

PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES

*Gulzodaxon Sultonqulova Avazjon qizi*

*School 37, Gallaorol district, Jizzakh region*

*English teacher*

+9998991002258

ABSTRACT

The article aims to study the problem of the peculiarities of the communicative functions of interrogative sentences. The relevance of the problem is connected with the rich pragmatic fullness of these linguistic units. The issue of communicative functions of interrogative sentences was considered from the theory of speech acts, in which they are realized. Thus, examples of interrogatives were analyzed in representative, directive, commission, and expressive speech acts based on dialogues from the sitcom “Big Bang Theory”. Determining the quantitative ratio of interrogatives in the composition of different types of speech acts and comparing these statistics with the results of another study allowed the authors to decide the most productive types. The prospect of further research is a more in-depth study of the pragmatics of interrogative sentences, as well as interdisciplinary research.

**Keywords:** Communication theory, function, dialogues, pragmatics, speech acts, texts, languages

INTRODUCTION

The present work deals with the research of interrogative sentences in terms of the functions, which they perform in the communication process. The subject of the study is English interrogative sentences and their translation into Russian. The target of research is the peculiarities of the realization of various communicative functions in these linguistic units. Interrogative sentences play a unique role in communication. Moreover, let us join the opinion of G. Gadamer (1991), who stated that people do not make any judgments at all, but “answer questions.” Thus, he drew attention to the generality of this way of interpersonal communication. Indeed, most different communicative acts are not only a manifestation of the vital activity of any human society but, undoubtedly, the first condition for its existence as itself.

It is necessary to pay attention to the wording of the topic of this work; there is the term “communication,” which is very ambiguous (Rachman, 2017; Van Valin, 2017). We believe that it is necessary to take into account the specifics of the current information age and that the consideration of the topic should go beyond the linguistic act of the two communicating individuals. Therefore, we will mainly hold to the so-called “French” interpretation of communication issues, which is not limited to

linguistic communication but includes various social problems of modern society (Nazarchuk, 2009). In this vein, a significant argument in favor of the relevance of the topic of this article is contained in works by G.G. Pocheptsov (2001). Paying attention to many problems of the present, he notes, “The end of the twentieth century brought the processes of communication to a new level when the states in the military field were to a large extent interested in them. It is about the phenomenon of information wars (operations)”. For the first time on this topic, A. Toffler (1995) spoke in his theory of the typology of wars. “The wars of the agrarian period were waged for territories, wars of the industrial period – for the means of production. Information age wars will be fought for the means of processing and generating information/knowledge ... The information has never been more significant” (Toffler, 1995).

### **Main body**

The topic of this article is also relevant in connection with the “peaceful” manifestations of the steadily increasing informatization of human civilization. For example, it could be such applied sections of the theory of communication as neurolinguistic programming, advertising, propaganda and PR technologies, psychotherapy, media communication, artistic communication (Bass, 1999). It should be noted that technical and scientific communication is characterized primarily by interrogative sentences of a cardinal (pure) communicative type. In contrast, intermediate-type sentences are rarely used and are predominantly aimed at drawing attention to particular objects, their features, attributes (Kohler, 2017). In some places of work, we will also touch the non-verbal kind of communication, since its paralinguistic means (for example, intonation) is inextricably linked with the communicative functions of interrogative sentences. Because of the development of linguistic research and given the importance of interrogative sentences indicated above, the topic identified at the beginning of the article should be thoroughly studied, with the involvement of specialists. The theoretical significance of the article is to systematize aspects of the theory of speech acts concerning the communicative functions of interrogative sentences. The practical relevance of the article is that the results of this study can be used to compose courses on the theory of communicative acts, pragmatics, stylistics, and translatology.

On the topic of this article, there is extensive material and quite ambiguous, because of the exceptional complexity of the phenomena occurring in the individual and public consciousness and subconsciousness. As a result of which linguistic concepts are incredibly abstract. Scientific research is distinguished by a variety of initial points of view and approaches to study. To compare the literature on this topic is difficult, at least because of differences in terminology. For example, the concepts “interrogative,” “indirect speech act,” and others are ambiguous.

