

Pragmatic functions of interrogatives in media texts

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A number of approaches to media texts tend to apply an interactive model to communication, and the texts are seen as intrinsically dialogic, relying on the receivers' subjective interpretation of meaning and activation of intertextual relations. In addition, media texts are increasingly used as material for linguistic analysis with the aim to reveal how their linguistic potential is utilized by journalists to convey messages and ideas, and influence the audience. The paper discusses the pragmatic functions of interrogatives and the way they are realized in media text, more specifically in newspaper articles' headlines, leads and bodies excerpted from British and American online media over a period of two months. The analysis is mapped against previous research of interrogatives in the field of pragmatics and mediallynguistics. The main findings show that interrogatives in headlines realize a range of pragmatic roles when used on their own or as part of paratactic or hypotactic complexes. These roles are closely dependent on their syntactic and semantic features and can range from attracting and focusing readers' attention, to urging readers to think about issues, look for certain types of answers in the text, or think of their own answers or reactions. Headlines can be expanded or clarified in the sub-headings, lead and main body of the article. In the main body, interrogatives help to structure and authenticate writer's dialogue with the audience, making the narrative or argumentation more emphatic, and soliciting active commitment to issues, feedback and empathy from the audience. Furthermore, some topics of high public interest and importance might lead to an increase in the number of questions in media texts. Further research of larger and more varied thematically material might throw light on the way different topics affect the frequency and distribution of pragmatic roles of interrogatives in media texts.

Keywords: pragmatic functions, interrogatives, headlines, media texts.

Introduction

Mass media are a key factor in shaping public opinion and focusing audience's interests on topics and issues of perceived social, political or environmental importance. Their role becomes particularly important in cases in which people lack direct knowledge or experience of events or phenomena and rely on media for information or advice. Mass media have the potential to set agendas and limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate [Happer & Philo 2013]. In addition to keeping their audiences abreast with current events, they can channel and focus public interest, and create bias in evaluating reality, which is a precondition for easier manipulation. Striving to reduce the effect of the medium on the interpersonal communication between the sender and the receiver of messages, journalists' texts tend to imitate as much as possible face-to-face communication

between interlocutors who share similar schematic and background knowledge. In this respect, newspapers, the oldest, yet most versatile genre for informing and influencing mass audiences, are particularly suitable for exploring the appearance and evolution of new ways for engaging with the audience. This type of personal engagement is most visible in digital editions, in which targeting segmented readership through podcasts, mobile feeds (based on readers' preferences) or discussions in newspapers' blog areas, is a common strategy.

Audience-centered approaches to text analysis see readers as having an active role in the construction of meaning. Drawing on the knowledge of other texts and conventions, readers combine ideas in their minds to create narratives which are fictitious and self-contained, and are important in the process of meaning making [Burton 2010]. This narrative creation can be facilitated by the writer's use of linguistic devices, such as interrogatives. Although the primary role of newspaper articles is to provide information rather than elicit response from the audience, interrogatives can serve a wide range of pragmatic purposes in structuring and channeling the writer — addressee communication. They can help to fill gaps in readers' knowledge by urging them to obtain missing information. In addition to this core function, performed by information(or wh-) questions, there is a variety of additional context-dependent pragmatic functions that are realized through other types of interrogatives, such as yes-no, alternative, rhetorical, echo, or tag questions. Their pragmatic functions might range from expecting confirmation or rejection of the proposition, to choosing an alternative, creating emphasis, calling to action, expressing attitude, signaling a desired answer, and even manipulating the addressee. In the broad field of mediallynguistics, pragmatic analysis is one of the approaches, which together with other research paradigms, such as critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, corpus-linguistics, and multimodal analysis, contribute to a fuller understanding of media texts.

Previous research in the field

Interrogatives in linguistics

The term interrogative is used to indicate the syntactic structure which typically performs the communicative function of questioning. Cross and Roelofsen [Cross, Roelofsen 2018] differentiate between two main types of questions: 'whether' questions, which have a finite number of direct answers (yes, no or more alternatives), and 'which'-questions, which may have an indefinite or infinite number of direct answers. In addition to these elementary questions, there are also 'why'-questions and embedded (indirect) questions. However, not all interrogatives are used to ask questions, e.g. rhetorical questions which convey speaker's attitude or stance. In addition, there are other, non-interrogative syntactic forms that perform the role of questioning. Although questions are easily recognizable by participants in communication, there is no single linguistic criterion (e.g. syntax, intonation, sequential position), which is sufficient or necessary to recognise a question [Bolinger 1957]. For example, in a study of English conversational data by Weber [Weber 1993], only 59% of all questions were expressed through interrogatives; the remaining 41% were questions in non-interrogative form. The present paper will only be concerned with the pragmatic functions of structures which have the form of interrogatives. In other

words, we consider syntactic form as a key factor in defining the function of questions in discourse.

