

# INTERCONNECTION AND INTERACTION OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** This paper presents the results of research devoted to one of significant aspects of interrogative sentences. The precise definitions of interconnection and interaction and the application of these terms to the language units helped to distinguish between interconnection and interaction of interrogative sentences in English. The existence of two different kinds of relations in the language, namely paradigmatic and syntagmatic, provided the basis for singling out two corresponding forms of interaction of English interrogative sentences. Contextual and distributional analyses of the material from authentic sources enabled to characterize the range and degree of their paradigmatic and syntagmatic interaction.

**Key words:** interrogative sentence, interconnection, paradigmatic interaction, syntagmatic interaction, form, range and degree of interaction.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The elements in the objective reality as well as the thoughts about them in the human consciousness exist in interaction (Kondakov, 1975, 87) which is reflected in the language system where categories and elements interact with each other and make up complex language units.

The terms “interaction”, “interconnection” and “interrelation” are often confused. According to the definition, the essence of relation consists in the dependence of one thing on the other *without their direct contact*. In this respect relation differs from connection which is defined as the *direct* dependence of one thing on another (Sviderskij, 1983 22). Consequently, interrelation can be described as mutual dependence of several objects without their direct contact, whereas interconnection is

mutual dependence of several directly contacting objects.

Interrelation and interconnection differ from interaction as they do not lead to the alteration of interrelated or interconnected objects and do not produce some new substance while interaction may cause changes and bring about the appearance of something new.

Interrogative sentences are characterized as syntactic units which serve to express questions. In logic a question is understood as the form of thinking which contains certain information and at the same time points at its insufficiency and aims at getting new information (Getmanova, 1986, 24). Due to the common semantic characteristics which consist in indicating the lack of knowledge and conveying the intention to receive the necessary information interrogative sentences are united into a microsystem of the language (Curikova, 1992, 9). They also possess a number of differentiating features connected with the anticipated answers which affect the structure of interrogative sentences. In special questions the expected answer is determined by an interrogative pronoun or adverb which implies unlimited number of possible variants. In the alternative question the potential answer is restricted by explicit variants. In the general question the answer can be either positive or negative. One of these variants is verbalized and the other is implied, but perceived by the interlocutors as contrary to the explicit one (Sklyarova, 2006, 214).

The objective of this article is to consider interrogative sentences of the English language in the framework of interconnection and interaction.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on the extensive material from authentic sources, in particular, fiction books of English-speaking authors, such as C. Ahern, M. Atwood, J. Austen, H. Cecil, A. Christie, P.D. Cornwell, A.C. Doyle, A.M. Greely, L. Irvine, A. Perry, T. Ross and S. Sheldon. The tasks of the study are:

–distinguishing between interconnection and interaction of English interrogative sentences;

–singling out different forms of interaction of English interrogative sentences;

–determining various cases of paradigmatic interaction of English interrogative sentences;

–finding out the peculiarities of syntagmatic interaction of English interrogative sentences.

The methods applied in this study are selected in accordance with the objective and tasks of research. The differentiation of interconnection and interaction of interrogative sentences is based on the philosophical definitions of both phenomena, whereas two forms of their interaction correspond to two types of relations in the language, namely, paradigmatic and syntagmatic. Interrogative sentences of the English language are investigated in their contextual environment with the help of distributional method of analysis in order to single out different cases of their paradigmatic interaction and the peculiarities of syntagmatic interaction which display the range and degree of both forms of interaction. To demonstrate interconnection of the main types of questions in the English language the method of transformation is used.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The interconnection of interrogative sentences can be explained from the point of view of logic. If the number of possible answers to the special question is limited by the situation it can be easily transformed into the alternative question which in its turn can be converted into several general questions. If it is unlikely to enumerate all potential answers to the special question it can be transformed into the alternative question where anticipated answers are not exhaustive but are enough to fill in the gap in knowledge (Zuev, 1961, 125-126). It can be proved by the following example: *How many windows are there in the back of the house?* (P.D. Cornwell, *Body of Evidence*). To transform this special question into the alternative one there is no need to enumerate all numbers. But taking into account the size of the house, the quantity of stores and other extra linguistic factors which make up the presupposition of this question one may state that the possible number of windows is no less than four and no more than six. So the corresponding alternative question will be: *Are there four, five or six windows in the back of the house?* It may be further converted into the subsequent general questions: *Are there four windows in the back of the house? Are there five windows in the back of the house? Are there six windows in the back of the house?* This logical transformation of interrogative sentences is hypothetical; it does not lead to the appearance of different types of questions in real speech which makes interconnection of interrogative sentences different from interaction.

Interaction of interrogative sentences can be characterized with the help of such parameters singled out by E.V. Murugova, as the form of interaction, the range of interaction and the degree of interaction (Murugova, 2007, 76).

