1:

**Table 1. Question Types on the Basis of Role, Competency, Standardness, and Sequential Place**

Class/Question Type	Role	Competency	Standardness	Sequential place
<b>1. Dispute directing questions</b>				
a) Dispute starting	Host	+	Not standard	T1(at the start of dispute)
b) Clashing questions	Host	+	Not standard	T2

c) Topic changing	Host /guest	+ /-	Standard/not standard	T1
<b>2. Argumentative questions</b>				
a) Negative debating question	Host/ guest	+/-	Non-standard	T1, T2
b) Attacking echo	Host	+	Not standard	T3
c) Attack back	Host/guest	+	Not standard	T3
d) Rhetorical questions	Host/guest	+	Not standard	Anywhere
<b>3. Clarifying questions</b>				
a) Classic clarifying	Host/guest	+/-	Standard	T3
b) Opinion eliciting	Host	+	Standard	T1
c) Examination	Host/guest	+/-	Standard	T1
d) Permission eliciting	Host/Guest	+	Standard	Pre-T1

Adapted from Anita Schirm [2008].

Notes:

- The plus (+) sign indicates competency, i.e. it is within the role of the participant asking it.
- The minus (-) sign indicates that it is not within the role of the speaker asking.

For example, in the opinion eliciting question, Host (+) means that the question is the result of competency because it is within the role of the host to raise it. Secondly, Topic changing question, Guest (-) means that the question is a result of lack of competency because the person asking it, in this case, the guest, does not fit the role of asking questions. For Standardness, a question is standard if it is asked because of a gap in the knowledge of the person asking it, and if the person expects an overt verbal answer. For example, *When does the government plan to provide laptops to primary school children?*

T1- the question occurs within the first turn of a question-answer sequence

T2- the question occurs at turn two of the sequence

Pre-T1 - turn-question occurring before the sequence

For example:

T1H: *I want to start with you Prof..... did Saba Saba live up to your expectations? Did CORD deliver what you think they had set out to?*

T2P1: *Yes and no. And ah in the point of yes, they re-emphasized the point that there are problems in this country that require urgent attention...*

The dispute-starting question at turn 1 (T1) above occurs at the first turn of the Question-Answer sequence. The response occurs at turn 2 (T2).

List of abbreviations:

T: Represents speaking turn so that T1 is the first speaking turn in the sequence.

P: Panelist

H: Talk show host

CA: Conversational Analysis

CORD: Coalition of Reforms and Democracy

IGP: Inspector General of Police

KANU:	Kenya African National Union
ODM:	Orange Democratic Movement
Q-A:	Question – Answer
Q-A-A:	Question- Answer- Answer
TNA:	The National Alliance
URP:	United Republican Party

The features of interest; that is, question types in the examples given are put in *italics* font.

After agreeing on the question types to look out for from the transcripts, each of us conducted independent identification and determination of incidence for each category of questions in the two data sets. Each of us summarized the analysis in a frequency table and listed examples of each question type per data set on a separate sheet of paper.

Before reporting our findings, we reconvened to check our individual analyses for inter-rater reliability. We were guided by an approach developed by Fleiss [1971] to establish the Kappa co-efficient using the following formula:

$$K = \frac{P(A) - P(E)}{1 - P(E)}$$

Where P (A) was the proportion of the times that we agreed and P(E) was the proportion of the times that we would agree by chance. Perhaps because of the fewer categories of questions involved and the number of talk shows involved in the study, our kappa coefficient was 0.95 which according to Landis and Koch [1977] is rated as “almost perfect agreement.” This gave us the confidence to conflate our individual analyses into one.

Since this study sought to describe the distribution and pragmatic use of different kinds of questions according to Schirm [2008; 2009], the mixed method design procedure by Creswell & Plano Clark [2011] was adopted. Data were analysed in an explanatory sequential format which entailed first determining the incidence of question types in the study corpus followed by qualitative analysis of contextual use. The description of the question types was also supported by the work of Raymond [2003] and Strivers [2011]. As Wangari & Maroko [2023] explain, the mixed method approach is explanatory because the outcome of the quantitative analysis forms the basis for qualitative explanation while it is sequential since the initial quantitative stage is followed by the qualitative phase.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Incidence for question types

Regarding question types and number of occurrences in the two data sets, the summary in Table 2 was generated.

**Table 2. Incidence for Question Typologies**

	Citizen TV	KTN	
Question type	No. of occurrence	No. of occurrence	Percentage (%)
<b>Dispute directing</b>			
(a) Dispute starting	4	2	5.1
(b) Clashing questions	8	7	12.7



(c) Topic changing	3	1	
<b>Argumentative questions</b>			
(a) Negative selecting	3	2	5.1
(b) Attacking echo	6	7	11.0
(c) Attack back	4	3	5.9
(d) Rhetorical questions	7	8	12.7
<b>Clarifying questions</b>			
(a) Classic clarifying	11	11	18.6
(b) Opinion eliciting	9	9	15.3
(c) Examination	3	2	5.1
(d) Permission eliciting	5	3	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

N=118

It is notable from Table 2 that in most of the cases, there was near parity in the number of occurrences of a question type across the TV station programmes. This was particularly the case among clashing questions, negative selecting, attacking echo, attack back, rhetorical questions, classifying questions and examination questions. Across the TV stations, clashing questions, attacking echo, rhetorical questions, classic clarifying and opinion eliciting appeared the most popular types with a combined incidence of 70.3%.

Clashing questions were often picked by the hosts from the two conflicting sides of the debate as they strove to be objective in sustaining the talk. Objectivity is an umbrella concept that encompasses a range of journalistic values including factual accuracy, balance between opposing views, and neutrality in presentation [Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Clayman et al., 2020]. So in such cases, the host is expected to uphold diverse and often conflicting aspects of objectivity simultaneously.

The significant number of attacking echo questions were mainly used by the hosts to aggressively challenge the stance of the panelists in order to elicit credible and valid information from them, and also make them accountable for the information they give. This way of expressing accountability in the talk exemplifies a claim that “the interactional accountability of answering questions is the fundamental basis for the public accountability of public figures” [Clayman cited in Montgomery, 2007, p.211]. On the other hand, rhetorical questions confer a higher argumentative value on the question, which normally exhibits a strong argumentative force because they are known to imply the speaker’s firm commitment to their implied answer.