Discussing interrogatives in the system of clause types, Huddleston [Huddleston 1994] differentiates them from other clauses, such as declarative and imperative, and states that there are two sub-types of interrogatives — open and closed. Open interrogatives are formed with a ‘wh-word’ and allow a range of answers, whereas closed interrogatives are formed by placing the auxiliary (or adding a dummy auxiliary) before the subject. Closed interrogatives are further divided into polar (taking either *yes* or *no* as answers) and alternative questions (with an answer from the options presented in the question). In terms of their pragmatic functions, both open and closed interrogatives can be used to get either information or direction. In traditional syntactic terminology, interrogatives can be used on their own, as simple sentences, or in combination with other clauses in relations of coordination or subordination. However, following Downing and Locke [Downing, Locke 1992], we accept that the term ‘clause complex’ is more appropriate for discussing discourse phenomena than the term ‘sentence’, as it reflects better the correspondences between their syntactic and semantic properties. Therefore, the terms used in our analysis for the syntactic relations between clauses are paratactic (between equal status clauses) and hypotactic (between clauses of unequal status). The logico-semantic relations between the clauses in close complexes are described as expansion (one clause expands the meaning of another by elaborating, extending or enhancing its meaning), or projection (one clause projected through another by a verb of saying or thinking).

The pragmatic role of interrogatives has been investigated at various levels of linguistic analysis. Within the speech act theory in particular, the illocutionary force of interrogatives is distinguished from their semantic content, while Conversation Analysis examines how questions and their answers are used in turn-taking for structuring conversation. Since the 1980s, research has increasingly explored the meaning which emerges in the context of actual use, which implies a close examination of semantic and pragmatic phenomena in their interconnectedness and inseparability. As Onea et al. [Onea et al. 2019: 5] point out, “in the past decades of research, questions have become a very prominent topic at the semantics-pragmatics interface”.

Interrogatives in media texts

Media research within the paradigms of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics have focused more on the manifestations of bias, ideology and power relationships in language, than on the impact of the linguistic choices made by journalists [Cotter 2015]. The key objects of study are the news stories, the processes involved in producing the texts, and the writers’ approaches to audience, which can be foregrounded through its comprehension and response to texts. The use of interrogatives is one of the most obvious ways to appeal to and interact with the audience in media texts. However, interrogatives are not equally present in different newspaper genres. For example, their use is not recommended in reporting so-called ‘hard news’, especially in headlines and introductions, although they are acceptable in feature articles and ‘soft’ news stories. As Keeble [Keeble 2006] points out, beginning with a question softens the impact of a story, or adds variety.

One of the primary roles of interrogatives in headlines is to provoke the audience to read the whole article in order to find the answer to the question [Nikolova 2008].

They also bring the author's main thesis to the foreground and problematize it by inviting the audience to look for the answer. On the other hand, the question expressed in the headline might signal the author's personal doubt in the truth value of the proposition [Nikolova 2008, p. 105]. Research also provides evidence that interrogative headlines are particularly effective in conveying a range of author's intentions, while at the same time losing their questioning force [Murtada 2003; Vahtel 2005]. However, some studies show that interrogatives are not the preferred choice of both writers and audience. In a study of electronic media headlines covering migration, Nedelcheva [Nedelcheva 2017] found that interrogative headlines are the second preferred type after the declarative ones, and that they are used to provoke the readers' interest and desire to find the answers. What is more, in a study of headline patterns in viral web content in English and Bulgarian media texts, Iglíkova [Iglíkova 2017] found that the question headlines are the least popular in terms of audience's preference. Her data showed that "the most common combination of headline types includes the use of a direct question addressing the reader either explicitly or implicitly, with a definitive preference for direct questions over indirect ones" [Iglíkova 2017: 81]. The relative unpopularity of question headlines was also confirmed by Scacco and Muddiman [Scacco, Muddiman 2016], who found that *question-based* headlines elicit negative reactions to a headline, negative expectations about the news article, and fewer intentions to engage with it. This is in line with Betteridge's law about headlines, which recommends to avoid questions in headlines, as any headline ending in a question mark can be answered with the word 'no'.

