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REVIEW ON STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF ENGLISH INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

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Abstract: This study examines the syntactic forms, semantic meanings, and illocutionary functions of English interrogative sentences in audiovisual media, with particular attention to the alignment or mismatch between form and function. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were drawn from three media sources: a documentary (*The Social Dilemma*), a talk show (*The Ellen Show*), and a vlog (MrBeast YouTube channel), yielding 30 interrogative sentences for analysis. The findings reveal five syntactic types: yes/no questions (23.3%), wh-questions (23.3%), tag questions (16.7%), declarative questions (20.0%), and echo questions (16.7%). Five illocutionary functions were identified: information-seeking, confirmation-seeking, rhetorical, directive, and expressive, each representing 20% of the sample. Notably, 70% of interrogatives exhibited form-function mismatch, with declarative questions showing complete mismatch (100%), as they retain declarative word order but function as questions through rising intonation. Media context significantly influenced interrogative use: documentaries favored canonical forms and alignment (60%), while talk shows and vlogs exhibited higher mismatch (60-70%) due to their spontaneous, interactive nature. The study demonstrates that syntactic form alone cannot reliably predict pragmatic function in real discourse, supporting the view that function often overrides conventional form. These findings contribute to the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface, media discourse analysis, and audiovisual translation, with implications for language pedagogy through authentic materials integration.
Keywords: *interrogative sentences; syntactic forms; illocutionary functions; form-function mismatch; audiovisual media; pragmatics; discourse analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Less attention has been devoted to the syntax-semantics/pragmatics interface in real-life audiovisual media, where questions are embedded in rich multimodal contexts including visual cues, prosodic features, and interactional dynamics. Audiovisual media such as documentaries, talk shows, and vlogs provide authentic data revealing how interrogative structures are strategically deployed for diverse communicative goals (Perez, 2022; Nilsson, 2023; Tamayo, 2022; Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Wang & Wei, 2023). This study addresses the gap by examining the syntactic forms, semantic meanings, and illocutionary functions of English interrogative sentences across three audiovisual media types, with attention to form-function alignment or mismatch.

Syntactic research has established a comprehensive typology of interrogatives: yes-no questions, wh-questions, alternative questions, tag questions, and echo questions (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Griffiths, 2023). Yes-no questions involve subject-auxiliary inversion; wh-questions involve wh-fronting with inversion (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Simanjuntak et al., 2023). Tag questions consist of

a declarative clause followed by a polarity-reversing tag (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983). Echo questions repeat a speaker's words with rising intonation (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Reinhardt, 2019; Park, 2010). Research on spoken English shows that interrogatives often deviate from canonical forms, with ellipsis, fragment questions, and declarative questions with rising intonation serving as question markers in informal contexts (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019; Slipetska et al., 2023).

Semantic and pragmatic analysis reveals that questions encode diverse meanings and perform functions beyond information-seeking (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969). Semantically, interrogatives include information-seeking, confirmation-seeking, rhetorical, and expressive questions (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Griffiths, 2023). Pragmatically, they function as speech acts performing directive, expressive, and declarative functions (Searle, 1969; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975). The multifunctionality of interrogatives underscores the importance of considering both semantic meaning and pragmatic function, as the same form can serve different functions depending on context, prosody, and speaker intention (Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Leech, 1983; Grice, 1975).

Audiovisual media are valuable sources of authentic linguistic data, offering rich multimodal contexts combining linguistic, auditory, and visual elements (Perez, 2022; Nilsson, 2023; Tamayo, 2022; Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Wang & Wei, 2023). Documentaries employ rhetorical questions for persuasive purposes; talk shows feature spontaneous dialogue where questions serve relational functions (Nilsson, 2023; Tamayo, 2022; Perez, 2022; Pavithra & Gandhimathi, 2024). Vlogs exhibit informal, conversational language with declarative and elliptical questions (Daulay, 2025; Lestari et al., 2023; Mahbub, 2023; Hossain, 2024). The multimodal nature enables analysis of prosodic and visual cues contributing to interrogative interpretation (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019; Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Wang & Wei, 2023). Subtitles and captions provide textual representations for translation and pedagogical purposes (Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023; Bolaños García-Escribano, 2025; Mahdi & Sahari, 2024).

