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PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH JOURNALISTIC INTERVIEWS

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Abstract. This paper examines the pragmatic features of interrogative sentences in Uzbek and English journalistic interviews from a contrastive perspective. Drawing on speech act theory, politeness theory and conversation-analytic research on news interviews, it shows that both languages share a common repertoire of question functions but differ in the means of mitigation and in the display of journalistic neutrality. English relies mainly on modal interrogatives, tags and lexical attribution, whereas Uzbek additionally uses the particles -mi, -chi and -a/-ya, conditional request forms, honorific address and grammatical evidentiality.

Keywords: interrogative sentence, journalistic interview, pragmatics, politeness, neutralism, contrastive analysis.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tezisda o‘zbek va ingliz tillaridagi jurnalistik intervyularda so‘roq gaplarning pragmatik xususiyatlari qiyosiy aspektda tahlil qilinadi. Nutq aktlari nazariyasi, xushmuomalalik nazariyasi va yangiliklar intervyusiga oid konversatsion tahlil tadqiqotlariga tayangan holda ikki tilda savol funksiyalarining umumiy repertuari mavjudligi, biroq yumshatish vositalari va jurnalistik betaraflikni ifodalash usullarida farqlar borligi ko‘rsatiladi. Ingliz tilida asosan modal so‘roq shakllari, ajratuvchi so‘roqlar va leksik havola qo‘llansa, o‘zbek tilida bularga qo‘shimcha ravishda -mi, -chi, -a/-ya yuklamalari, shart maylidagi iltimos shakllari, hurmat ifodalovchi murojaatlar va grammatik evidensiallik muhim o‘rin tutadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: so‘roq gap, jurnalistik intervyu, pragmatika, xushmuomalalik, betaraflik, qiyosiy tahlil.

INTRODUCTION

The interview is one of the central genres of contemporary journalism, and the question is its principal instrument. Through questions the journalist opens topics, requests facts, tests the consistency of the interviewee’s position, voices public concerns and challenges evasive answers. The interrogative sentence in an interview is therefore a pragmatically loaded unit whose design reflects professional norms, the asymmetry between the participants and the communicative conventions of a particular linguistic culture.

The analysis requires a clear distinction between form and function: an interrogative sentence is a grammatical category, whereas a question is an action designed to obtain a response.[1] In interviews the

[1] Here *interrogative sentence* denotes a grammatical form and *question* a communicative action. On the lack of one-to-one correspondence between sentence types and discourse functions, see: Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J.

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two often diverge. English Could you explain what went wrong? functions as a request, and Isn't this simply a U-turn? as a critical assessment. Similarly, Uzbek Nahotki boshqa yo'l bo'lmasa? – 'Can it really be that there is no other way?' – conveys disagreement rather than a request for information. Moreover, interview talk is produced for an audience that does not take part in the exchange,[2] which is why interviewers ask questions whose answers they already know and attribute contentious views to third parties.

English news interviews have been studied in considerable detail, whereas the pragmatics of questioning in Uzbek media discourse and its systematic comparison with English have received much less attention. At the same time, the growth of online media and live broadcasting in Uzbekistan has increased the number of interviews in which journalists question officials on socially sensitive issues. The aim of this paper is to identify the pragmatic functions of interrogative sentences in Uzbek and English journalistic interviews, the linguistic resources used to mitigate or intensify their force, and the factors behind the observed similarities and differences. The examples cited are normalized utterances illustrating recurrent question formats, with the relevant Uzbek forms in bold and English translations in single quotation marks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The pragmatic study of questions is rooted in speech act theory. Searle treats questions as requests for information: the speaker does not know the answer, wishes to obtain it, and the utterance counts as an attempt to elicit it.[3] He also distinguishes 'real' questions from 'exam' questions, in which the speaker checks whether the hearer knows the answer. Journalistic interviews add a variety that fits neither category: the interviewer often knows the answer but asks so that the audience hears it from the interviewee, who thereby becomes publicly committed to it. In such audience-oriented questions the sincerity condition is, in effect, transferred to the audience on whose behalf the question is asked. Speech act theory has further shown that the interrogative form can carry the force of a request, a suggestion or a reproach; such indirect uses are especially productive in interviews, where the journalist's institutional role is confined to asking, while the journalist's communicative goals include evaluating and challenging.

