



Question-Answer Dialogical Discourse in English and Its Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract: This article investigates the pragmatic and structural characteristics of question-answer dialogue in English across literary, conversational, and media contexts. Utilizing discourse analysis and pragmatic interpretation of selected English dialogues, the study focuses on ellipsis, intention, and speaker dynamics within dialogue construction. The analysis reveals that question-answer structures are not only tools for information exchange but also serve expressive, strategic, and interpersonal functions. Pragmatic elements such as sarcasm, irony, and implicit meaning are commonly embedded through ellipsis and minimal responses. The study concludes that understanding these features enhances effective communication and provides insight into contextual language use.

Keywords: English Dialogue, Discourse Analysis, Ellipsis, Pragmatics, Question-Answer Structure, Fiction, Everyday Conversation, Interviews

Introduction

When analyzing the specific aspects of question-and-answer dialogic discourse in English, it is important to recognize the fundamental role that dialogue plays in human communication. Dialogues are not merely a means of exchanging information—they are powerful tools for sharing personal experiences, expressing thoughts, and fostering mutual understanding.

Since ancient times, dialogic speech has held a central place in human interaction, serving as a medium through which individuals connect, reflect, and transform their perceptions of the world (Berdnik, 1993).

Through dialogue, people exchange ideas, build shared meanings, and align their efforts toward common cultural and social goals. This dynamic and interactive nature of dialogue underscores its significance in both everyday conversations and structured forms of communication, such as interviews and literary exchanges.

Methodology

The concept of dialogue was first scientifically studied by the French sociologist, criminologist, and one of the founders of social psychology, Gabriel Tarde. The scientist

emphasized that society is the result of the interaction of individual minds through communication between people and defined dialogue as a characteristic model of existence. According to the definition of the linguist Bakhtin (1993), dialogue is “a simple and understandable type of communication, in which each sentence, despite its short or sharp form, has a logical integrity and expresses the speaker’s unique position.” In dialogic speech, whether hidden or overt, question-answer is the engine of communication and is the force that sets the conversational mechanism in motion. Questions or interrogative sentences, require new information and ensure the thematic and rhematic coherence of the dialogic text: *“How did you know it was me?” she asked.*

“My dear Professor, I’ve never seen a cat sit so stiffly.”

“You’d be stiff if you’d been sitting on a brick wall all day,” said Professor McGonagall.

“All day? When you could have been celebrating? I must have passed a dozen feasts and parties on my way here.”

Professor McGonagall sniffed angrily.

“Oh yes, everyone’s celebrating, all right,” she said impatiently (Rowling, 1998).

By analyzing the context, it is identified that, the questions which are asked regularly, can impact on the process of communication. They can change normal conversations to discussions or disagreements.

In addition, the communication process reaches its culmination point precisely as a result of this consistency. Examples of question-answer dialogues in English, like all languages, are observed in life situations, discussions, media, interviews, conversations and examination processes. At this point, we should take into account, that the purpose of the interrogative sentence is not limited by obtaining the necessary information, but is also manifested by its accompanying pragmatic meaning and speaker's intention. It can be seen in the form of information, criticism, sarcasm, irony and motivation.

The situation where the interrogative sentence is used to mean surprise:

- *These two fishermen are my good friends. They live in a boat, Steerforth.*
- *In a boat? -said Steerforth, laughing. “That sounds the right kind of house for a fisherman. I should like to see it some time, Copperfield” (Dickens, 1998).*

Interrogative sentences can express strong anxiety and concern:

- *How was it, old fellow? What happened to you? Tell us all about it !”*
- *I’m better now, but I ’m a deal too flustered (Carroll, 1998).*

Questions asked to open a conversation or defuse a tense situation actually reveal the speaker's inner purpose:

- *How are you Mrs Barkis? My aunt said. I was sorry to hear about the death of your husband.*
- *Thank you, ma’am, Pegotty replied. She looked a little afraid of my aunt (Dickens, 1998).*

While analyzing dialogic situations in English literature, we have witnessed that in question-and-answer discourse, the respondent has more options during the conversation: that is, the respondent can refuse to answer, change the topic of the conversation, or use short and general response forms to indicate that the communicative situation does not satisfy him:

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then." (Carol, 1998).

In the above dialogue excerpt, the question is not answered clearly and specifically, and its place is filled with less important information.

In English, question-answer dialogic discourse is also characteristic of the style of speech. We understand dialogue as a conversation between two or more people who talk about a common topic. In the process of studying question-answer dialogues in many situations, we can see that long sentences do not appear in the response replicas, that is, the idea is expressed very concisely. The main reason for this is that in the process of dialogue, in addition to words, a number of extralinguistic factors (external factors) are important. These include factors such as the situation, speech situation, facial expressions, gestures, general information and experiences of the addressee and the addressee on the topic of the dialogue.