The relationship between syntactic form and pragmatic function has been a central concern, with studies revealing that form does not always predict function in natural discourse (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969). Canonical wh-questions typically serve information-seeking functions, while yes-no questions serve confirmation-seeking functions, but both can be used rhetorically or expressively depending on context (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Griffiths, 2023). Form-function mismatch, where interrogative forms serve non-interrogative functions or vice versa, has been documented across discourse contexts (Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Leech, 1983; Grice, 1975). Declarative questions illustrate mismatch, retaining declarative word order but functioning as questions through rising intonation (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019; Slipetska et al., 2023). Rhetorical questions adopt interrogative form but function as assertions (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983). The prevalence of mismatches underscores the need for integrative analyses considering syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and multimodal factors.

The study of interrogatives has significant implications for language teaching, as questions are essential components of communicative competence (Hussain & Khan, 2022; Karataş et al., 2024; Chasanah et al., 2022; Setyaningsih et al., 2022; Nofya & Atmazaki, 2024). Learners often struggle with interrogative structures and pragmatic functions, particularly declarative, elliptical, and tag questions prevalent in informal discourse (Daulay, 2025; Kartika et al., 2023; Suharsiwi et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2023). Audiovisual media are increasingly used as pedagogical tools, providing authentic examples of question use (Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Perez, 2022; Pavithra & Gandhimathi, 2024; Mahdi & Sahari, 2024). Effectiveness depends on explicit instruction, awareness-raising, and practice in meaningful contexts (Hussain & Khan, 2022; Karataş et al., 2024; Chasanah et al., 2022).

Translation of interrogatives presents significant challenges due to structural and pragmatic differences between languages (Mahdi & Sahari, 2024; Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023; Bolaños García-Escribano, 2025; Tamayo, 2022). Translators must navigate structural changes, maintain pragmatic functions, and convey prosodic and paralinguistic features through subtitles (Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023; Bolaños García-Escribano, 2025; Najwan et al., 2025). Pragmatic equivalence is crucial, where illocutionary force is preserved even when formal structure is adapted (Mahdi & Sahari, 2024; Kos, 2024; Hajiyeva, 2025). Machine translation integration has also emerged as a research topic (Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023; Bolaños García-Escribano, 2025).

Despite extensive research on interrogatives, significant gaps remain in understanding their structure and function in real-life audiovisual contexts. Existing studies have focused on either syntactic properties in written texts or pragmatic functions in face-to-face conversation, with limited integration of perspectives (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Leech, 1983; Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995). Limited comparative analysis exists across genres such as documentaries, talk shows, and vlogs (Nilsson, 2023; Perez, 2022; Tamayo, 2022; Daulay, 2025; Mahbub, 2023). The form-function relationship in audiovisual interrogatives remains underexplored, particularly in terms of mismatches. Pedagogical and translational implications have received limited empirical attention (Hussain & Khan, 2022; Karataş et al., 2024; Mahdi & Sahari, 2024; Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023).

This study addresses these gaps by examining the syntactic forms, semantic meanings, and illocutionary functions of English interrogative sentences across three audiovisual media types, focusing on form-function alignment and mismatch. The following research questions guide this study: (1) What syntactic forms of questions appear in English audiovisual media contexts? (2) What semantic meanings and illocutionary functions do those questions serve? (3) Is there a correspondence between the syntactic form and the pragmatic function of the question, or is there a mismatch?

This study offers significant contributions to linguistic research, discourse analysis, and applied linguistics. The novelty lies in its integrative approach combining syntactic classification, semantic analysis, and pragmatic interpretation within a unified framework. Unlike previous studies, this examines diverse question types across three media genres—documentary, talk show, and vlog—offering comparative insights into how media context influences form and function. The study breaks new ground by systematically analyzing form-function alignment and mismatch, providing empirical evidence on divergences between syntax and pragmatics. Theoretically, it contributes to the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface by demonstrating how pragmatic context and speaker intention influence interrogative interpretation. For media and discourse studies, it offers insights into strategic question use for informational, relational, and persuasive goals. From an applied perspective, it has implications for language pedagogy and audiovisual translation by informing teaching and translation practices (Daulay, 2025; Hussain & Khan, 2022; Mahdi & Sahari, 2024; Kos, 2024; Valdez et al., 2023). The study thus addresses a critical gap and contributes to the ongoing evolution of interrogative studies in the digital age.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the structure and meaning of English interrogative sentences in audiovisual media (Suwartono, 2014). This approach enables in-depth exploration of linguistic phenomena in natural contexts, focusing on forms, meanings, and functions without quantitative hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Data were drawn from three English-language audiovisual media: (1) documentary film *The Social Dilemma* (Netflix, 2020) — reflective, argumentative discourse; (2) talk show *The Ellen Show* (Season 19, 2022) — spontaneous, interactive dialogue; and (3) vlog MrBeast YouTube Channel (2023 episodes) — informal, conversational discourse. From each source, approximately 30% of relevant interrogative sentences were sampled, yielding 30 data items (10 per source). Purposive sampling ensured selection of information-rich data (Etikan et al., 2016), with criteria including direct spoken interrogative utterance, clear interactional context, and variation across question types (yes/no, wh-, tag, declarative, echo questions).