Classic clarifying questions recorded high occurrences as hosts challenged the panelists to give credible facts to support their opinions, and/or to clarify some facts. Similarly, the high frequency of opinion-eliciting questions identifies it as a source of interactional order. The host strives to get the opinions of all the panellists present with the motivation to sustain an objective talk. One would therefore expect that the opinion-eliciting questions would be more objective.

### 3.2. Qualitative analysis of the question types

In this section, we illustrate the question types according to Schirm [2008] giving an example from either of the TV stations. The discussion focuses on both the form and the function of the questions.

#### 3.2.1. Dispute-Directing Questions

Dispute-directing questions are specific questions whose institutional function is to direct a dispute or an argument. In institutional talk shows, the role of the moderator is to initiate the conversation and to elicit the opposing views of the guests as well as to monitor that the dispute does not run too heated. In accordance with the role of directing, a moderator's dispute-directing questions, which enjoy competency, include dispute-starting questions, clashing questions, and topic-changing questions. These questions are illustrated as follows: (a) Dispute Starting Questions, (b) Clashing Questions and (c) Topic Changing Questions.

##### 3.2.1.a. Dispute-Starting Questions

These are questions that are typically generated by the host/moderator after introducing the topic and the guests in the opening segment. They thus enjoy competency and typically occur at the beginning of a turn sequence. The following are examples of dispute-directing questions from some of the programmes recorded:

#### Example 1 KTN

T1H: *Members of CORD are saying this has been misinterpreted ...Prof A I want to give you a chance and I want you to respond to that... What exactly does national dialogue mean? What will be the terms for that?*

T2P1: *Well I am glad that it is in the media so that it is not misunderstood. But you know we have some very urgent issues that are of national importance. The issue of security is not an issue we can only leave to the government. It is a national issue requiring the participation of everybody...*

In Example 1, the topic of discussion is the national dialogue that the opposition party CORD is trying to push for. However, the government is alleged to be opposed to the idea of holding the dialogue. The talk show host points out that the opposition members claim to have been misinterpreted. This already displays a contentious issue. She therefore directs the first question to one of the participants, a political analyst, to kick off the argument, "*Prof \_\_ I want to give you a chance and I want you to respond to that.... What exactly does national dialogue mean? What will be the terms for that?*" This is a WH-question marked by the presence of the interrogative word 'what', and it places no restrictions on P1 on the expected response [Quirk et al., 1985]. At turn 2, the participant responds by supporting the need for national dialogue to address issues that are of national importance, and cannot just be left to the government, "*But you know we have some very urgent issues that are of national importance. The issue of security is not an issue we can only leave to the government...*" It is expected, as we shall see in the next section that the host will direct the next question to another participant for a different view on the topic.



### 3.2.1.b. Clashing Questions

These questions, normally directed at another guest, are used to elicit the opposing views of the panellists. That is, typically, the main function of the clashing question is to change the speaker and to assist in developing the conflict. The host can initiate disagreements on a preceding utterance soon after the first dispute-starting question. This early disagreement among the panelists sets the stage for the argumentative talk that ensues as illustrated in the example below:

#### Example 2 KTN

T1H: *Alright, and we shall come back to you. Eeh... that deadline that has been given by CORD that is by July 7<sup>th</sup> ... Senator K, why is Jubilee against the idea of national dialogue... is it the idea that Jubilee has the solution to all problems to get any ideas from the others in the country?*

T2P2: *Thank you ... the said dialogue everybody who has spoken from the president... to myself today in Tharaka Nithi and many other leaders including ... we have said... one, we have been encouraging dialogue and some of the issues that CORD is saying, we believe there are other issues including the issue of the wage bill... So the idea of a dialogue is not a new thing. What is new to us are ultimatums, threats and incitement of the public in the face of young men in the stadia, to excite them and cheat them...*

In Example 1 in the previous section, the host introduced the issue under discussion; that is, the national dialogue that members of the opposition were pushing for at a rally. In the first dispute-directing question, the host asked one of the panelists P1, from the opposition CORD, what his view on the national dialogue was, and what the terms for the national dialogue would be. He responded that the national dialogue would address urgent matters of national importance, for example, insecurity.

In Example 2, therefore, in an attempt to elicit a different view on this, the host poses the next question to the next panellist, a senator from the government side to comment on the view that the government is opposed to the dialogue: “*Senator K, why is Jubilee against the idea of national dialogue?*” This is a WH-question that requires the senator to give reasons as to why the government is not keen on holding the national dialogue. At the same turn 1, the host uses another question that would be considered restrictive: “*Is it the idea that Jubilee has the solution to all problems to get any ideas from the others in the country?*” This is a focused Yes/No question in which a proposition may be thought to be true in general, but some uncertain elements in the proposition are queried in a focused way [Givon, 1993]. Thus, the host is questioning the perception that the Jubilee government holds the solution to all the problems in the country. The probable response to such a focused question would be “Yes, it is” or “No, it is not”. Therefore, in this example, the host makes use of a WH-question and a Yes/No question to bring in conflicting arguments.

Accordingly, the senator in his response asserts his disagreement at turn 2, and says the government is not against the dialogue, what they are against are the ultimatums given by the opposition. This is in the statement “*...we have been encouraging dialogue..... What is new to us are ultimatums, threats and incitement of the public in the face of young men in the stadia, to excite them and cheat them...*”. We therefore observe the contrast between P1 and P2 responses which is generated by the clashing question posed by the host. The host is meant to cross-examine the politician in as much as his party is responsible for the position on the national dialogue. Disagreement is normally a response to a previous clashing question. The next panellist takes a negative

orientation to the propositional content of the previous speaker's utterance. Through the clashing question, the host obtains more information regarding national dialogue, which is a matter of controversy that takes up the rest of the talk. It is this conflict of opinion that advances the argument as domains of consensus and controversy are established and maintained in the unfolding discourse. Next, we focus on the third type of dispute-directing questions.