The 1985 grammar by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik provides the formal inventory of English questions and shows that yes–no questions may be neutral or biased towards a positive or a negative answer, a notion that links grammar to pragmatics. The comparative project introduced by Enfield, Stivers and Levinson in 2010 examined question–response sequences across ten typologically diverse languages within a shared coding framework, making it possible to compare questions by the actions they perform rather than by grammatical form alone. The same functional principle underlies the present study.

In their 2002 monograph, Clayman and Heritage describe the news interview as an institutional form of talk governed by two competing norms: neutralism, which requires the interviewer to avoid stating personal opinions, and adversarialness, which requires probing and challenging public figures. In a 2002 article, Heritage shows that negative interrogatives such as Isn't it…? are regularly produced and

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1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman, Chapter 11, pp. 801–854.

[2] On interview talk as designed for an audience that does not participate in it, and on the norms of neutralism and adversarialness, see: Clayman, S. E., & Heritage, J. 2002. *The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Searle, J. R. 1969. *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66–67. The felicity conditions are paraphrased.

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responded to as vehicles for assertions, whereas statements with negative tags are not contested as assertions in the same way.

Politeness theory explains the relational side of questioning. In Brown and Levinson's model, interactants claim negative face, the want to be free from imposition, and positive face, the want to be approved of.[4] Any question imposes on the addressee, and critical questions also threaten positive face; the weight of the threat depends on social distance, relative power and the degree of imposition. The interview is an instructive setting here, since the journalist's institutional right to ask coexists with a marked status asymmetry between a journalist and a minister or a regional governor, a hokim. Rhetorical questions form a separate line of research: in her 1994 study, Ilie treats them as argumentative acts in which the speaker is committed to an implicit answer and seeks the addressee's recognition of its obviousness.[5]

In Uzbek linguistics, interrogative sentences have been described within syntax as a communicative type of sentence formed by question words such as kim, nima, qachon, nega and qanday, by the particles -mi, -chi and -a/-ya, and by intonation.[6] Pragmalinguistic research in Uzbek scholarship is represented, in particular, by Safarov's 2008 monograph, which introduces the conceptual apparatus of speech acts, communicative intention and context, and by Hakimov's 2013 book on the foundations of Uzbek pragmalinguistics. However, the pragmatics of interview questions in Uzbek, particularly in comparison with English, has not yet been examined in detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Table 1 shows, the two languages mark interrogativity by typologically different means. English, an analytic language with relatively fixed word order, relies on subject–auxiliary inversion, do-support and clause-initial wh-words. Uzbek, an agglutinative language with subject–object–verb order, keeps declarative word order in questions: polar questions are marked by the particle -mi, attached to the predicate or to a constituent in narrow focus, and question words remain in situ. The particle -chi forms elliptical questions, -a/-ya seeks confirmation in conversational registers, and -mikan adds a dubitative tone, while nahotki 'can it really be that' and axir 'after all' contribute emotive and argumentative meanings.

Table 1. Principal formal means of interrogativity in English and Uzbek

Question type	English	Uzbek
Polar question	Subject–auxiliary inversion: Will the project be completed this year?	Particle -mi on the predicate: Loyiha shu yil yakunlanadi**mi**?
Polar question with narrow focus	Cleft or contrastive stress: Was it the ministry that took this decision?	-mi on the focused constituent: Bu qarorni vazirlik**mi** qabul qilgan?

[4] Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 61–68.

[5] Ilie, C. 1994. *What else can I tell you? A pragmatic study of English rhetorical questions as discursive and argumentative acts*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, p. 128. The definition is paraphrased.

[6] G'ulomov, A., & Asqarova, M. 1987. *Hozirgi o'zbek adabiy tili: Sintaksis*. Toshkent: O'qituvchi. By the purpose of utterance, Uzbek grammar distinguishes *darak*, *so'roq* and *buyruq* sentences, that is, declarative, interrogative and imperative ones.

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Question type	English	Uzbek
Content or wh-question	Wh-word in initial position: When will the law come into force?	Question word in situ: Qonun **qachon** kuchga kiradi?
Confirmation-seeking question	Tag question: You signed the document, didn't you?	Invariant tag or -a/-ya: Hujjatni imzolagansiz, **shunday emasmi**? / Imzolagansiz-**a**?
Elliptical and dubitative questions	And what about the regions?; I wonder whether this will be enough.	Hududlarda-**chi**?; Bu yetarli bo'lar**mikan**?