Systematic viewing and transcription were conducted through six stages: source identification, segment selection, viewing and listening, verbatim transcription with contextual annotations, coding with unique identifiers (e.g., DOC-01: 15:23), and verification through repeated review. Transcripts were annotated with speaker identity, intonation cues, facial expressions, gestures, and interactional details following multimodal transcription conventions (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019).

Analysis proceeded in three stages: (1) Syntactic Classification — each interrogative was categorized into five types based on formal features (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Yule, 2020); (2) Semantic and Illocutionary Analysis — semantic meaning and illocutionary function were identified using Speech Act theory (Searle, 1969) and pragmatics frameworks (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975); and (3) Form-Function Alignment Analysis — correspondence between syntactic form and illocutionary function was evaluated to identify

alignment or mismatch (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020).

Rigor was ensured through triangulation of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives; systematic coding; contextual analysis; researcher triangulation through independent analysis; verification of transcripts; and transparent reporting of procedures (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings on the structure and meaning of English interrogative sentences in audiovisual media. Results are organized according to the research questions, addressing syntactic forms, semantic meanings and illocutionary functions, and form-function alignment. Each subsection integrates findings with previous research.

Distribution of interrogative types across media sources

Analysis of 30 interrogative sentences from three audiovisual media sources revealed a diverse distribution of question types. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution across the three sources.

Table 1. *Distribution of interrogative types across media sources*

Interrogative Type	Documentary (n=10)	Talk Show (n=10)	Vlog (n=10)	Total (N=30)	Percentage (%)
Yes/No Questions	3	2	2	7	23.3
Wh-Questions	4	2	1	7	23.3
Tag Questions	1	3	1	5	16.7
Declarative Questions	1	2	3	6	20.0
Echo Questions	1	1	3	5	16.7
Total	10	10	10	30	100

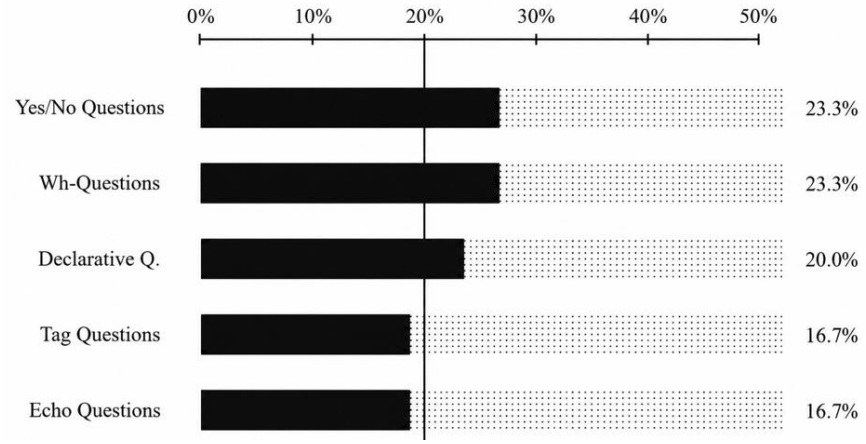


Figure 1. *Distribution of interrogative types across media sources*

The findings indicate that yes/no questions and wh-questions are the most frequently occurring interrogative types (23.3% each), followed by declarative questions (20.0%), tag questions (16.7%), and echo questions (16.7%). This distribution reflects the diverse communicative functions served by interrogatives across different media contexts, with information-seeking and rhetorical functions being particularly prominent in documentary discourse (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Griffiths, 2023).

Syntactic features of interrogative types

The analysis identified five distinct syntactic forms of interrogative sentences across the data sources. Table 2 presents the syntactic features of each interrogative type.