The above factors cause certain fragments to be ellipsis in the question-answer process and in the structure of the sentence. Ellipsis (in Greek - elleipsis - dropping, falling) - is the phenomenon of omission of speech elements. Ellipsis is a phenomenon observed in live colloquial speech, as well as in literary texts. This process is associated with the fact that the gestures, facial expressions, mimic movements of the speaking parties in a close position are known to both parties, and the thought is known to both parties. The use of the ellipsis phenomenon in dialogical speech is also inextricably linked with pragmatics. The main reason for this is that the speaker clearly understands in the process of expressing his opinion which unit of the language he needs or can be omitted, and to what extent this is necessary for achieving his communicative goal.

Result and Discussion

In ellipsis, one of the parts of speech in the text is omitted for various reasons. We can observe this in the form of a morphological indicator, phonetic or lexical unit. This omitted unit is structurally clear and partially provides information about the conversation process and the psychological state of its participants. The phenomenon of ellipsis is also clearly evident in the construction of dialogues in English:

"Who gave this to you?"

"Martin. The owner. I must thank him." (Hemingway, 1952).

In fact, the answer to the question above should have been "Martin gave it to me", but here the part of the sentence is ellipsis. Below we can see another situation:

-Are you planning to go abroad again? Agnes asked me quietly as she played...

-I hope that, I will not (Hemingway, 1952).

Here, along with the part of the sentence, the complement is also ellipsised, and in its full form it is in the form of "I hope that, I will not go abroad again". An example of a conversation taken from J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" can also be used as an example of the omission of parts of the sentence, that is, the occurrence of ellipsis:

"Hagrid," said Dumbledore, sounding relieved. "At last. And where did you get that motorcycle?"

"Borrowed it, Professor Dumbledore, sir," said the giant, climb-ing carefully off the motorcycle as he spoke (Rowling, 1998).

In this situation, the writer uses the young man's response to Professor Dumbledore's refusal to tell him exactly where he got the motorcycle, effectively using the phenomenon of ellipsis to convey a speech situation to the reader.

In most cases, in the course of a conversation, the words used in the previous line are not repeated in the subsequent lines. The reason is that in live communication there is a strong tendency to omit everything that is not necessary to express the idea. However, when viewed separately from the initial line, the subsequent lines may seem incomprehensible. That is, in order for contextual ellipsis to be used in a question-and-answer dialogue, there must be an initial part of the conversation. To summarize, the perfection of communication is not reflected in individual replicas, but in the sum of all replicas - in a certain dialogical unity. It should also be noted that the pragmatics of dialogue is also understandable precisely when all replicas are clearly reflected:

-You 're looking for eggs, I know that well enough; and what does it matter to me whether you 're a little girl or a serpent ?"

-It matters a good deal to me,-said Alice hastily (Carroll, 1998).

Since the dialogue text contains ellipsis, it is impossible to understand the essence of the subsequent replies, the respondent's internal purpose, that is, the pragmatics of the question or answer, in isolation from the main reply. In the dialogue above, it is also difficult to understand what the reply (*It matters a good deal to me*) refers to without familiarizing yourself with the question text.

One of the types of communication that expresses the dialogic discourse of questions and answers is the interview. While dialogues in fiction are used to effectively convey to the reader the place, space, social situation, psychological state, age, gender, status and inner experiences of the participants in the conversation, interviews broadcast through the media are real conversations with strong influence. Examples of dialogue-style question-and-answer communication include roundtable discussions, briefings, debates and press conferences. An interview is a process consisting of a person asking questions (a journalist) and a person expressing their thoughts, knowledge and experience by answering questions. Unlike everyday conversations, the questions asked during the interview are often clearly defined and the respondent is asked to fully explain these questions. In real-life dialogues, the roles between people alternate sharply, and one person can simultaneously act as both the questioner and the answerer.

Conclusion

Speaking about the pragmatic scope and communicative purpose of the interview, as a media event, it includes functions such as informing, entertaining, and influencing people through questions and answers. There are also several types of questions in the interview structure. The questions are mainly selected by the journalist. In this situation, special

attention is paid to the pragmatics of the question, since different forms of questions require different approaches from the respondent.

Many factors can affect the pragmatic field of question-answer dialogic discourse. The most important of these are lexical, semantic, morphological and phonological factors. In English, question-answer discourse is used mainly in everyday conversations, exams and interviews.

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