The problems of interrogatives in the dialogue texts were devoted to the works of

G.G. Pocheptsov (2001), G.R. Vlasyan (2006), E.N. Vorobyeva (2009), D. Bolinger (1957), R. Conrad (1983), D. Searle (1975), L. Song (1985) and many others. Among the literature directly related to the topic under consideration, we highlight the work “Interrogative sentences as indirect speech acts” by R. Conrad from the digest “New in foreign linguistics” (Arutyunova & Paduchev, 1985). R. Conrad (1983), considering the rules of speech behavior in the formation of implicit meanings of the utterance, systematized the typical ways of using interrogative sentences on secondary meanings (parallel names – “pragmatic meaning,” “communicative meaning”) of speech acts. A study claims that the importance of dialogue as a means of communication in every aspect of society. The findings also reveal that dialogue fuels socio-economic development (Orlova, Musina, & Dzhanikesheva, 2020). Another study provides cues on the vitality of speech, which has bearings on understanding opinions and shaping public issues (Choi, 2020). Speech, a form of dialogue, remains instrumental in the process of communication. Researching the potential of the impact of interrogative sentences on the behavior of communicants is devoted to the works of K.M. Shilikhina (1999). General questions concerning the communicative functions of interrogative sentences were stated in the textbook by N.S. Valgina (2000). G.G. Pocheptsov’s (2001) book “The theory of communication” was used in this work as the primary source for communicativistics (the work has features of scientific work, textbook, and journalism about fateful social events). The author illuminated the topics of the theory of communication, which develops within the framework of linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, and sociology. There are extensive studies of linguists on this topic in English. Researchers pay special attention to the analysis of the pragmatics of interrogative constructions (Fareh & Moussa, 2008; Song, 1985). The majority of researchers studied the problem of the functions of questions within the theory of speech acts (Darani & Afghari, 2013; Kasimova, 2017), including interrogative sentences from their implementation of indirect acts (Conrad, 1983; Searle, 1975). Some scientists have studied interrogative sentences within the framework of the structural method (Bolinger, 1957). R. Conrad (1983) attempted to combine the last two approaches, point out five types of interrogative sentences based at the same time on their structural organization and communicative functions.

The communicative approach to the consideration of the sentence allows us to assert that in a communication situation, all communicative types of sentences can give an infinite number of variants and shades of communicative intent. The interrogative sentence is viewed in the communicative aspect as an intentional means of verbal communication, which is used by the speaker to realize his communicative intentions. In this regard, interrogative statements can be considered as an integral part of the speech strategy of the speaker (Gusev, 2017). The most frequent communicative function of the interrogative sentence is the request for information (Kasimova, 2017).

The communicative setting of such sentences is quite ambiguous. It is impossible to find any additional communicative meanings in it. In other types of communicative settings, companion communicative tasks that fluctuate in a quite wide range and sometimes contain opposite meanings are easily defined. The use of interrogative constructions for the expression of non-interrogative values is carried out based on the neutralization of interrogative semantics (Conrad, 1983). After all, this is not a request for necessary information, but an expressive statement/negation, imperative, expression of emotion or evaluation, a means of maintaining contact or activating the interlocutor's attention. However, interrogative significance does not disappear and is not entirely replaced by indirect, because it is concentrated in the very structure of the interrogative. The study of the communicative functions of interrogative sentences is directly linked with their syntactic characteristics. The structural and grammatical structure of the question is usually determined by the communicative intention of the speaker. However, there is an ambiguous correspondence between the intention and the formal organization of the interrogative sentence, which explains the existence of multiple meanings of syntactic constructions. N.S. Valgina (2000) classifies interrogative sentences based on the characteristics of communicative use: the actual interrogative sentence contains a question that necessarily presupposes an answer; the interrogative-affirmative sentence contains information that requires confirmation; an interrogative-negative sentence already contains a denial of what is being asked; the interrogative rhetorical sentence contains a statement or a negation and does not require an answer since the answer is contained in the question itself. In analyzing the communicative properties of a particular interrogative sentence, its actual division also plays an important role. The real division of the sentence proceeds from the expression of a specific meaning in the context of the given situation – in contrast to the formal division of the sentence into grammatical elements. If the theme precedes the rheme, the word order in the sentence is called objective; otherwise, it is subjective (Valgina, 2000). The actual division of the sentence can be expressed by the order of words, intonation, and other means.

### **Conclusion**

Interrogative sentences in dialogues, as a rule, have class features of actually interrogative, as well as other types of sentences. Such constructions are one of the most vivid occurrences of functional transposition and the result of formal-semantic links of interrogative, narrative, and imperative sentences. Due to the integral character of the realization of the functional characteristics of interrogative sentences, they convey such a wide range of pragmatic meanings. Communicative functions of interrogatives are realized with the help of several constructions, lexical and syntactic units, which, as a rule, are typical for one or another type of speech act. In this work, we analyzed some of these markers, illustrating the main points with examples from

the popular American sitcom “The Big Bang Theory” and its translation into Russian. The results of this work broaden the understanding of the communicative character of interrogatives in English and Russian. And although these units were examined mainly from the theory of speech acts, the work can jump-start for different generalizations and further research.

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