On the other hand, the use of questions as headlines in electronic media is a popular strategy for increasing the so-called 'clickbait' effect, alongside the use of personal and possessive pronouns, and negative words [Kuiken et al. 2017]. Lai and Farbroth [Lai, Farbroth 2014] also confirmed that questions have a considerable impact on generating readership. Their experiments proved that interrogative headlines have a greater impact than declarative ones, and that self-referencing cues make questions more effective, as they trigger the reader to relate to the message which enhances cognitive processing. According to Bly [Bly 2006], effective headlines must ask a question that the reader can empathise with or would like to see answered. In order to be appealing, headlines should focus on the reader's self-interest, curiosity, and needs. In addition, Ifantidou [Ifantidou 2009] noted readers' preference for creative, slightly confusing or less informative headlines which provoke readers' imagination and desire to read the article and resolve a potential headline ambiguity or meaning distortion. With respect to disambiguation of meaning, Hosman & Siltanen [Hosman, Siltanen 2011] outlined several types of questions: hypothetical (if-questions based on suppositions, not facts), rhetorical (which presuppose a correct answer), leading (questions that prompt a particular answer), and tag questions (which might affect perceptions of the speaker's power and credibility, and more indirectly, have an effect on attitude change).

While interrogatives in headlines are studied from different perspectives, research on their functions in the body of newspaper text is rather scarce. These functions can only be fully accounted for when considering their role in realizing paratextual interrelations between headlines and main texts [Varzapova 2015]. The relation between headlines and sub-headings was researched by Lyutaya [Lyutaya 2008] who found that sub-headings are more explicit and informative than headlines, and are linearly extended to further develop the structure of the article text. A detailed account of the relations of headlines to the

audience on the one hand, and to the main text, on the other, is presented in a comparative study of Russian and British newspaper headlines by Podchasov [Podchasov 2001]. He differentiated between several main types of headlines according to their relation to the addressee: informative, appealing, informative-appealing, disorienting, and defective. In comparison, Agapova [Agapova 2009] identified three types of functions performed by headlines in modern Russian press: neutral-informing, convincing and disorienting.

In a seminal work on the application of discourse analysis to the structure of news texts, van Dijk [van Dijk 1983] claimed that the grammatical choices made for a discourse and the expression of underlying propositions in different syntactic structures may sometimes be arbitrary (and beyond cognitive control), but may also be functional. Therefore, in analyzing the role of interrogatives in the newspaper texts, a researcher needs to take into account their functions in the news article macrostructure which attracts and organizes readers' attention, helping them decide whether to read the rest of the article. An interesting view of headlines (the abbreviated style of newspaper headlines) as a deviant morpho-syntactic compression of the lead paragraph of the article is put forward by Moncomble [Moncomble 2018: 2], according to whom "most news headlines result from the reduction of a full sentence or paragraph: most copyeditors work from the first paragraph of the news article itself and boil it down to its most essential semantic parts". His hypothesis is that headlines "builds on the potentialities of ordinary English, extending the normal limits in order to fulfil particular pragmatic goals" [Moncomble 2018: 4]. Bell [Bell 1995], on the other hand, compared the structure of news stories to personal narratives, emphasizing the role of the lead in assessing the value of the news story. He drew attention to the frequent disruption of the linear chronology in news stories, a fact later confirmed by Cotter [Cotter 2010], who defined reporters not as stenographers or transcribers, but as storytellers and interpreters. In a similar vein, discussing informing, evaluating and imperative functions of media genres, Duskaeva [Duskaeva 2004: 23] emphasized the implicit dialogue nature of writer-audience communication, and the role of writer's assumptions about the aspects of reality which readers are unaware of and which might be of interest to them. Gedgafova [Gedgafova 2017] also linked interrogative headlines to writer's intentions to create conditions for a dialogue, and even 'befriend' the readers so that they can see in the text what the writer wants them to see. These findings about the specifics of news articles' texts allow for a better understanding of the role of interrogatives in structuring news reports and communicating ideas and opinions to the audience.

Research Questions and methodology

Based on the findings of previous research relevant to our discussion, and accounting for the identified gaps, the main questions addressed in the present article are:

1. What are the functions of interrogatives in newspaper texts?
2. Do syntactic and semantic features of interrogatives affect their pragmatic roles?
3. Is there a difference in the way interrogatives are used in different parts of newspaper texts, i.e. in the headlines, leads and the rest of the text?
4. Does the topic of the newspaper texts affect the frequency of occurrence of certain types of interrogatives in them?