Table 2. *Syntactic features of interrogative types*

Interrogative Type	Syntactic Feature	Example	Key References
Yes/No Questions	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	"Is this the world we really want to live in?"	Holmberg (2015); Huddleston & Pullum (2002)

Wh-Questions	Wh-fronting + Inversion	"Why do we let these systems control our behavior?"	Holmberg (2015); Huddleston & Pullum (2002); Mouriena & Nazara (2024)
Tag Questions	Declarative + Question Tag	"We think we're controlling the technology, right?"	Yule (2020); Thomas (1995); Simanjuntak et al. (2023)
Declarative Questions	Declarative + Rising Intonation	"You really wore that on stage?"	Park (2010); Reinhardt (2019); Slipetska et al. (2023)
Echo Questions	In-situ wh-placement	"You're giving him what?"	Yule (2020); Thomas (1995); Griffiths (2019)

The syntactic analysis reveals that interrogative sentences in audiovisual media adhere to canonical syntactic patterns while also exhibiting variations influenced by spoken discourse. Yes/no questions and wh-questions in documentary contexts strongly adhere to standard syntactic patterns (wh-fronting and inversion), as described in Holmberg (2015) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002). In talk show and vlog contexts, however, more elliptical and declarative-intonation forms appeared, reflecting spontaneous spoken discourse rather than careful scripted speech (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019).

Semantic meanings and illocutionary functions

The analysis revealed five dominant illocutionary functions served by interrogative sentences across the data sources. Table 3 presents the distribution of illocutionary functions.

Table 3. *Distribution of illocutionary functions*

Illocutionary Function	Documentary	Talk Show	Vlog	Total	Percentage (%)
Information-Seeking	3	2	1	6	20.0
Confirmation/Agreement-Seeking	1	3	2	6	20.0
Rhetorical/Reflexive	4	1	1	6	20.0
Directive	1	2	3	6	20.0
Expressive/Emotive	1	2	3	6	20.0
Total	10	10	10	30	100

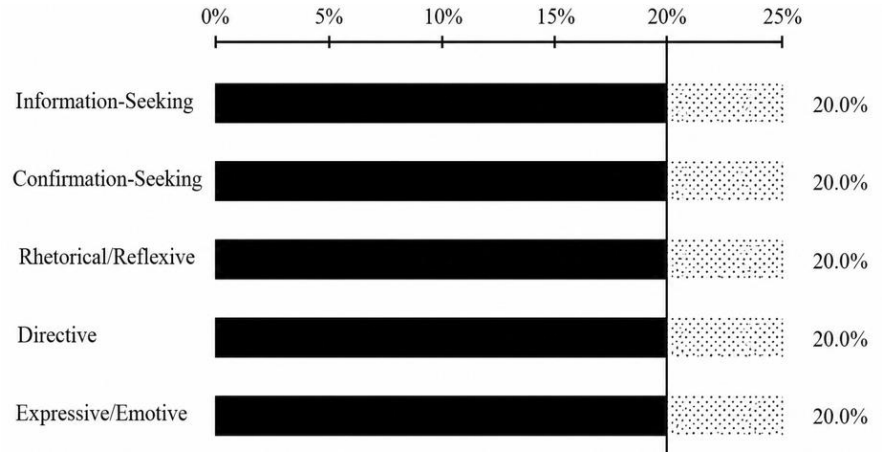


Figure 2. *Distribution of illocutionary functions across media sources*

The findings demonstrate that interrogative sentences serve a wide range of illocutionary functions beyond mere information-seeking. Rhetorical functions are particularly prominent in documentary settings, where questions are used to provoke reflection rather than elicit answers (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020). Confirmation-seeking functions are prevalent in talk shows, reflecting the interactive and relational nature of the genre (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995). Directive and expressive functions are more common in vlogs, where questions are used to engage audiences and express emotions (Daulay, 2025; Lestari et al., 2023; Mahbub, 2023).

Form-function alignment and mismatch

The analysis of form-function correspondence revealed that while many interrogatives displayed alignment between syntactic form and pragmatic function, a substantial number exhibited mismatch. Table 4 presents the distribution of alignment and mismatch across interrogative types.

Table 4. *Form-function alignment and mismatch*

Interrogative Type	Alignment	Mismatch	Partial Mismatch	Total
Yes/No Questions	3	3	1	7
Wh-Questions	4	2	1	7
Tag Questions	1	3	1	5
Declarative Questions	0	5	1	6
Echo Questions	1	2	2	5
Total	9	15	6	30
Percentage	30%	50%	20%	100%