### 3.2.1.c. Topic-Changing Questions

This type of question either introduces an entirely new topic or singles out a point mentioned earlier and asks a question about it. The topic-changing questions always open a new turn sequence, as in the following examples. In our corpus, this question was used by the talk show host as illustrated below:

#### Example 3 KTN

T1H: *Senator, Senator let's talk about the challenges that the Jubilee Government has faced over the last one year and as we conclude, how you are going to sort that out. There are a lot of Kenyans who are unsafe today.... Going to the market, being in a matatu, being in a shopping mall, no matter where they are..... there is a real threat of insecurity we have seen rising since Jubilee won power, something we have not seen in the previous regime...Tell us what challenges you are facing and how you are planning to tackle them so that one year from now we will have a different discussion.*

T2P2: *Thank you. The issue of insecurity is very worrying. ...One area that must improve is the security sector especially with regard to the effort that our men and women in uniform make toward national emergency and terrorist attacks...*

Example 3 is drawn from a discussion on the topic of Jubilee and CORD talk ultimatums. The talk earlier progressed as participants from both sides (the government and the opposition) disputed the need for a national dialogue. Towards the end of the programme, as marked by the words "*as we conclude*", the host brings in a new though closely related topic on the challenges the Jubilee government has faced since they took power. "*Tell us what challenges you are facing and how you are planning to tackle them so that one year from now we will have a different discussion*". Here, the host uses two successive questions in the same utterance. The question "*what challenges...*" requires P2 to provide information on the specific challenges the Jubilee government is facing, while the next question "*how are you planning to tackle them...*", demands an explanation of the manner or the strategies the government will use to address the challenges. Note that she poses the question at the beginning of her turn and repeats it at the end of the turn, probably to control the nature of the contribution from the panellists. The panellist sticks to the topic by saying that the police need to improve their response towards emergency and terrorist attacks. The topic-changing question creates a link between what has been discussed before, i.e. the national dialogue, and what comes next in the show, i.e. the challenges being faced by the Jubilee government.

It is interesting to note that in this kind of discourse, the topic is not as rigid as is the case in the courtroom, news interview and classroom discourse. The talk exhibits some features of ordinary conversation where topics emerge freely and in a variety of ways, and a speaker can initiate a new turn of departure which gives the talk a quasi-conversational character [Hutchby, 2019]. This gives the argumentative talk shows a dual nature: institutional and semi-institutional as noted also by Ilie [2015]. In the section that follows, we present the second category of questions: the argumentative questions.

### 3.2.2. *Argumentative Questions*

This is the second broad class of questions that characterize argumentative talk shows. They explicitly or implicitly question the standpoint of the other participants and express opposition to their statement, thus maintaining the argument. In our corpus, we identified four different kinds of argumentative questions: These questions are presented as follows: (a) Negative Debating Questions, (b) Attacking Echo Questions, (c) Attack Back Questions, and (d) Rhetorical Questions.

#### 3.2.2.a. *The Negative Debating Questions*

This type of question includes structurally interrogative questions with a negative particle. Dispute participants do not regard negative questions as questions asking for clarification but, instead, as expressions of possible standpoints or criticisms of a third party [Heritage, 2002]. They may take both contracted and uncontracted forms, for instance: “*Couldn’t it be/ Could it not be...*”, “*Can’t we/ Can we not....*”, “*Aren’t we/ Are we not...*”. In our data these questions appeared in the contracted form, achieved various functions, and were asked by either the host or the panellists as shown in Example 4:

#### Example 4 Citizen TV

T1P3: *And URP must be able to understand that the President has all powers as put in the Constitution... It is really time that the URP expectations were that \_\_\_\_ and when I talk of URP, it is actually Kalenjins land. If you look at the Kalenjins, all of them actually are in URP, including .....*

T2P2: *Don’t we have people in KANU?*

In Example 4, the topic is the wrangles in the Jubilee coalition over the sharing of power between the two parties that make up the Jubilee coalition: TNA and URP. P3, a member of the Opposition at turn 1 points out that the URP that produced the Deputy President should understand that the President, who is a member of TNA, has all the powers under the Constitution. He further alleges that all Kalenjins are members of URP. However, in a negative debating question “*Don’t we have people in KANU?*” P2 dismisses this claim. If anything, it is a fact that there are some Kalenjins who are indeed members of KANU. The question therefore counters or challenges P3’s stated position that all Kalenjins are in URP.

The negative debating questions identified in the corpus of this study were packaged as rhetorical questions that sought to enhance the argument in the confrontational sequences in which they occur. For instance, the question “*Don’t we have people in KANU?*” is more of a challenge or a dispute to the previous utterance that all Kalenjins are in URP. The challenges advanced by the negative interrogatives are unanswerable in the example given. Koshik [2002] classifies these types of questions as rhetorical.

#### 3.2.2.b. *The Attacking Echo Questions*

The second member of the argumentative category of questions is the one which repeats fully or partly an utterance that occurred earlier in the conversation. This repetition is also augmented with arguments expressing opposition, thus, questioning the truth value of the original statement. These questions draw on resources from a previous answer to provide for their relevance and credibility [Clayman & Heritage, 2002]. They were used mostly by the hosts to undermine the validity of an earlier claim. The following examples illustrate this:

### Example 5 Citizen TV

T1H: *CORD talked about security. Is security a problem in this country?*

T2P3: *It is, but when O is saying the success of the rally was to remind Kenyans about the problem they are facing....*

T3H: *Mmh*

T4P3: *You don't have to remind any Kenyan. We are facing serious challenges as a country. There are problems, we know it. But what are your solutions? Have you ever heard any one alternative policy that CORD in the past through their shadow cabinet minister in different dockets? What's CORD's plan on security? We have plans and implementing them. It is taking time yes, there are challenges we admit. We would want to see what alternative they have. But in due time, and as soon as it is possible, most of the things will be sorted out.*

Earlier in the talk, on the discussion on “politics post *Saba saba*” a panellist from the CORD had pointed out issues that they had sought to address in the rally, insecurity being one of them. In Example 5, we see the host repeat the issue of insecurity in the statement “*CORD talked about security*”. On the basis of this response, the host poses the next question to a senator from the government, “*Is security a problem in this country?*”. So the first statement echoes an earlier statement which is followed up by the question that seeks to get the view of the senator on the matter. This is a Yes/No question with a subject-operator inversion and it enjoys competency as it is posed by the talk show host. Accordingly, the question receives a conforming response in which the Senator (P2) admits that there are many challenges the Country is facing but challenges the opposition to come up with strategies to address the problems in the question “*What's CORD's plan on security?*” (Turn 4). He responds to the attack by presenting the Government's position that “*as soon as it is possible, most of the things will be sorted out*”. The attacking echo question is seen to also generate and advance an argument.