Interrogative sentences in the English language display two forms of interaction,

termed as paradigmatic and syntagmatic which are determined by the existence of two corresponding types of relations. Paradigmatic relations make up the structure of language system and syntagmatic relations unite language units in speech. Paradigmatic interaction causes the appearance of mixed types of questions. Due to syntagmatic interaction interrogative sentences are able to be realized in sequences in connected speech. The result of paradigmatic interaction is the formation of one interrogative sentence, whereas the result of syntagmatic interaction is the complex of interrogative sentences.

There are several cases of paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences.

Firstly, paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences is observed in the syntactic units where one of the expected answers to the alternative question is expressed indefinitely with the help of an interrogative pronoun or adverb, thus widening the range of potential answers:

*Have we here a coincidence, or what?* (A. Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*).

Secondly, the questions beginning with the word combination *which of* should be also referred to the cases of paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences. Such syntactic constructions have the form of special questions, but their contents are closer to the alternative ones as the number of possible answers here is restricted by the situation:

*Which of these are likely to be carpet versus garment fibers?* (P.D. Cornwell, *Body of Evidence*).

Thirdly, paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences can be traced in the syntactic structures which have the form of alternative questions, but the semantic peculiarities of anticipated answers make them closer to general questions. The mixed character of such interrogative sentences can be explained by the fact that to answer them one should choose not be-

tween an affirmation and negation, but between two possible variants which are contrary to each other, like affirmation and negation. The possible answers represent the pairs of language units the contradictory meaning of which is determined by the lexical means with negative meaning marking one of them. One of the antonyms may also be partially implicit:

*George Elephant, are you guilty or not guilty?* (H. Cecil, *The Name*).

*Was it murder or wasn't it?* (A. Christie, *Appointment with Death*).

*Will the Prime Minister reappear or will he not?* (A. Christie, *The Kidnapped Prime Minister*).

In the interrogative sentences where the possible answers are represented by antonyms with the contradictory meanings of root or affix morphemes such interaction is revealed weaker:

*You grew up rich or poor, Anna Maude?* (T. Ross, *Briarpatch*).

*Is your answer partial or impartial?* (A.M. Greely, *The Bishop and the Missing Ltrain*).

Finally, paradigmatic interaction can be exemplified by the situations when general questions are used instead of special:

*"She has been with you long?"*

*"Nearly a year"* (A. Christie, *The Nemean Lion*).

Such cases are characterized by linguists as the discrepancy between the form of the sentence and its communicative goal (Bulygina, T.V., Shmelev, 1992, 110), because the character of expected answer does not correspond to the type of question.

Indirect questions with the interrogative introductory part can be treated as the product of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic interaction because they consist of the succession of two questions in one sentence, but the speaker's intention is not to find out *whether* the listener knows (remembers, thinks, etc.) or does not know (remember, think, etc) something, but to find *what* he or she knows (remembers,

thinks, etc.) about certain situation. Thus, in the focus of communication is the second question, while the first question loses its interrogative function and plays just a subsidiary role:

*Do you remember what she was wearing that day?* (P.D. Cornwell, *Body of Evidence*).

*Do you know, for certain, Mr. Monk, whether he is alive or dead?* (A. Perry, *Cain His Brother*).

*Do you know if Mrs. Burton-Cox was a friend of your family, of your mother and father?* (A. Christie, *Elephants Can Remember*).

Purely syntagmatic interaction of interrogative sentences can be observed in the cases when the number of possible answers to the special question is limited by the following alternative question:

*Who keeps changing the rules, them or us?* (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*).

Though such examples are regarded as mixed questions (Wunderlich, 1980, 141), we share the opinion that they can be treated as a combination of two sentences (Korol'kova, 1981, 13). Such combination is possible due to the ability of alternative questions to follow special ones, narrowing the variety of potential answers (Palmer, Blandford, 1969, 302). Moreover, unlike mixed and indirect questions such sentences can be split in two separate syntactic units, which proves that this is a complex of questions, the result of syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences.

But the cases of syntagmatic interaction of interrogative sentences are not confined only to the combination of special and alternative questions. On the contrary, they are much more numerous and varied. In speech one can run across the cases when interrogative sentences of different types follow one another making up the chains of questions:

*Why should he take the horse out of the stable? If he wished to injure it why could he not do it there? Has a duplicate*

*key been found in his possession? What chemist sold him the powdered opium? Above all, where could he, a stranger to the district, hide a horse, and such a horse as this? What is his own explanation as to the paper which he wished the maid to give to the stable-boy?* (A.C. Doyle, *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*).