Comparing linguistic and nonlinguistic methods of textual analysis, Wodak and Busch [Wodak, Busch 2004: 107] state that “media analysis is problem oriented and not dogmatically related to the one or other linguistic theory or methodology”. The value of mixed-method approaches is that they allow for a look at a phenomenon from different perspectives, and thus avoid the limitations of following a strict agenda which might lead to overlooking something important. Mixed methods approach was used in van Dijk’s [van Dijk 1998] comparative analysis of news reports, and in the Glasgow Media Group research. In the present study, the methodological approach is a combination of elements of content analysis, linguistic analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis. Content analysis might account for the number of interrogatives, and the significance of their proportion in the text. Linguistic analysis will focus on the interface between syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of interrogatives. Narrative analysis will help to look into the writer’s structuring of the text and the reader’s positioning in it. Discourse analysis will help to identify specific preferences in formulating the questions which might shed light on the writer’s intentions to manipulate the reader.

Data analysis and discussion

As mentioned earlier in this paper, syntactic features of the interrogatives are used as a starting point in their classification. In addition, the present discussion of pragmatic functions is limited only to those structures which have the form of interrogatives. The data discussed in the article includes about 120 interrogatives excerpted from online versions of British and American newspapers and news sites (The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Sun, The Times, Daily Mail, The New York Times, New Statesman, The Independent, BBC news) over a period of 2 months — March and April 2020. Since this period coincided with the outbreak and spread of the corona virus pandemic, in the last two months this topic dominated all leading news. The unprecedented and unpredictable development of the disease raised a lot of uncertainty and anxiety in people, which resulted in an increased number of questions in media texts, which is reflected in the examples discussed below. In the discussion that follows, we first look at interrogatives which serve as headlines, and then discuss their pragmatic roles in the body of articles, in structuring narratives and developing author’s argumentation.

1. Interrogatives in headlines

In the headlines in our corpus, interrogatives are predominantly used in single clauses — 63 % of all cases. This might be explained with the fact that shorter forms speed up the processing of information by the reader [Moncomble 2018: 5]. Single interrogative clauses are used in four main patterns: closed interrogatives used on their own (32 %); open interrogatives used on their own (25 %); open or closed interrogatives used after a nominal clause (19 %); and open or closed interrogatives used as first or second pair parts in adjacency pairs (14 %). Interrogatives which are part of clause complexes account for 37 % of all data. Of them, 63 % have paratactic relations between clauses, and 35 % — hypotactic, with a very small percent (2 %) of complexes with both types of relations.

1.1. Closed interrogatives used on their own

Closed interrogatives make about 32% of single interrogatives in the corpus. The messages they convey are clear, simple, and do not need previous knowledge of the topic or immediate context for their interpretation. In the corpus there is an observable predominance of questions with modal auxiliaries, in comparison with primary ones, which might be due to writer's intention to address the increasing uncertainty of the audience (related to the coronavirus pandemic): *Can a face mask protect me from coronavirus?* (*The Guardian*, 30.03.2020); *Could vitamin D help protect you from coronavirus symptoms?* (*The Telegraph*, 25.04.2020); *Should world worry about Singapore's virus surge?* (*BBC News*, 10.04.2020); *Is today's deodorised culture destroying our sense of smell?* (*The Telegraph*, 18.04.2020); *Does alcohol weaken the immune system?* (*The Telegraph*, 22.04.2020). There are four possible answers to these questions: yes, no, or one of the options presented in the question, as in: *Will sky-high unemployment lead to authoritarianism or progress?* (*The Guardian*, 30.03.2020). However, other reactions are possible, ranging from no answer, uncertainty, or lack of interest. Therefore, their pragmatic roles are related to getting the readers to find the answer in the text; reflect on the question and look for their own answer; compare their answer with the answers in the text; opt out of reading the text they are not interested in the answer.

1.2. Open interrogatives used on their own

Open interrogatives make for 25% of the single clauses, and most of them are *why*-questions, although other *wh*-words, such as *how long*, *who* or *what* are also present: *Why weren't we ready?* (*New Statesman*, 30.03.2020); *Why are coronavirus mortality rates so different?* (*The Guardian*, 09.04.2020); *Why are Londoners so bad at keeping a respectful distance?* (*The Telegraph*, 29.03.2020); *How long does coronavirus live on different surfaces?* (*The Guardian*, 04.04.2020); *Who is most at risk of contracting coronavirus?* (*The Guardian*, 21.02.2020); *What is happening in Germany?* (*Independent*, 26.04.2020). The prevalence of *why*-questions in the corpus corresponds to readers' anxiety about the developing coronavirus crisis. The questions signal the information which readers can find in the articles, e.g. the number of infected or diseased, the time the virus survives on different surfaces, etc. *Why*-questions are recommended in journalist's handbooks, as they challenge readers to think critically. They convey the author's commitment to the proposition first, e.g. *We weren't ready for the coronavirus*, and then invite readers to look for evidence in the text. The pragmatic roles of open interrogatives are to signal the type of information sought; narrow the focus of the search; guide readers to find evidence in the text; and implicitly provoke readers to agree or disagree with the answers in the text.