It can be observed from our analysis that panellists may present an opinion, that the host may challenge. After that point, the organization of the talk situates them in a defensive position vis-à-vis the host. The echo questions in this data may stand as accusatory questions in that once posed, they prompt the panellists to defend themselves or subsequently clarify the issue under attack. The next section focuses on the third type of argumentative questions.

#### 3.2.2.c. The Attack Back Questions

Unlike the Attacking Echo Questions, Attack Back Questions make no direct reference to the previous view in the course of attacking it, but they formulate another question instead of providing an answer. This means that in certain circumstances, the question-answer adjacency pair as a basic unit of social interaction may not hold true. Typically, the Attack Back Questions always immediately follow the previous question. Ilie [2001] observed that the authority of the show host is not absolute; the show guests themselves may also initiate a turn without necessarily being prompted. Thus, this question is typically posed by a guest, thus enjoys competency, and it is non-standard. Attack Back Questions featured in the corpus of this study occurred mainly when the panellists addressed each other directly without the allocation by the host. Consider Example 6 below:



**Example 6 Citizen TV**

T1H: *Please keep it brief prof. Why these wrangles or conflicts?*

T2P1: *Yes. I will keep it brief. I want to give free advice to my friend Senator M.... those who do not respect history will never respect the present or the future and you are one of them in your coalition. If you look at the history of this country from 1963 to now. Look at my script by Machiavelli, those who help you to power must be done away with. Look at Jaramogi and Jomo Kenyatta, what he said that Kenyatta should rule, but what about the quarrel between Jaramogi Odinga and Tom Mboya and what it did to the people? Then you come to Daniel Arap Moi and vice president Kibaki, vice president eh Karanja. What happened? They start to have conflicts. What happened? He did away with them. And he did away with them because of causes related to power. Kibaki and Raila Odinga. They agreed they would share government and finally, you saw Kibaki say where did I talk about this? I am the president.*

T3H: *Now...*

T4P3: *How can you prove that you are an exception?*

T5P1: *You cannot, you cannot argue from the past, we must show the facts and...and address the present....*

In Example 6, we observe a scenario where the host at Turn 1 nominates P1, a political analyst to explain why there is conflict in the Jubilee coalition: *“Please keep it brief prof. Why these wrangles or conflicts?”* This is a WH-question that demands that P1 provides reasons for the wrangles in the Jubilee coalition. It invites a narrative response with little degree of restriction as observed at Turn 2; he gives an elaborate background on previous squabbles between political leaders. He enumerates a list of previous political leaders who rose to power and then did away with those who had helped them get to those positions. These he feels relate well to the collisions in Jubilee. He cites the conflict between the first president Jomo Kenyatta and Jaramogi, who helped him ascend to power. Then Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga’s agreement to share power which was never honoured; *“Look at my script by Macchiavelli, those who help you to power must be done away with. Look at Jaramogi and Jomo Kenyatta, what he said that Kenyatta should rule...”* He therefore connects these past experiences with the current coalition between URP and TNA whereby power should be shared equally, but this has not been the case. He therefore makes reference to Machiavelli’s “Principle” which states that those who help you to rise to power should be done away with in order to remain in power. In turn 2, the host attempts to come in probably to direct the next question to another panellist. She uses the discourse marker *“now”* to indicate her intention to take over the floor. However, before she could go on, P3, a panellist from the CORD coalition asks the WH-question *“How can you prove you are an exception?”* which is directed to a senator from the Jubilee coalition. This question casts doubt on the willingness of the president, who is a member of TNA, to share power equally with URP, the other party in the Jubilee coalition. This question therefore occurs as P3 addresses another guest P2 directly without the allocation of the host. At turn 5, the co-panellist, in response to the question dismisses the P1 allegation by stating that *“you cannot, you cannot argue from the past, we must show the facts and...and address the present...”*. Here, a departure in the Q-A roles is observed. P3 rather than waiting for the host to allocate the next turn initiates a question-answer sequence himself addressed to a co-panelist. This practice is more common in ordinary conversation [Schegloff, 2007].

In using the Attack Back Questions the panellists as we can observe would abandon their role to provide answers or responses, adopt a questioning role to attack a co-panellist with a question, and sometimes take over the role of the host, a convention not common with institutional discourse. However, the hosts normally resist such attempts by cutting in to assert their role, and they are able to forestall such future attempts. Clayman [2010] observes that such attacks demonstrate a departure from the Q-A turn-taking system, but we observe that the hosts take up their institutionally mandated role to restore order. This demonstrates how power relations between the talk show hosts and the panellists play out. The last category of questions under the argumentative questions is the rhetorical questions.

### 3.2.2.d. Rhetorical Questions

In this type of argumentative questions, the person asking a question does not expect an immediate answer but uses it as a means of creating effect [Ilie 1999; Gruber 2001]. In this study data, the rhetorical questions occurred mostly in the hosts' and the panellists' argumentative monologue as illustrated below:

#### Example 7 Citizen TV

T1P1: *Just a little response to what Mheshimiwa is saying, these issues have been acknowledged they are very important issues, but A, if you look at these issues, look at the messages... issues of corruption, some of these messengers have been in position in government where they could have sorted out issues of corruption in their own dockets. In the land, in medical services, what have they done?*

T2H: *You are referring to Prof \_\_\_?*

T3P1: *Yes, yes, because Prof A was in medical services at one time, through his declaration nurses were sacked. How do you create jobs by sacking nurses? It's probably they have forgotten that. Secondly, they have people in immigration. \_\_\_ was in immigration. How much did he work? Tangible evidence that he did something to change the level of corruption in immigration? So, I could go on and go on. So the message they are putting forth is correct. But what most Kenyans are not comfortable about is... the messengers...*

P1, a political analyst, presents his reservations about the members of CORD calling for a rally to discuss challenges like security and corruption in the country. At turn 1, he points out to the host that some of the politicians in the opposition were in the previous government but they didn't seem to have delivered much. In the utterance "*In the land, in medical services, what have they done?*" the question "*what have they done?*", which is a WH-question, comes out as rhetorical as the host to whom it is directed does not give a response; instead she asks the panellist if he is referring to Prof \_\_\_ at turn 2. "*You are referring to Prof \_\_\_*" is a question in the form of a statement. In turn 3, P1 indeed confirms so in the statement that begins "*Yes, yes, because Prof \_\_\_ was in medical services at one time; through his declaration nurses were sacked*". This response creates a link between the question and the rhetorical questions that follow. "*How much did he work?*" is another WH-question followed by another question in the form of a statement: "*tangible evidence that he did something to change the level of corruption in immigration?*" By use of these rhetorical questions, P1 appears to convey a strong personal commitment that these members of the opposition have no ground to actually pass the message of incompetence in the current government.