In requests for information and elaboration, English interviewers regularly use modal interrogatives, while Uzbek interviewers often move the request out of interrogative syntax:

1a. Could you tell our viewers how the new scheme will work in practice?

1b. Yangi tizim amalda qanday ishlashi haqida tomoshabinlarimizga batafsilroq gapirib ber**sangiz**. – 'If you would tell our viewers in more detail how the new system will work in practice.'

The modal interrogative in example 1a is formally a question about ability but conventionally a request; it leaves the addressee an option and thus realizes the negative politeness strategy that Brown and Levinson call conventional indirectness. Example 1b is an elliptical conditional whose unexpressed consequent, roughly 'it would be good', conveys tentativeness and deference, and the softened imperative Ayting-chi, … 'Tell us, …' works as a friendly pre-question. Thus English channels mitigation mainly into the modal interrogative, whereas Uzbek distributes it across conditional, imperative and interrogative forms.

Interviewers frequently use conducive questions, designed to favour a particular answer. The most assertive format is the negative interrogative:

2a. Isn't it true that waiting lists have in fact grown longer since the reform?

2b. Islohotdan keyin navbatlar, aksincha, uzay**madimi**? – 'Haven't the waiting lists, on the contrary, grown longer since the reform?'

As Heritage has shown, questions such as example 2a are treated as vehicles for the interviewer's own position. The Uzbek negative predicate with -mi has an analogous effect, which the particle axir can strengthen further: **Axir**, bu mablag' ham soliq to'lovchilarning puli **emasmi**? – 'After all, isn't this also taxpayers' money?' Confirmation is sought through tags, which in English agree with the anchor clause, while Uzbek uses invariant forms such as …, shunday emasmi?, and through declarative formulations marked by English so and Uzbek demak or ya'ni.

To preserve the neutralistic stance described by Clayman and Heritage, interviewers often attribute contentious points to third parties, as in English Your critics say the programme has been a costly failure. What is your response? Uzbek interviewers use similar attributions and audience-oriented prefaces such as Tomoshabinlarimizni qiziqtirayotgan savol shu: … – 'The question our viewers are interested in is this: …', which present the journalist as a mediator of public concern rather than a personal critic. A further Uzbek resource is grammatical evidentiality:

3. Loyihaga ajratilgan mablag'ning bir qismi maqsadsiz sarflangan **emish**. Bunga qanday izoh berasiz? – 'Part of the funds allocated to the project has reportedly been misspent. What is your comment?'

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The form -mish marks the claim as hearsay,[7] so an allegation can be put to the interviewee without the journalist vouching for it; English achieves this only lexically, by means of reportedly or allegedly. In formal broadcasts lexical attribution tends to be preferred, while -mish is more typical of conversational formats, where it may also signal scepticism towards the rumour. Such scepticism can even be face-saving for the interviewee, since it signals that the journalist does not necessarily endorse the allegation.

English interviewers mitigate questions mainly lexically, through hedges, meta-questions and titles, and formulas such as With respect often announce an impending challenge. Uzbek deference is more grammaticalized: it relies on the plural Siz, on honorific address such as hurmatli vazir and on formulas such as Agar sir bo‘lmasa… ‘If it is not a secret…’. Compare two challenges:

4a. With respect, that does not answer my question. Is it yes or no?

4b. Hurmatli vazir, kechirasiz, lekin savolimga aniq javob bermadingiz. **Ha yoki yo‘q**? – ‘Respected minister, excuse me, but you have not given a clear answer to my question. Yes or no?’

Example 4b shows what may be termed layered politeness: deference is maintained at the level of address through the title, the apology and the plural verb form, while the propositional content is openly challenging. Similar restraint appears in accountability questions:

5a. How could you allow this to happen?

5b. **Qanday qilib** bunday holatga yo‘l qo‘yildi? – ‘How was such a situation allowed to happen?’

Both questions demand an account, but example 5a targets the addressee as agent, whereas example 5b uses the agentless passive yo‘l qo‘yildi, impersonalizing the accusation. The pursuit of unanswered questions also differs. The best-known English case is the 1997 BBC Newsnight interview in which Jeremy Paxman repeatedly asked Michael Howard Did you threaten to overrule him?[8] Uzbek interviewers tend to pursue through reformulation rather than verbatim repetition, for example Savolimni boshqacha qo‘yay: … ‘Let me put my question differently: …’, which maintains pressure without appearing disrespectful to a senior official. The contrast should not be overstated, since reformulation is also common in English interviews; the difference appears to lie in how acceptable verbatim repetition is as an openly confrontational technique.