1.3. Open or closed interrogatives which follow a nominal group

One frequently occurring pattern in headlines (19%) is a nominal group (a term from the systemic functional grammar for a group of words describing an entity), followed by a colon and an interrogative clause. It is used for assigning thematic prominence through fronting the topic: *Coronavirus vaccine: when will it be ready?* (*The Guardian*, 06.04.2020); *The good face mask guide: which ones work against coronavirus?* (*The Telegraph*, 23.04.2020); *Labour new shadow cabinet: Who is in the new Labour shadow cabinet?* (*Daily Express*, 06.04.2020); *Climate crisis: in coronavirus lockdown, nature bounces*

back — but for how long? (*The Guardian*, 09.04.2020); *Postcard from Seoul: ‘Coronavirus? What coronavirus?’* (*The Telegraph*, 18.04.2020; *The Life & Times of Malcolm McLaren by Paul Gorman review: Is it punk to share your granny’s bed?* (*The Telegraph*, 19.04.2020). In cases like these, “the reader is invited to relate the headline to previous reporting on the same theme, and the nominal group acts as a label before the headline per se” [Moncombe 2018: 11]). While this might be true for most cases, in others, like the in last of the examples above, it simply provides context for the question that follows. The pragmatic functions of such interrogatives are closely related to the intertextual potential of headlines [Varzapova 2015], which in our material is employed with the aim to draw reader’s attention to the new information in already familiar topic. This is done through a theme-rheme distribution of information, which also focuses and limits the scope of the topic announced in the nominal group.

1.4. Single interrogatives as first or second pair parts in adjacency pairs

Open and closed interrogatives can function as either first or second pair parts of adjacency pairs, whose meaning and function should be interpreted as one whole. Headlines with an interrogative clause followed by a declarative one are much more frequent than those with a reversed order: *Why is ‘cottagecore’ booming? Because being outside is now the ultimate taboo.* (*The Guardian*, 15.04.2020); *Why is South Korea beating coronavirus? Its citizens hold the state to account.* (*The Guardian*, 11.04.2020); *Can a face mask protect me from coronavirus? Covid 19 myths busted.* (*The Guardian*, 11.04.2020); *State servant or free agent? The BBC’s balancing act is now even harder.* (*The Guardian*, 15.04.2020); *Anyone who’s been laid off can pick fruit, right? It’s not that simple.* (*The Guardian*, 17.04.2020). The variety of first-part interrogatives includes modal, alternative, and even tag questions (as in the last example). Their functions range from attracting readers’ attention, to raising their curiosity, posing a dilemma (in alternative questions), or putting forward a statement and inviting reader’s confirmation (in tag questions). The second part, rather than providing an answer (although it might point to it, as in the first example above), in the majority of the cases contains a comment or a prompt, urging the audience to read the article. The second part might suggest emotional reactions or directly manipulate readers’ interpretation, as in: *What links every single member of Starmer’s shadow cabinet? (The answer will enrage you!)* (*Daily Express*, 12.04.2020). It can also prompt readers to find the answers themselves: *When will the cabinet ease the lockdown? That depends which minister you ask.* (*The Guardian*, 08.04.2020); *How will the UK lockdown end? Seven ways rules could be lifted.* (*The Times*, 16.04.2020); *To cruise the Arctic or the Antarctic? That is the question...* (*The Telegraph*, 18.04.2020), or to take action: *Think you know your Margiela from your McQueen? Take our fashion quarantine quiz;* (*The Guardian*, 09.04.2020); *Never read War and Peace? Now is the time.* (*The Guardian*, 09.04.2020). Some headlines of this type contain reduced interrogative clauses, which makes their style more colloquial, closes the distance with the readers and increases their illocutionary force.

Interrogatives can be the second pair parts in the adjacency pairs: *I need a glass of wine every night to take the edge off. Is that so wrong?* (*The Telegraph*, 17.04.2020); *My corona-anxiety is off the scale. What can I do?* (*The Telegraph*, 17.04.2020). Such examples are not very frequent, as the preferred model is for the interrogative to occur after a column in hypotactic clause complexes (see below). In them the meaning of the question can only

be understood in the context of the first part. They usually pose a dilemma to the reader, the solution to which is provided in the article.