The rhetorical questions enjoy competency in that the panellists in the talk shows have a chance to ask the questions. They are also nonstandard since they are not a result of a knowledge gap in the area. The rhetorical questions are used argumentatively in the talk shows. When asked by the show host, certain rhetorical questions acquire an institutional function of controlling and/or evaluating the ongoing talk [Ilie, 1998, pp. 133-134]. In all the examples above, it can be noted that neither the hosts nor the panellists attempt to answer the rhetorical questions. This provides further evidence that these questions are meant to prompt an argumentative discussion [Ilie, 1999]. Their strength is reinforced by the fact that they are message-oriented, audience-oriented and interlocutor-oriented at the same time. In the section that follows, we address the last category of questions.

### 3.2.3 Clarifying Questions

These are standard questions that elicit missing information, and they fall into three types in our data as illustrated in this section in four subsections: (a) Classic Clarifying Questions, (b) Opinion Eliciting Questions, (c) Examination Questions, and (d) Permission Eliciting Questions.

#### 3.2.3.a. Classic Clarifying Questions

This type of question aims to elicit information in pursuit of credibility. They do not start or contain an opinion and usually occur in the first turn of a secondary sequence adjacency pair. The questions are directed at absolute fact with the forms “*Why so...?*”, and “*Who is...?*” These questions mostly occur during highly probing and adversarial lines of questioning [Ilie, 1999]. Let us now present these questions as they are featured in this study data.

#### Example 8 KTN

T1H: *Okay, A. while we are still talking about the police, let's talk about how much we are investing in the police service and whether they are equipped enough for these times of terror...*

T2P1: *Yeah I think, the Kenya police service act has never been enacted. We went into the election in 2013 without a unified police force... so there was Operation Linda Nchi in which 400-450 officers have been killed by the Al Shabaab....*

T3H: *450 police officers killed in the line of duty since the operation Linda took off. So M, you are the police spokesman. One of the effort in terms of security is?*

T4P1: *Thank you very much.... since the IGP came into office he has made a strong urge that there is order in the police service. One, through ensuring there is.....*

T5H: *Such as?*

T6P1: *Equipment... motor vehicle to enable us the officers to survey the border in a way that they are able to identify any elements coming but also the number because on its own will not be enough...*

T7H: *So... So?*

T8P1: *So, we are working on the number and you have seen the effort of the government to increase the number of officers. We are also working on the mobility...*

In Example 8, the host seeks to find out what measures the government is taking to curb terror in the Country. She is particular about the police equipment, and at turn 1 therefore, she asks the police spokesperson to clarify that. The phrase “*let's talk about how much we are investing in the police service and whether they are equipped enough*” is a question in the statement form that

comprises a requisition with an embedded WH-word “how”. In turn 2, P1, a police spokesman, points out that 450 officers have been killed. This response forms the basis for the next question by the host at turn 3, who still seeks to find out credible facts on what the government is doing in a “so” prefaced statement-form question “*so one of the efforts in terms of security is?*” In turn 4, the host probes further, and directs the next question to P1 to clarify on what order the IGP has brought to the police service, in the question “*Such as?*” It, therefore, seems that her questions are conditioned by pursuit of tangible facts. This demand for credibility is further pursued in line 7 through the use of the non-sentence question “*So... So?*”

In turns 6 and 8, P1 in his response talks of the motor vehicles which have seen an increase in the number, to enable the officers to survey the borders: “*Equipment..... motor vehicle to enable us, the officers, to survey the border...*”. He also says that the government has increased the number of police officers: “*You have seen the effort of the government to increase the number of the officers ...*”. Turn 8 provides information / firsthand knowledge of the matter in question. P1 and P4 have therefore enhanced the credibility of the message they are conveying by providing facts that consolidate the responses. The effort to accentuate P1’s authoritativeness is perhaps most apparent when the host refers to him by the title “police spokesman”, which forms the basis of that knowledge. Our observation thus adapts to Martinez’s [2000] argument that the police spokesman is influenced by his professional position, and consequently his obligation for accountability to make truth the centrepiece of his response and that of the encounter at large. We now shift to another example drawn from Citizen TV, where the host makes explicit the need for clarity.

### Example 9 Citizen TV

T1H: *Alright. For purposes of clarity. The issue of \_\_\_\_?*

T2P3: *The issue of \_\_\_\_ coming in. One thing I want to say is when you read the constitution, it is very clear that you can only bring the issue of impeachment when there is a serious violation of the constitution. My friend eh \_\_\_\_ has given eh.... We have not seen what \_\_\_\_ has done wrong. If it is the issue of transferring \_\_\_, he is a public servant and he can be transferred like any other person. So to me, the issue of \_\_\_\_ coming for impeachment it does not hold water at all.*

In Example 9, the host seeks clarification from P3, a senator, on the issue of the impeachment of the then-devolution cabinet secretary \_\_\_\_\_. The impeachment has been a subject of debate. It is obvious that the question is meant to clarify the terms for impeachment as the host uses the statement “*for purposes of clarity...*”. This preface is followed by a statement-form question, “*The issue of \_\_\_\_?*” P3 explains, citing the constitution, that one is only impeached if he or she has seriously violated the constitution, and therefore, an act like transferring a civil servant is far from such violation. Thus, the person in question should not be a victim of impeachment.

Note that in Example 8 the host does not leave the floor open to any panellist to respond to the classic clarifying questions, she rather selects one based on their credentials normally presented in the opening segment. Consider the statement “*So M, you are the police spokesman ...*” M is expected to present the security measures that the government is putting in place. This sequentially obligates a response from the selected speaker, which is connected to the preceding challenge. Reynolds [2011] identifies a similar practice and looks at it as a display of relative difference in knowledge, which treats the selected speaker as having the primary rights to the answer. We could treat these kinds of questions as recipient-focused [Schegloff, 2007]. Next, we focus on opinion-eliciting questions, another subclass of clarifying questions.