Rhetorical questions are used by both parties. Interviewers use them to challenge, as in Bunday sharoitda **kim** investitsiya kiritadi? – ‘Who would invest under such conditions?’, while interviewees use them to justify decisions and appeal to shared values, as in **Axir**, qaysi ota-ona farzandining sifatli ta’lim olishini istamaydi? – ‘After all, which parent does not want their child to receive a good education?’ In Ilie’s terms, such questions commit the speaker to an implicit answer; in the interviewee’s turn they convert the slot for an answer into an argumentative move and position the interviewer, together with the audience, as the party that must accept what is presented as self-evident. Uzbek has dedicated markers that favour a rhetorical reading, namely axir, nahotki and -mikan, whereas English relies more on prosody and on intensifiers such as ever, as in Who could ever object to that? Table 2 summarizes the main correspondences.

Table 2. Pragmatic functions of interview questions and their typical realizations

Function	English	Uzbek

[7] The forms *ekan* and *-mish* mark information as acquired indirectly rather than through direct experience: *ekan* more often presents it as newly learned or inferred, while *-mish* more readily signals hearsay and may imply doubt.

[8] BBC *Newsnight*, 13 May 1997. The question is widely reported to have been asked twelve times without a direct ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

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Function	English	Uzbek
Request for information or elaboration	What does this reform mean for…?; Could you tell us…?	…nimani anglatadi?; …gapirib bersangiz; Ayting-chi, …
Request for confirmation	Tag or formulation: …, weren't you?; So you are saying…?	Invariant tag or formulation: …, shunday emasmi?; Demak, …?; Ya'ni, …?
Conducive question	Negative interrogative: Isn't it true that…?	Negative predicate with -mi: …-madimi?; Axir, … emasmi?
Attributed or audience-oriented challenge	Critics say… What is your response?; Many of our listeners will want to know…	Ayrim ekspertlar …, deb hisoblaydi; Tomoshabinlarimizni qiziqtirayotgan savol: …; …emish
Accountability challenge	How could you allow…?; Why didn't you…?	Nega …?; passive Qanday qilib … yo'l qo'yildi?
Pursuit	Repetition; With respect, …; Yes or no?	Reformulation: Savolimni boshqacha qo'yay…; Ha yoki yo'q?
Rhetorical question	Who could ever object to that?	Axir, …?; Nahotki …?; …-mikan?

Three tendencies emerge. First, the functional repertoire of interview questions is largely shared, reflecting the common institutional logic of the genre and the tension between neutralism and adversarialness. Second, the realization of these functions reflects typology: English builds conduciveness and mitigation into syntax, whereas Uzbek relies on particles and on conditional, passive and evidential verb forms. Third, politeness is distributed differently: in English deference is chiefly lexical and may be sharply reduced in adversarial exchanges, while in Uzbek it is grammatically encoded in address and tends to persist even in critical questions.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that interrogative sentences in Uzbek and English journalistic interviews perform a common set of pragmatic functions: requesting information and confirmation, advancing conducive propositions, demanding accounts, pursuing answers and making rhetorical arguments. Their pragmatic value depends less on grammatical type than on orientation, prefatory framing and sequential position. English calibrates the force of questions mainly through syntax, modal interrogatives, tags, hedges and third-party attribution, whereas Uzbek additionally employs interrogative particles, conditional elicitations, honorific address, audience-oriented prefaces, agentless passives and evidential forms. The similarities stem from the shared professional norms of journalism, while the differences are rooted in typology and in linguocultural conventions of respectful communication.

The findings are relevant for journalism education, where the pragmatic force of question formats should be taught explicitly, and for translation, where equivalence often requires a change of form: English Could you tell us…? is often best rendered by the Uzbek conditional …aytib bersangiz, and the

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Uzbek evidential -mish by English reportedly or allegedly. For the teaching of English for media purposes, the results offer material for developing learners' awareness of how politeness and neutrality are encoded differently in the two languages. Future research could test these tendencies quantitatively on an annotated corpus of Uzbek and English interviews.

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