2. Clause complexes containing interrogative clause(s)

Clause complexes containing open or closed interrogative clauses account for 37 % of the data in the corpus. Of them, 63% have paratactic relations between their clauses, and 35 % — hypotactic, with a very small percent (2 %) of complexes with both types of relations.

2.1. Paratactic clauses

Paratactic relations exist between units of equal status, which can be linked through coordination, or juxtaposition. The order in which they occur cannot be reversed due to the anaphoric and pragmatic relations between the clauses. In the majority of examples, there are two interrogative clauses of either open or closed type which are linked by the conjunction *and*. The thematic structuring of the message sets the interpretation of new information in context, provides sequence and logic in understanding the topic, and narrows the focus from general to specific: *What is a pandemic and does it change the approach to coronavirus?* (*The Guardian*, 14.03.2020); *How does the virus spread and how does it affect people?* (*The Guardian*, 24.04.2020); *What is coronavirus, how did it start and how big could it get?* (*The Telegraph*, 25.04.2020); *Are garages still open — and should I get my car MoT test during coronavirus lockdown?* (*The Telegraph*, 25.04.2020). Another common paratactic headline contains two clauses linked without conjunctions. The symmetry in their structure is reflected in their punctuation. The interrogative clause, which always comes second, specifies, exemplifies and clarifies the declarative one. The elaboration might include a quote from an interview, inexplicit enough to prompt the audience to read the whole article to solve the ambiguity: *This Morning in chaos during 'serious' coronavirus chat: 'What the hell have you done?'* (*Daily Express*, 01.04.2020). The question might follow a succinct presentation of a news story or news report: *Five fishermen, a stormy night and £53m of cocaine: were the Freshwater Five wrongly convicted?* (*The Guardian*, 18.04.2020); *Coronavirus mapped: which countries have the most cases and deaths?* (*The Guardian*, 24.04.2020), or a fact, establishing a cause and effect sequence: *Flights are grounded — is this the moment we give up our addiction to flying?* (*The Guardian*, 09.04.2020); *Car maintenance during lockdown: can I wash my car and how do I keep my battery charged?* (*The Telegraph*, 23.04.2020). This thematic structure enhances the pragmatic force of the interrogative. The question can make the whole headline provocative, challenging the audience to read the article for more information.

2.2. Hypotactic clauses

In the corpus, hypotactic clause complexes are less numerous than the paratactic ones, probably because the headlines following this pattern are longer and provide unnecessary details. Their subordinate clause can extend, elaborate on, or project the meaning of the main clause, as in the following examples: *Devastated by coronavirus, did Bergamo's work ethic count against it?* (*The Guardian*, 06.04.2020); *How can we demand all Brits to wear masks when our NHS workers are going short?* (*The Sun*, 18.04.2020); *Scientists ask: could summer heat help beat Covid-19?* (*The Guardian*, 05.04.2020). In some cases

interrogative clauses can be part of longer clause complexes with both para- and hypotactic links between them: *As Italy's coronavirus deaths surge beyond 9000, what did it get wrong and what can other countries learn?* (*The Telegraph*, 29.03.2020). The pragmatic functions of the interrogative clauses in these complexes cannot be realized without the other parts of the headlines. Their first purpose is to draw the readers' attention to the complex semantic interplay in the headline meaning realization. Secondly, they serve to prompt the reader to reflect on the situation described in the proposition and solicit some kind of feedback, instead of urging the reader to look for an answer in the text. Clause complexes in the corpus are also used to ask open questions, whose answers may not be immediately available in the text. Due to these functions, they are more common in editorials and opinion articles than in purely informative news-reporting articles.

3. Interrogatives in the leading paragraph and the body of a newspaper article

3.1. The headline — lead connection

The leading paragraph (known as 'lead' or 'intro') in a newspaper article is the second most important part of the article (after the headline), whose aim is to further maintain audience attention and convey the most important aspects of message or argument. This is where the so-called 'famous Ws — *who, what, where, when and why*' find their brief answers, and where the key events are first mentioned [Keeble 2006]. The lead is closely linked to the headline and usually elaborates or disambiguates its meaning, as can be seen in the following example, in which the interrogative headline — *COVID-19: Is the coronavirus an expression of God's wrath?* is expanded in the following lead: *Is the coronavirus an expression of God's wrath, a punishment for our sins or, as some of us believers like to think, merely another sign that He is testing us? I'll address later the godless anthem that insists this epidemic is about nature healing itself, because matters of God are urgent and they might be getting us killed at the moment.* (*New York Times*, 18/04/20). The lead can also clarify the question in the headline, by providing more details first, and then expand the question further. In the lead of the article from *The Times* (15/04/20), entitled *How will the UK lockdown end? Seven ways rules could be lifted*, the initial clarification that there is a plan to end the lockdown is followed by another complex interrogative structure containing more detailed questions: *Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, has called on the government to publish a road map setting out how it intends to ease the coronavirus lockdown. In Whitehall, a team of officials are creating just such a phased plan, which will remain behind closed doors until it is signed off by ministers. But what would such a plan look like, what are the risks and benefits — and what kind of public health measures would need to run alongside it?*