### 3.2.3.b. *Opinion-Eliciting Questions*

These types of questions enquire directly about the interlocutor's opinion in connection with some concrete event rather than an absolute fact. That is, they are interested in the interlocutor's attitude, regardless of the truth value of the content. The questions take the forms "What is your opinion on...", "What's your take...", "What are your thoughts on...", etc. In responding to the questions, panellists preface their responses with structures like "I think...", and "For me...", the host first sets the context of the question and then topicalizes the matter to which the panelists should respond as shown in the examples in this section.

#### Example 10 KTN

T1M: *I would like to talk about aah... we see an attack in Likoni, we see a grenade blow up in Eastleigh... we see ahah some explosives assembled in Pangani, ...Let's talk about the long-time solutions because to some extent and while many Kenyans appreciate what is happening it sometimes appears like a knee-jerk reaction.*

T2P4: *I think the biggest problem we are having right now is for the people to try and agree that we cannot just fight terrorism or insecurity generally using the security agency. It is an undertaking where everybody needs to be involved...*

T3H: *So, in your view, what is your solution now? What will make Kenya feel safer because it can now happen when you are in a matatu, it can happen at the bus stop.*

T4P4: *These things are normally stored where people are, they are normally transported among people. The public needs to trust us, give us information...*

In Example 10, the host seeks to find out from the police spokesman (P4) what the government's solution to the terror attacks is. At turn 1, she sets a background to the issue by highlighting the various attacks, for example, the Likoni attack and the explosives at Pangani. Note that she doesn't seek the opinion in the form of a question, but a statement that indeed requires the opinion of P4: **"Let's talk about the long-time solutions because to some extent and while many Kenyans appreciate what is happening... it sometimes appears like a knee jerk reaction"**. At turn 2, P4 gives his opinion that the fight against terrorism should be a collective responsibility. Notice here the use of the words *"I think"* as a marker of his personal opinion: *"I think the biggest problem we are having right now is for the people to try and agree that we cannot just fight terrorism or insecurity generally using the security agency..."* So by responding to the host statement, P4 presupposes his interpretation of the host's proposition as a question. This is a clear indication that form cannot be a sole indicator of a question, since questions do not necessarily need to be produced in the interrogative form. In turn 3 that follows, the host asks for his view on the solution *"so in your view, what is your solution now?"* Again the host is trying to elicit his thoughts on the topic by using the structure *"...in your opinion"* that is followed up by the WH-question, *"What is your solution now?"* In turn 4, the panellist says that the public needs to work with the security agents, a statement that reiterates his earlier position: *"The public needs to trust us, give us information..."*

In some other cases, the host can elicit opinions from different panellists on a matter of opinion or controversy drawn from an interview with a political analyst. In such cases, the panellists can either display an opinion in support or lack of support for the issues raised. The example below drawn from Citizen TV presents an elaborate illustration of this. The host first presents a video clip on an interview she had conducted with a political analyst. She then invites the panellists to react to the political analyst's opinion.

### Example 11 Citizen TV

T1H: *Gentlemen, I want to bring another view because part of the woes as you have seen within Jubilee coalition have also been occasioned by the MP ... who wants to impeach ... Let's listen to the views of ... and what he has to say about that and if it could catapult into something even bigger.*

**Political analyst:** *If this game is escalated to a point where the president is impeached, and by the way, that is something we must anticipate especially with this impeachment talk. If he is impeached, the beneficiary of the impeachment will be ...*

TH: *On what grounds? On what possible grounds would one use to bring up a bid to impeach the President?*

**Political analyst:** *You do not need to have any grounds. It can just be you do not like the shape of his head. And eh recently you do not like the way he walks. If we have numbers, we will impeach him and eh... Look at it if you have the URP members saying that ah we are not with ... because ... seems to be with. W., then you have the CORD members. If you put the two together, then you will have a President with crises within parliament. But the beneficiary of this ultimately will have to be - And he can even appoint ... to become the Deputy President.*

T2P1: *Now...*

T3H: *Hold on Prof. I want to come to you ... on this because he has mentioned your coalition leader ...and there are those who may observe or opine that there are still very warm relationships between URP and ODM because of the previous relationship between ... and... Does that theory that you have just heard resonate with you?*

T4P3: *I think A, one thing you need to know is that eh in politics, we do not have permanent enemies and ah permanent friends. So in terms of strategic partnerships in politics is allowed. The same way Senator M. had mentioned about the relationship between the Kikuyus and the Kalenjins. Many pessimists thought it would not work. But eh looking at eh what ... has just mentioned, the issue of I don't think ODM has plans of mending woes with URP and TNA.*

T5H: *I will come, we will come to details of what is going on and the rallies. Please hold on to that. Let me get the views of the rest of the panel very quickly on ... views.*

T6P1: *... he is preparing the president to see the beneficiary of his problems. And that is how... will destroy him. In fact, what ... has done is what I have exactly said...*

T7P2: *..., what ... is saying at least I know... he is my friend. What he is saying is what vultures and brokers in town are doing. Because in all honesty, is what we call political vultures are doing because they want a political rift between ...and ...*

In Example 11 Citizen TV, the host presents the views of ... who is of the opinion that an attempt to impeach the cabinet secretary is a larger scheme to impeach the president. At turn 1, the host therefore seeks to get the responses of the guests on this matter. Turn 3 is allocated to an MP from the CORD coalition to give his view on the statement “...And there are those who may observe or opine that there is still a very warm relationship between URP and ODM because of the previous relationship between ... and...” This statement precedes the Yes/No question “**Does that theory that you have just heard resonate with you?**” In his response, he first generally admits that in politics there are no permanent enemies but he later refutes the allegation that ODM has any plans of mending with URP and TNA.



Notice how he begins his turn by *“I think...”* and then *“I don’t think ODM has plans of mending woes with URP and TNA. CORD, we are very keen, we want Kenyans to give a report card...”* Thus, he shares his thoughts which are totally in contrast with the political analyst’s view. In turn 5, the host then allocates the subsequent turns to the rest of the panel to share their views. Note the statement, *“Let me get the views of the rest of the panel very quickly..... on ...views”*. In turn 6, P1, a political analyst shares his views that are rather contentious that if the President is impeached, the Deputy President will be the beneficiary. This is in the statement *“he is preparing the President to see the beneficiary of his problems. And that is how ... will destroy him”*. P2, a senator from the Jubilee government opines that the purported impeachment is meant to cause a rift between the President and his deputy. In a rather very scathing remark, he refers to those plotting the impeachment as political vultures in turn 7. We observe that the political analyst’s view is both contentious and objectionable. His opinion on this highly divisive issue has strong judgmental overtones, thus sparking varied opinions from the panellists who are drawn from both the government and the opposition.