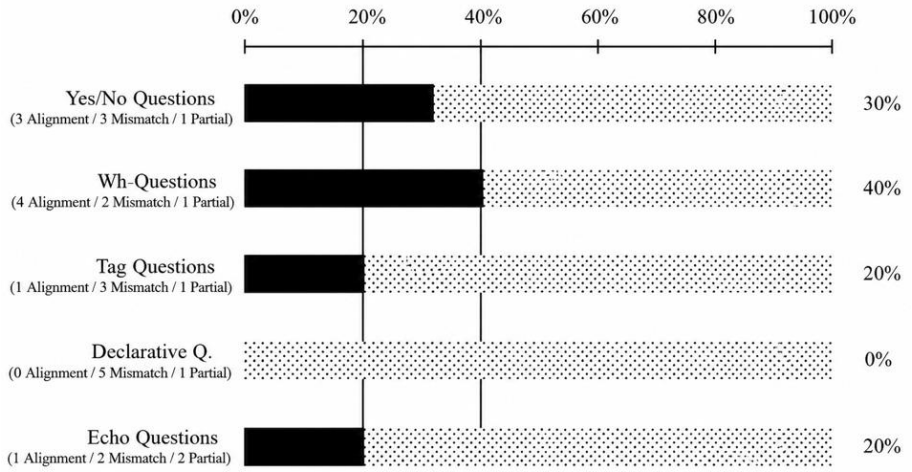


Figure 3. *Form-function alignment and mismatch*

The findings reveal that declarative questions exhibit the highest proportion of form-function mismatch (100%), as they retain declarative word order but function as questions through rising intonation (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019; Slipetska et al., 2023). Tag questions also exhibit significant mismatch (60%), as they serve expressive or rhetorical functions rather than literal confirmation-seeking (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983). Wh-questions show the highest alignment (40%), particularly when used for information-seeking functions in documentary contexts (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Overall, approximately 70% of the sample demonstrated some form of mismatch (50% complete mismatch, 20% partial mismatch), supporting the view that in real-life media discourse, function often overrides conventional form (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975).

Detailed analysis of interrogative types

Yes/No Questions

Sample Analysis:

> (1) "Is this the world we really want to live in?" (The Social Dilemma)

The syntactic form of the question (1) involves auxiliary + subject inversion. However, this question does not expect a literal answer because it is rhetorical in nature. Although the structure is interrogative, it serves a rhetorical function, and it seems to have expressive meaning that is evaluative, questioning social and moral values. Therefore, it appears to have ambivalent correspondence between the syntactic form and the pragmatic function (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020).

Table 5. *Yes/no questions: Form-function analysis*

No.	Utterance	Source	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Alignment
1	"Is this the world we really want to live in?"	Documentary	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Rhetorical/Expressive	Mismatch
2	"Do you think technology controls us?"	Documentary	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Information-Seeking	Alignment
3	"Are you serious?"	Talk Show	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Expressive	Mismatch

4	"Can you pass that?"	Vlog	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Directive	Alignment
5	"Is this the best way?"	Talk Show	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Confirmation-Seeking	Alignment
6	"Did you really do that?"	Vlog	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Expressive	Mismatch
7	"Is it worth it?"	Documentary	Subject-Auxiliary Inversion	Rhetorical	Mismatch

Wh-Questions
Sample Analysis:

(2) *"Why do we let these systems control our behavior?"* (The Social Dilemma)

The syntactic form of the question (2) is syntactic interrogative (WH + AUX + Subject + Verb). However, question (2) has a similar function to (1). Both (2) and (1) are rhetorical questions which do not need a literal answer—rather, they make the audience aware of digital dependence. This interrogative form serves a rhetorical function, and it has expressive meaning which can be used for awakening audience awareness by asking for a rational reason of human beings towards technology. Therefore, it has correspondence between the syntactic form and the pragmatic function (Form-Function Match) (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Griffiths, 2023).

Table 6. *Wh-questions: form-function analysis*

No.	Utterance	Source	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Alignment
1	"Why do we let these systems control our behavior?"	Documentary	WH + AUX + Subject + Verb	Rhetorical/Reflexive	Alignment
2	"What happened to privacy?"	Documentary	WH + AUX + Subject	Information-Seeking	Alignment
3	"Who created this system?"	Documentary	WH + AUX + Subject	Information-Seeking	Alignment
4	"Where did you find that?"	Talk Show	WH + AUX + Subject	Information-Seeking	Alignment
5	"What are you doing?"	Vlog	WH + AUX + Subject	Directive	Partial Mismatch
6	"Why would you say that?"	Talk Show	WH + AUX + Subject	Expressive	Mismatch
7	"How did you do that?"	Vlog	WH + AUX + Subject	Information-Seeking	Alignment

Tag Questions
Sample Analysis:

(3) *"We think we're controlling the technology, right?"* (The Social Dilemma)

The syntactic form of the question (3) is rhetorical declarative which consists of a declarative clause plus a short question tag (declarative + tag). This kind of question is used to get confirmation, not new information-seeking. It has a specific semantic meaning, i.e., asking for agreement. So, the syntactic form in (3) does not correspond to the pragmatic function (Form-Function Mismatch) (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983).