3.2. Interrogatives in structuring the news article body

The headline can be expanded or clarified in the sub-heading (if one is present), which serves as a bridge to the lead, and then to the main body, as in the article from *The Guardian* (4/04/20). The article is entitled *How long does coronavirus live on different surfaces?* The sub-heading contextualizes and elaborates on the meaning of the headline, and the question in its second part specifies the scope of the information sought: *Coronavirus RNA was found on a cruise ship 17 days after passengers left. What are the risks of handling packages and groceries?* This confirms the observations made by Lyutaya [Lyutaya 2008]

that sub-headings are often more explicit and informative than headlines, and are linearly extended to further develop the structure of the article's main body. The lead contains an extremely long clause complex ending with an open interrogative: *More people are staying indoors to avoid contact with people potentially infected by Covid-19. But in light of a recent report from the US's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that said RNA from the virus that causes Covid-19 was found in the Diamond Princess ship 17 days after its passengers had left, what are the risks of handling packages, groceries and what scientists call "high-touch" surfaces?* Thus, the lead expands the message first introduced in the headline and then clarified in the sub-heading, by a chain of details which outline the context of the problem — the report about finding virus traces on the ship. The article body is constructed as a sequence of seven questions to experts and their answers. Since the context has already been established by the headline — sub-heading — lead expansion, the questions in the body are short and straightforward, and present a balanced mix of closed and open interrogatives whose pragmatic role is to signpost and structure the elicited factual information. As a rule, articles structured as imaginary dialogues between the writer and the audience, as it is in the example above, contain a larger number of interrogatives. In argumentative texts, such as editorials, there are fewer questions, and their role is mainly to support author's argumentation by appealing to readers and making them think about issues raised by the questions. An example of such use of interrogatives can be seen in following article in *The Guardian* (29/03/20), entitled *Coronavirus means we really are, finally, all in this together*. The journalist levels his criticism at the inhuman rhetoric of politicians which creates negative attitudes and prejudice to unemployed people in the present difficult situation. The author raises his questions near the end of the article: *If millions of people are suddenly staring into the most uncertain future imaginable, and 500,000 people are suddenly applying for universal credit, will those ideas survive? Put another way, what will happen to the beliefs and prejudices that have defined so much of the last 10 to 15 years, encouraged by politicians chasing votes: mutual suspicion, a manic belief in "personal responsibility", and the very British tendency to focus your furies on the people down the street?* Both questions are complex hypotactic constructions the first part of which summarises the context of the discussion (signaled in the first sentence by anaphoric reference — *those ideas*). In the context of the author's argumentation the questions are perceived as rhetorical rather than genuine, which accentuates the concern and pessimism in his position. To sum up, in our data the use of interrogatives in article body is related to: structuring the story as a direct dialogue with the audience, thus reducing the effects of vicarious communication; making author's narrative or argumentation more emphatic; soliciting feedback and empathy from the audience, and urging audience to think about the issues discussed in the text.

Key findings and conclusion

An important feature of newspaper texts is that they are produced with the explicit intention to engage the readers and influence their perceptions by involving them in a meaning-creation process. The aim of the present study was to research how interrogatives are used by authors to enhance and manipulate this process. In response to our first research question, we identified a range of context-dependent pragmatic functions that are realized through different types of interrogatives used in headlines, leads and main

bodies of newspaper articles. We found that closed interrogatives slightly outnumber open ones when used as headlines on their own. Their pragmatic functions are realized in getting the readers to find an answer — positive, negative, or signaled in the question word — in the text. They might prompt the readers to reflect on the question and look for their own answers which can then be compared with those provided in the text, or even opt out of reading the text, if they find the question irrelevant to their interests. We did not identify any significant differences between pragmatic functions of single open and closed interrogatives. However, when used after a nominal group, interrogatives reveal a shift in their functions which results from positioning the query about new information against the background of an already familiar topic. In addition, they focus and limit the scope of the topic announced in the nominal phrase. Different pragmatic functions were identified when single interrogatives function as first or second pair parts in adjacency pairs. As first parts, they aim to attract readers' attention and raise their curiosity. They can also present a dilemma to be resolved in the text (in alternative questions), or put forward a statement and ask for reader's confirmation (in tags). As second parts in adjacency pairs they can only be understood in the context of the first part, thus activating intertextual relations, and their role is to pose a dilemma addressed to the reader, the solution to which is actually provided in the article.