It can be observed from the examples presented that in this category, the host introduces a balance of perspectives from the panellists while maintaining a neutralistic posture. Across these examples, hosts can be seen exercising marked caution when introducing matters of opinion or controversy. Such matters could in principle be quite damaging to neutralism [Hutchby, 2006]. The remarks from the guests come across as distinctly contentious or objectionable in character. In exercising some degree of control over the issue, the host selectively invites a guest to respond to the issue raised. The panellists are given a practically unconstrained floor to voice their opinions, though they are guided on what to comment on in the first turn by the host. The host generates disagreement among the panellists, and the panellists strive to foster diversity of opinion. For example, the political analyst’s remarks have been regarded as particularly opinionated and controversial, subsequently attracting diverse responses from the two sides of the political divide. The host avoids actions whose primary purpose is to express support for a point of view. They, therefore, use receipt tokens such as *“mhm”*, *“huh”*, *“okay”*, etc. after panellists present their views.

In responding to the questions, the panellists authenticate their talk with experiential background and knowledge to show the relevance of their contributions to the topics under discussion. They seek to justify their statements or actions in the sense that they hold institutional positions and by their status, the “public figures are treated as having some loci on the matter at hand” [Montgomery, 2007, p.148]. For example, P3 is a senator in ODM, thus his response to the political analyst’s claim *“I don’t think ODM has plans of mending woes with URP and TNA”* is likely to hold because he represents the party and has knowledge of what the party believes in.

Next, we focus on the third type of questions under the category of clarifying questions, namely: Examination Questions.

### 3.2.3.c. Examination Questions

Examination questions seek to find out if the person to whom the question is directed has certain information or not. They mostly take the form *“Are you aware...?”*, *“Do you know...”*, *“Are you complacent with...?”* In our data, these kinds of questions were asked by the host and were directed at a particular panellist whom the host felt to be the custodian of the information elicited going by the credentials spelt out in the opening segment of the talk show. They are similar to classic clarifying questions in that they aim at eliciting information. Consider the examples in this section that illustrate this phenomenon.

### Example 12 Citizen TV

**Political analyst:** *The insecurity galore being blown up...they want to blow up until we have a situation where we say we have no confidence in this government to be able to deliver...we have that well photographed. Do you remember 43% of polls in 2013 did not vote for the current government? This means they could begin to have an avalanche, which could lead to an African spring... A spring that could flow into Uganda that could go into Rwanda go into South Sudan and the West has been very good at choreographing such springs. This is the beginning here in Kenya with the current rate of terrorism.*

T1H: *Let me start with you Dr... He is alleging that the new push, the rallies CORD is holding and telling the public, to voice your grievances against the government is a larger scheme to form an African spring? Are you complacent?*

T2P3: *I think eh first and foremost we need to understand where ... is coming from. In terms of research, you look at the person in terms of truthfulness. This is a gentleman who came up with the issue of the tyranny of numbers. So whatever opinion that he comes up with, the aspect of objectivity is not there... is subjective. He knows where his bread and butter comes from... So I am not going to agree with what he is saying... We are just holding rallies, and we are here to welcome our CORD leader...*

The discussion in this excerpt sparks out of a video clip on an interview conducted by the host and featuring the political analysts. The issue under discussion is the rallies that the CORD had held to welcome their leader. The analyst alleges that holding the rallies is a wider scheme to form an African spring that will begin right here in Kenya and spread into other African countries. The host, therefore, seeks to establish from P3, a member of parliament from the CORD coalition, if indeed this is the case. After formulating a context for the question in the statement “*Let me start with you Dr...He is alleging that the new push, the rallies CORD is holding and telling the public, voice your grievances against the government is a larger scheme to form an African spring*”. The host invites then poses the examination question “*Are you complacent?*” Probably, the host expects the panellist to verify the information delivered by the analyst. In his response, the panellist builds a rebuttal and says that ... is subjective in his opinion. He refers to the analyst’s notion of tyranny of numbers that appeared to favour the current government in the 2013 general election. Hence, the panellist feels that the view is meant to please the government. He puts this in the statement “*...is subjective. He knows where his bread and butter comes from. So to I am not going to agree with what he is saying*”. In the next section, we focus on the last type of clarifying question: the permission-eliciting questions.

#### 3.2.3.d. Permission Eliciting Questions

Permission Eliciting Questions do not elicit any information but “ask for permission” to add a comment or clarify a comment made earlier. Clayman and Heritage [2002] reckon that their use demonstrates a common and relatively benign form of departure that emerges in multi-interviewees where a currently unaddressed interviewee seeks to comment on some aspect of the talk in progress. With the permission granted to contribute, the interlocutors moved on with their utterances. In our corpus, requests were made in the format of a positive interrogative through the construction “*Can I...*”. Let us now illustrate this occurrence in the example below:



**Example 13 KTN**

T1H: *Yes, I would like you to address the challenges as we close our discussion....*

T2P1: *Can I, can I make a few corrections?*

T3H: *Alright.*

T4P1: *You know quite a number of projects Jubilee say they are implementing, were initiated during the previous government. The thing is government projects will take time to come to fruition. Fortunately, they have borne fruits in their government....and they should not tell the people that are the Jubilee projects. No, they were there during the grand coalition government...*

T5H: *Yes*

T6P1: *They are part of Vision 2030...*

We observe in Example 13 that the programme is coming to a close as indicated in the host's statement in turn 1, "*...as we close our discussion*". The host directs at turn 1 that the guests should address the challenges the Jubilee administration is facing. But at turn 2, P1, a senator from the opposition, seeks permission to make a few corrections in the positive interrogative, "*Can I, can I make a few corrections?*" The host grants him permission at turn 3, in the word, "*alright*". With the permission granted, he states that "*you know quite a number of projects Jubilee say there are implementing, were initiated during the previous government...*" He differs from the previous statement earlier in the show on the achievements the Jubilee government claims to have made. He firmly states, "*fortunately, they have borne fruits in their government...*" The host acknowledges that with the marker "yes" in turn 5. In turn 6, P1 continues with the turn he had discontinued at turn 4 when the host cut in. He states that the projects are part of Vision 2030. Hence, the activity initiated with the request at turn 2 by P1 has been completed.