Table 7. *Tag questions: form-function analysis*

No.	Utterance	Source	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Alignment
1	"We think we're controlling the technology, right?"	Documentary	Declarative + Tag	Confirmation-Seeking	Mismatch
2	"You liked the movie, didn't you?"	Talk Show	Declarative + Tag	Confirmation-Seeking	Alignment

3	"He's a good guy, isn't he?"	Talk Show	Declarative + Tag	Confirmation-Seeking	Alignment
4	"We should go now, shouldn't we?"	Vlog	Declarative + Tag	Directive	Mismatch
5	"That's amazing, isn't it?"	Talk Show	Declarative + Tag	Expressive	Mismatch

*Declarative Q*uestions

Sample Analysis:
(4) *"You really wore that on stage?"* (The Ellen Show)

The syntactic form of the question (4) is declarative with rising intonation (↑) and without inversion. From the structure viewpoint, this is not a question because the subject precedes the verb. However, because the sentence is uttered with rising intonation and with certain facial expressions, it can function as an expressive interrogative which literally asks about the real action (fact-confirming), but implicatively delivers astonishment (serving an ironical function). So, it is obvious that there is no correspondence between the syntactic form and the pragmatic function (Form-Function Mismatch) (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019; Slipetska et al., 2023).

Table 8. *Declarative question: Form-function analysis*

No.	Utterance	Source	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Alignment
1	"You really wore that on stage?"	Talk Show	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Expressive	Mismatch
2	"He's coming today?"	Talk Show	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Confirmation-Seeking	Mismatch
3	"You did it?"	Vlog	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Expressive	Mismatch
4	"She's serious?"	Vlog	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Expressive	Mismatch
5	"They're really doing this?"	Documentary	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Expressive	Mismatch
6	"We're going now?"	Vlog	Declarative + Rising Intonation	Directive	Mismatch

Echo Questions
Sample Analysis:

(5) *"You're giving him what?"* (MrBeast)

The syntactic form of the utterance "You're giving him what?" above is a wh-echo question, characterized by in-situ wh-placement and the absence of subject–auxiliary inversion. Semantically, it requests clarification of the object being given. Pragmatically, however, it functions not only as a request for information but also as an expression of surprise or disbelief, often seeking confirmation of unexpected information. Therefore, the sentence in (5) appears to have a partial mismatch between syntactic form and pragmatic function, as the interrogative structure simultaneously performs both directive and expressive illocutionary acts (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Griffiths, 2023).

Table 9. *Echo questions: Form-function analysis*

No.	Utterance	Source	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Alignment
1	"You're giving him what?"	Vlog	In-situ wh-placement	Information-Seeking + Expressive	Partial Mismatch
2	"He said what?"	Talk Show	In-situ wh-	Information-Seeking +	Partial

			placement	Expressive	Mismatch
3	"You did what?"	Vlog	In-situ wh-placement	Expressive	Mismatch
4	"She went where?"	Vlog	In-situ wh-placement	Information-Seeking	Alignment
5	"They're doing what?"	Documentary	In-situ wh-placement	Expressive	Mismatch

Media context and question usage

The context of audiovisual media significantly influenced question forms and functions. Table 10 presents the relationship between media context and interrogative usage.

Table 10. *Media context and question usage patterns*

Media Context	Dominant Question Types	Dominant Functions	Key Features
Documentary	Wh-Questions, Yes/No Questions	Rhetorical, Information-Seeking	Canonical forms, reflective, persuasive
Talk Show	Tag Questions, Declarative Questions	Confirmation-Seeking, Expressive	Relational, interactional, spontaneous
Vlog	Declarative Questions, Echo Questions	Directive, Expressive	Elliptical, intonation-driven, engagement-oriented

Documentary settings privileged canonical forms tied to informational and rhetorical functions, with wh-questions adhering strongly to standard syntactic patterns (wh-fronting and inversion) as described in Holmberg (2015). Talk shows relied more on relational, expressive functions with tag or intonation forms, reflecting the interactive and spontaneous nature of the genre (Nilsson, 2023; Perez, 2022; Valdez et al., 2023). Vlogs leaned heavily toward motivational and engagement-oriented questions, often elliptical or intonation-driven, reflecting the informal, conversational nature of digital communication (Daulay, 2025; Lestari et al., 2023; Mahbub, 2023; Hossain, 2024). These patterns illustrate that interrogative use is adapted to medium, audience, and interaction type (Tamayo, 2022; Pavithra & Gandhimathi, 2024; Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025).