Clause complexes containing interrogatives are less frequent than single interrogatives, and those with paratactic relations between clauses outnumber the hypotactic ones. There are two types of paratactic headlines in the corpus — containing two interrogative clauses of equal status, or having one interrogative clause which follows a declarative one. In both types the thematic structuring of the message sets the interpretation of the new information in context, provides a sequence and narrows the focus of understanding from general to specific. When coming second, the interrogative clause usually specifies, exemplifies and clarifies the first one. In some cases this thematic structuring enhances the pragmatic force of the interrogative and makes the whole headline provocative or challenging. The pragmatic functions of interrogatives which are part of hypotactic complexes could only be revealed after a close examination of the whole complex. Their role is to draw the readers' attention to the complex semantic interplay in the headline and solicit feedback by prompting the reader to reflect on the proposition. Clause complexes in the corpus are often used to ask questions, whose answers may not be immediately available in the text, which makes them more typical of editorials and opinion articles than of purely informative news-reporting articles. These findings allow us to claim that syntactic and semantic features of interrogatives affect their pragmatic roles, which is an answer to our second research question.

The third research question addressed potential differences in the way interrogatives function in headlines, leads and bodies of news articles. The headlines, whose pragmatic functions are realized in close dependence on their form and meaning, can be expanded or clarified in sub-headings, which connect them to the lead and the main body of the article. In the main body of news articles interrogatives are used for structuring and authenticating writer's dialogue with the audience, making the narrative or argumentation more emphatic, and soliciting active commitment to raised issues, as well as feedback and empathy from the audience.

Finally, corpus material allows us to claim that some topics, especially those gaining much public attention as the coronavirus pandemic with its unpredictable and

life-threatening development, lead to an increase in the number of questions in media texts. However, the limitations of our research do not allow us to claim that certain types of interrogatives or certain pragmatic functions have higher frequency in the texts. Further research of a larger, more varied thematically and extended in time corpus is needed in order to gain insights into the way different topics affect the frequency, range and distribution of pragmatic functions of interrogatives in media texts.

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Прагматические функции вопросительных конструкций в медийных текстах

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В целом ряде подходов к исследованию медиатекстов проявляется тенденция к применению интерактивной модели коммуникации, в рамках которой рассматриваемые тексты считаются по своей сути диалогичными, полагающимися на субъективную интерпретацию смысла читателем и активацию интертекстуальных отношений. Кроме того, медиатексты все чаще используются в качестве материала для лингвистического анализа с целью выявления того, как журналисты используют лингвистический потенциал текстов для передачи сообщений и идей и для влияния на аудиторию. Обсуждаются прагматические функции интеррогативных конструкций и то, как они реализуются в медиатекстах, в частности в заголовках, во введении и в основном тексте газетных статей, выбранных из британских и американских онлайн-СМИ. Анализ сопоставляется с предыдущими исследованиями интеррогативных конструкций в области прагматики и медиалингвистики. Основные результаты показывают, что вопросительные конструкции в заголовках реализуют ряд прагматических функций, когда используются сами по себе или как часть паратактических или гипотактических комплексов. Эти роли во многом зависят от их синтаксических и семантических характеристик и могут варьировать от привлечения и фокусирования внимания читателя до побуждения

читателя задуматься о проблемах, искать ответы в тексте или думать о собственных ответах или реакциях. Заголовки могут быть расширены или уточнены в подзаголовках, введении и основной части статьи. В основной части вопросительные конструкции помогают структурировать и аутентифицировать диалог автора с аудиторией, делая повествование или аргументацию более выразительным и добиваясь активного участия читателей к проблемам, осуществления обратной связи и сочувствия со стороны аудитории. Кроме того, некоторые темы, представляющие большой общественный интерес, могут привести к увеличению количества вопросов в медиатекстах. Дальнейшее исследование более объемного и разнообразного тематического материала может пролить свет на то, как разные темы влияют на частотность и распределение прагматических ролей вопросительных конструкций в медиатекстах.

Ключевые слова: прагматические функции, интеррогативы, заголовки, медийные тексты.

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