A similar observation can be made in the attack-back questions that the panellists make non-elicited comments in the unfolding talk. The requests made in the permission-eliciting questions could in principle consist of an adjacency pair with the first pair part comprising a request, and the second pair part – compliance or rejection [Schegloff, 2007]. This principle applies in the example above where the P1 request "*Can I...*" at turn 2 receives acceptance "*alright*" at turn 3. This could justify the argument that the use of the modal verb "Can (I)" licenses the possibility that the host may turn down the request [Kuhlen, 2012].

Taking a genre analysis approach, this paper has outlined a range of ways in which talk show hosts elicit information from the panellists through varied question types in argumentative talk shows on two TV stations in Kenya. The arguments in the talk shows studied were initiated through a certain category of questions immediately after the opening segment: the dispute-directing questions. Once the talk show hosts started off the arguments, the talk developed as they engaged the panellists in opposing or clashing views throughout the talk show. The analysis has demonstrated a recurrence of question types on the two media stations. This indicates that questioning is a typical feature of the argumentative talk show genre. Conventional definitions of genre advance the notion that genres constitute particular shared conventions of content, structure and communicative purposes [Swales, 1990, 2004]. Informed by previous genre analysts [Swales, 1990, 2004; Maroko, 1999, 2008; Bhatia, 2004; Devvit, 2004], it can be argued that argumentative talk shows on Kenyan TV stations can be recognized as a genre.

The question typology in this study was based on formal or structural characteristics of questions. Assigning question types was based on both the propositional content and also the communicative function of initiating and developing the argumentations that characterized the talk show

discourse in their context of use. Some questions were formally distinct: the WH-Questions, Yes/No Questions and Rhetorical Questions. Other types borne out of our data were the statement-form questions marked by a rising intonation. This style did not clearly mark their pragmatic function. For example, a WH-question could be used to request information, seek clarification or also serve as a rhetorical question. This confirms that while the form and function of questions are intertwined, one form of question can serve several different functions in the interaction [Kuhlen, 2012].

Probing a panelist's statements or arguments, either through requiring further details or an account of some of his/her response was a common practice used by the talk show hosts. This was done through attacking echo and attack-back questions which cast doubt on the panelists' assertions. As Clayman and Heritage [2021] reckon, such questions may be adversarial in content and demand for accountability quite explicitly.

Additionally, a high number of the hosts' questions did not only consist of a questioning component. Unlike ordinary conversation, where a speaker is initially entitled to only one turn, i.e. constructional unit, the talk show host can produce multi-units [Greatbatch, 1998; Heritage & Roth, 1995]. These generally consist of "prefatory" statements which serve to set the background context that helps inform the audience as well as establish the relevance of the subsequent question and provide the necessary references.

Of significance is that in the sequential organization of the practice of questioning and answering, speaker selection was crucial in developing the argument; the host was seen to direct some particular questions to a particular panellist. This happens when the information to be elicited belongs to the recipient's territory of knowledge. Consequently, the selection of the speaker sequentially obligated a response, and the response enhanced the credibility of the information passed to the wider audience. We observe under Conversational Analysis that the talk show hosts and the panellists orient to one another's action as they engage in question-answer sequences in the interactional ordering of the talk, with the talk show host having a dominating role over the turns. The question-answer sequence largely displayed a Q-A format whereby a question was followed by an answer. Notable though were Q-A-A, where an elicitation from the host in the form of a question was followed by two responses from the panellists. Q-Q-A sequences featured in our data as a question from the host followed by another question from a panellist normally addressed to a co-panellist. The co-panelist would then provide a response as was noted in the attack back questions. This displayed a violation of the turn-taking system, which is unexpected in institutionalized discourse [Clayman & Heritage, 2002, 2021; Tolson, 2006]. Reacting to this violation Tolson [2006] argues that talk shows demonstrate a possibility of transgressing the generic protocols; a panelist can initiate a question-answer sequence. This is an observation that our findings clearly stay with, and further confirms that argumentative talk shows have a dual nature in that they display features of both ordinary conversations and institutional discourse [Hutchby, 2019; Schirm 2008].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From our analysis of the questions in this paper, we observe that questions are the main resources of interactional order that give the TV talk shows their oppositional and argumentative character. The questions recur in the programmes, take different forms and serve different communicative functions. The conclusion from our analysis therefore is that there are certain types of questions that typify this form of talk on Kenyan TV argumentative talk shows. The common ques-

tion and their corresponding communicative purposes delineate the Kenyan TV argumentative talk shows. To explore the communication characterizing the argumentative TV talk shows further, future lines of research could focus on establishing correspondences between question typology and strategies adopted by panellists to respond to the questions. In addition, as TV programming is becoming more interactive, it will be interesting to explore the role of contributions through viewers' call-in sessions and comments on social media platforms, such as Twitter, in shaping the argumentative talk show genre.

### ***Conflict of interest***

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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#### ***About the authors:***

**Loice Wamaitha Mwai** holds a PhD in applied linguistics from Kenyatta University. She is currently a Lecturer in the Department of English, Linguistics, and Foreign Languages at the same University. Her research interests are in Genre Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Media, and Language. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4347-9712

**Geoffrey Mokua Maroko** holds a PhD in applied linguistics from Kenyatta University. He is an Associate Professor of applied linguistics at Machakos University. His current teaching and research interests are in genre and discourse analysis, language management & planning, media & communication, and language teaching & testing. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1747-6753

**Daniel Ochieng' Orwenjo** holds a PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Frankfurt. He is currently an Associate Professor of applied linguistics at the Technical University of Kenya. He is the Director of the Centre for Languages and Communication Studies at the University. He is a Fellow of the Global Young Academy (GYA) and Africa Science Leadership Program. His teaching and research interests are in diverse areas of applied linguistics.

**Emily Auma Ogutu** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, Linguistics, and Foreign Languages at Kenyatta University. She holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Birmingham. Her teaching and research interests are in various areas of text linguistics.

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