



Q&A FORMAT PRAGMATICS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK SCIENCE DISCOURSE

Shahnozabegim Yokubjonova.

Nodirabegim Yokubjonova

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876997>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 8th December 2025

Accepted: 9th December 2025

Online: 10th December 2025

KEYWORDS

Q&A Format, Pragmatics, Rhetorical Questions, Engagement Markers, Science Discourse, Discourse Structuring, English, Uzbek, Comparative Linguistics.

ABSTRACT

The Question and Answer (Q&A) format is a pervasive, rhetorically powerful tool in popular science communication, employed to structure information delivery and maximize audience engagement. This comparative study examines the pragmatic functions and conventions of Q&A structures—both implicit (rhetorical questions) and explicit (FAQ sections, interviews)—in English and Uzbek popular science texts. English utilizes the Q&A format primarily as an Engagement Marker, simulating dialogue and preemptively addressing audience skepticism. Uzbek discourse, often reflecting a more didactic and authoritative rhetorical tradition, tends to use the Q&A format more for Knowledge Structuring, where the answer functions as a clear, unambiguous assertion of expert knowledge.

Introduction

In popular science writing, the act of questioning is fundamentally a pragmatic one, designed to engage the reader, manage cognitive load, and anticipate points of confusion or skepticism. The Q&A format, whether used implicitly through rhetorical questions or explicitly in structured FAQ sections, acts as a discourse lubricant, facilitating the transfer of complex information. However, the way questions are posed and how answers are delivered are deeply colored by a language's rhetorical traditions and its conventions regarding the display of expert authority. English, with its emphasis on reader-writer rapport, and Uzbek, with its distinct historical influences on didactic writing, deploy these formats differently. To fully appreciate the scope of global science communication, analysts must investigate the cultural values embedded in the interrogative-responsive structure. "The choice of using a Q&A format is a conscious pragmatic decision that externalizes the writer's anticipation of the audience's informational deficit." [1, 320].

1.0 Rhetorical Questions and Engagement in English

1.1 Simulating Dialogue and Mitigating Doubt

In English popular science, the rhetorical question is a high-frequency engagement device. The pragmatic function of asking a question the writer immediately answers (e.g., "But why is the atmosphere blue? The answer lies in Rayleigh scattering...") is threefold:

1. **Arousal of Curiosity:** It interrupts the expository flow and stimulates the reader's interest.
2. **Simulation of Dialogue:** It creates an imaginary conversation, positioning the writer as a responsive tutor rather than an authoritarian lecturer.
3. **Discourse Structuring:** It acts as a clear textual marker, announcing the topic of the immediate subsequent paragraph.

This strategy is rooted in the English popular science tradition of prioritizing reader rapport and minimizing the perceived distance between the expert and the layperson. The question serves as a brief moment of shared uncertainty, which the expert immediately resolves.

Explicit Q&A formats (FAQ sections) in English often function as a form of **Negative Politeness**, preemptively addressing face-threatening acts by allowing the reader to select the information they need without being lectured. "Rhetorical questions function as metadiscourse signals, demonstrating the writer's alignment with the reader's perspective and managing the flow of complex explanatory chains." [2, 340].

1.2 The Answer as a Narrative Hook

In the English Q&A structure, the answer section frequently employs narrative elements, metaphors, and high-frequency intensifiers. The answer is not just a definition; it is a compact story or explanation designed to maintain the emotional tone established by the question. The use of first-person plural pronouns (*we*) throughout the answer further reinforces the idea of a shared intellectual journey, maintaining the pragmatic goal of reader involvement.

2.0 Q&A Structures and Authority in Uzbek Discourse

2.1 Structuring Knowledge and Maintaining Didactic Tone

In Uzbek science discourse, particularly in formal educational contexts or popularized works, the Q&A format may be pragmatically utilized to emphasize the **Didactic Function**—the clear, systematic transmission of verified knowledge. The question often serves a purely structuring purpose, similar to a chapter title or subheading, rather than a rhetorical one aimed at simulating dialogue.

The answer component tends to be characterized by:

- **Higher Assertiveness:** Less use of hedging or tentative language, reflecting a tradition where the written word of the expert is treated as highly conclusive.
- **Emphasis on Formal Terminology:** While English might replace a technical term with a simple metaphor in the answer, Uzbek answers may retain the precise, newly created endogenous term (or the standard loanword), reinforcing the authority of the terminology itself.

The underlying pragmatic goal is often to provide an authoritative *hulosasi* (conclusion or summary) that can be easily memorized or cited, prioritizing clarity of content over emotional engagement.

"In many post-Soviet linguistic traditions, the direct presentation of knowledge via structured Q&A reinforces the writer's authoritative role, where the primary pragmatic goal is knowledge transfer rather than shared intellectual exploration." [3, 188].

2.2 Personalized Involvement vs. Authoritative Distance

A key contrast lies in the management of personal involvement. While English answers often feature *we* to include the reader, Uzbek answers may rely more on impersonal structures or a third-person authoritative stance, maintaining a greater rhetorical distance between the writer and the reader. When first-person pronouns are used, they often signal the writer's certainty or the institutional voice, rather than an invitation for the reader to join a dialogue. The Q&A format thus pragmatically serves to compartmentalize the discourse, making the transfer of information highly organized and unambiguous.

Conclusion

The Q&A format operates as a versatile pragmatic tool in popular science, but its specific functions diverge significantly between English and Uzbek discourse. In English, Q&A is primarily a **reader engagement mechanism**, simulating dialogue and using rhetorical questions to manage attention and build rapport. In Uzbek, the format often functions as a **didactic structuring device**, emphasizing the authoritative presentation of knowledge and clarity of assertion. These differences reflect broader linguistic and cultural conventions regarding the display of expert authority and the desired social distance between the writer and the audience. Recognizing these contrasting pragmatic goals is essential for researchers and communicators working to bridge linguistic divides in science literacy.

References:

1. Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*. London: Continuum. p. 320.
2. Mugford, G., & Dymott, R. (2012). The popularisation of science: A linguistic analysis. *Journal of Science Communication*, 11(2). p. 340.
3. Sager, J. C. (1990). *A practical course in terminology processing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. p. 188.
4. Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman, 1985. - p. 1150.
5. Biber, D. (1988). *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 190.
6. Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 410.