Syntactic diversity and media context

The findings demonstrate that interrogative sentences in audiovisual media exhibit diverse syntactic structures influenced by media context. Wh-questions and yes/no questions predominate in documentaries, reflecting canonical forms in formal discourse (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Declarative and echo questions prevail in talk shows and vlogs, reflecting spontaneous, interactive nature (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019). Documentaries favor canonical forms for informational functions (Nilsson, 2023; Perez, 2022). Talk shows employ wider forms including tag and declarative questions for relational functions (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995). Vlogs exhibit the most diverse forms—elliptical, declarative, and echo questions—reflecting informal digital communication (Daulay, 2025; Lestari et al., 2023; Mahbub, 2023). These patterns align with research emphasizing media context influence on linguistic practices (Tamayo, 2022; Pavithra & Gandhimathi, 2024).

Semantic and pragmatic multifunctionality

The analysis reveals interrogatives serve five dominant functions—information-seeking, confirmation-seeking, rhetorical, directive, and expressive—demonstrating multifunctionality in achieving communicative goals (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Searle, 1969; Grice, 1975). Rhetorical functions dominate documentaries for persuasive purposes (Slipetska et al., 2023; Yessenbayeva et al., 2020). Confirmation-seeking and expressive functions prevail in talk shows and vlogs, reflecting relational and interactional nature. Tag questions maintain social harmony (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995). Declarative questions with rising intonation convey emotions (Park, 2010; Reinhardt,

2019). These findings align with speech act theory emphasizing context and speaker intention (Searle, 1969; Grice, 1975; Thomas, 1995).

Form-function mismatch and pragmatic override

The most significant finding is the high form-function mismatch proportion (70%), demonstrating that syntactic form alone does not reliably predict pragmatic function. This supports the view that function overrides conventional form in real communication (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Grice, 1975). Declarative questions represent the clearest mismatch example (Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019). Wh-questions exhibited highest alignment (40%), reflecting canonical information-seeking association (Holmberg, 2015; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Tag and declarative questions exhibited highest mismatch (60% and 100%), highlighting pragmatic flexibility (Yule, 2020; Thomas, 1995; Leech, 1983). Mismatch prevalence in talk shows and vlogs (60-70%) reflects spontaneous, interactive nature where pragmatic context strongly influences interpretation (Nilsson, 2023; Perez, 2022; Valdez et al., 2023).

Media context as a determinant of interrogative use

The findings demonstrate that media context significantly influences question forms, functions, and alignment patterns. Documentary settings, characterized by scripted, reflective discourse, favor canonical interrogative forms, informational and rhetorical functions, and form-function alignment (60%). Talk shows, characterized by spontaneous, interactive discourse, employ a wider range of forms and functions, with a higher proportion of mismatch (60%). Vlogs, representing user-generated, informal discourse, exhibit the most diverse range of forms, with a predominance of declarative and echo questions and a high proportion of mismatch (70%).

These patterns highlight the importance of considering medium, audience, and interaction type in analyzing interrogative use. Documentaries, with their formal, reflective discourse, align with the findings of Nilsson (2023) and Perez (2022) on the use of canonical forms in scripted media. Talk shows, with their relational, interactional functions, reflect the findings of Valdez et al. (2023) and Tamayo (2022) on the strategic use of questions in interactive genres. Vlogs, with their engagement-oriented, informal discourse, align with the findings of Daulay (2025), Lestari et al. (2023), and Mahbub (2023) on the use of elliptical and intonation-driven forms in digital communication.

Implications for Syntax-Semantics-Pragmatics Interface

The findings of this study have significant implications for the study of the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface. The prevalence of form-function mismatch demonstrates that syntactic form alone cannot reliably predict pragmatic function in real discourse, supporting the view that pragmatic context, interactional setting, and speaker intention must be taken into account (Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Leech, 1983; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969). The analysis of interrogative sentences in audiovisual media thus provides empirical evidence for the importance of integrative analysis that considers multiple linguistic and contextual factors.