Such textual units are named complexes of questions. They were thoroughly investigated in Russian (Mel'kumjanc, 1997), German (Vlasenko, 1986; Han, 1985), and partially in English (Skljaroja, 2006). A complex of questions is completed from the point of view of its contents and intonation. It is believed to have a sole interrogative communicative goal (Han, 1985, 135), and a so called "uniting semantic component" (Mel'kumjanc, 1997, 7). But the results of our research show that a complex of questions can fulfill communicative tasks different from getting information. Besides the sentences which comprise it may not have some common idea. Thus, in the following example there is a complex consisting of rhetorical questions which in fact contain statements rather than inquiries but express them more emotionally:

*"What the hell did they teach you in medical school? Don't you even know the difference between heartburn and a heart attack?"* (S. Sheldon, *Nothing Lasts Forever*). → *They didn't teach you anything in medical school. You don't know the difference between heartburn and a heart attack.*

In the other example the first and second constituent elements in the complex of interrogative sentences are aimed at restoring the contact with the interlocutor and only the third constituent element is a pure question:

*"Excuse me? Am I talking to myself? I asked you if it was OK if I go in and tell my friends that we had to leave?"* (C. Ahern, *PS, I Love You*).

Taking into account the above mentioned facts, we share the opinion of L.P. Vlasenko who treats a complex of ques-

tions as a number of interrogative sentences following one another and connected through intonation, structure or meaning (Vlasenko, 1986, 111).

According to the opinion of V.A. Mel'kumjanc based on the results of his research, the constituent elements of the complex of questions in Russian may represent separate sentences, parts of a composite sentence and homogeneous members in a simple sentence (Mel'kumjanc, 1997, 5).

The analysis of complexes of questions in the English language shows that they can be found on the textual level, as well as on the level of a composite and simple sentences. In a simple sentence a complex of questions is the result of the compression of a composite sentence where similar elements are omitted:

*And what sort of young lady is she? Is she handsome? (J. Austen, Pride and Prejudice).*

*Which one was it, or did you have them both? (L. Irvine, Castaway).*

*How did it happen and where? (P.D. Cornwell, Body of Evidence). → How did it happen and where did it happen?*

But complexes of questions can be found in the text oftener than in the sentence. The number and possible combinations of questions in the text are greater than those in the sentence due to relative independence, self-sufficiency of separate sentences and the completeness of the idea expressed by them.

Thus, in the following example the complex of interrogative sentences consists of ten constituent elements. This number includes all syntactic units marked by interrogative punctuation. Elliptical and detached constructions are treated as separate components:

*Was it dropped by Colonel Arbuthnot? Or by someone else? Who wore the scarlet kimono? Who was the man or woman masquerading in Wagon Lit uniform? Why do the hands of the watch point to 1.15? Was the murder committed at that*

*time? Was it earlier? Was it later? Can we be sure that Ratchett was stabbed by more than one person? What other explanation of his wounds can there be? (A. Christie, Murder on the Orient Express).*

In complexes of questions consisting of two elements all types of interrogative sentences of the English language can be combined whereas in multi-element complexes the number of such combinations increases. Thus, in the next example the complex of interrogative sentences includes a special question, a general question, an alternative question and a disjunctive question:

*Which of them is it? The egregious Greg? The quiet Edward Hillingdon or my fellow Jackson? It's got to be one of the three, hasn't it? (A. Christie, Caribbean Mystery).*

Besides, interrogative sentences in the complex of questions may immediately follow each other or be in remote contact, in the latter case they are separated by the author's words or by the sentences of other communicative types, such as declarative or exclamatory. Their presence does not destroy the unity and integrity of the complex the constituent elements of which are strongly connected by intonation, structure or meaning:

*"What do you think of this sentence, my dear Lizzy?" said Jane as she finished it. "Is it not clear enough?" (J. Austen, Pride and Prejudice).*

*Oh, was that what it was this month? I was just dying to know. So how did it go? (C. Ahern, PS, I Love You).*

*And is such a girl to be my nephew's sister? Is her husband, is the son of his late father's steward, to be his brother? Heaven and earth! – of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted? (J. Austen, Pride and Prejudice).*

Thus, interaction of interrogative sentences brings about definite changes, in case of paradigmatic interaction mixed types of questions appear, syntagmatic in-

teraction leads to the appearance of larger language units.

The degree of paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences is greater than the degree of their syntagmatic interaction which is determined by stronger structural and semantic unity of mixed types of questions in comparison with interrogative complexes. At the same type the range of syntagmatic interaction of interrogative sentences is wider than the range of their paradigmatic interaction because the combinations of questions which can make up a complex are more varied than those which can produce mixed types of questions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Interaction, interconnection and interrelation are close but different phenomena which have their own peculiarities. Interconnection of interrogative sentences is explained by the laws of logic. Interaction of interrogative sentences in the English language has paradigmatic and syntagmatic forms. Paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences leads to the appearance of their mixed types. Syntagmatic interaction of interrogative sentences leads to their successive combinations in speech. The constituent elements of the resulting complexes of questions represent different types of interrogative sentences in various sequences and number. Their unity and integrity are achieved by intonation, structure or meaning. The degree and range of paradigmatic interaction of interrogative sentences differ considerably from those of syntagmatic interaction.

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