The findings also contribute to the growing body of research on multimodal discourse analysis, demonstrating how visual and prosodic features interact with syntactic form and pragmatic function in meaning construction (Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Wang & Wei, 2023; Nilsson, 2023; Park, 2010; Reinhardt, 2019). The role of intonation, facial expressions, and gestures in distinguishing interrogative functions underscores the importance of multimodal analysis in understanding question interpretation (Mazeree et al., 2023; Al-Jarf, 2024; Nurnaningsih et al., 2018). For media studies, the findings highlight how question forms are strategically used to achieve communicative goals in different media contexts, reflecting the adaptation of language to medium, audience, and interaction type.

The findings of this study align with and extend previous research on interrogative sentences, audiovisual media, and discourse analysis. Table 11 presents a comparison of key findings with previous research.

Table 11. *Comparison with previous research*

Finding	This Study	Previous Research	Alignment
Structural Diversity	Five interrogative types identified	Holmberg (2015); Huddleston & Pullum (2002)	Consistent

Pragmatic Functions	Five illocutionary functions identified	Leech (1983); Thomas (1995); Yule (2020); Searle (1969)	Consistent
Form-Function Mismatch	70% mismatch across sample	Leech (1983); Thomas (1995); Yule (2020); Grice (1975)	Consistent
Media Context Influence	Significant influence on forms and functions	Nilsson (2023); Perez (2022); Tamayo (2022)	Consistent
Declarative Questions	Highest mismatch (100%)	Park (2010); Reinhardt (2019); Slipetska et al. (2023)	Consistent
Rhetorical Functions	Prominent in documentary	Slipetska et al. (2023); Yessenbayeva et al. (2020)	Consistent

The findings reveal five interrogative syntactic types—Yes/No (23.3%), Wh- (23.3%), Tag (16.7%), Declarative (20.0%), and Echo (16.7%)—and five illocutionary functions—Information-Seeking (20%), Confirmation-Seeking (20%), Rhetorical (20%), Directive (20%), and Expressive (20%). Form-function alignment occurred in only 30% of cases, with complete mismatch in 50% and partial mismatch in 20%; declarative questions exhibited the highest mismatch. Media context influenced patterns: documentaries favored canonical forms with 60% alignment, talk shows showed interactive forms with 60% mismatch, and vlogs displayed informal forms with 70% mismatch. Theoretically, the findings demonstrate that syntactic form alone cannot predict pragmatic function, supporting integrative analysis across syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and multimodal factors (Thomas, 1995; Yule, 2020; Leech, 1983; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969). Pedagogically, the diversity of interrogative forms underscores the need to expose learners to authentic audiovisual materials to develop awareness of declarative, echo, and tag questions prevalent in spoken discourse (Hussain & Khan, 2022; Karataş et al., 2024; Daulay, 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2022; Nofya & Atmazaki, 2024; Lestari et al., 2023).

For media discourse, interrogatives are strategically adapted to medium and audience, with rhetorical questions in documentaries, tag questions in talk shows, and declarative questions in vlogs serving genre-specific purposes (Nilsson, 2023; Perez, 2022; Tamayo, 2022). For audiovisual translation, preserving pragmatic function and illocutionary force over surface structure is essential (Mahdi & Sahari, 2024; Kos, 2024; Bolaños García-Escribano, 2025). Limitations include a small sample (30 interrogatives), focus on three media sources, and reliance on textual transcripts with limited prosodic and visual analysis. Future research should explore larger corpora, wider media sources, multimodal analysis, and comparative cross-cultural studies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined interrogative sentence forms, meanings, and functions in audiovisual media. Findings reveal diverse syntactic structures—yes/no, wh-, tag, declarative, and echo questions—with distribution varying by media context. Five functions emerged: information-seeking, confirmation-seeking, rhetorical, directive, and expressive. The key finding is high form-function mismatch (70%), especially in declarative questions (100%), demonstrating that syntax alone cannot predict pragmatic function.

The findings contribute to syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface research and media discourse analysis, revealing how interrogatives adapt to medium and audience. For translation, preserving pragmatic function poses challenges beyond surface structure. Recommendations include using authentic media in language teaching, expanding corpus research with multimodal analysis, and training translators in interrogative complexity. Future studies should explore cross-genre and cross-linguistic patterns, learner development, and multimodal pedagogy. Interrogatives are fundamental to communicative competence, and audiovisual media offer valuable data for research, teaching, and translation.

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AI USE DISCLOSURE

The authors used generative AI tools (ChatGPT and DeepSeek) selectively for language refinement, grammar checking, and formatting. All AI outputs were critically reviewed and revised. The intellectual contributions, research design, data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions remain entirely the authors' own work. No AI tools were used in data collection, statistical analysis, or findings generation. The authors take full responsibility for the final content and academic integrity of this manuscript.

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