



Pragmatic Functions of Questions in the Movie “A Man Called Otto”

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ABSTRACT

Questions serve a range of functions that go far beyond just seeking or requesting information. These different functions of questions depend on the context of the conversation. This study attempts to examine the various pragmatic functions of questions in the movie *A Man Called Otto*. The data were all the interrogative sentences in the movie. The data were analyzed using the framework proposed by Fareh and Moussa (2008), which identifies 35 distinct pragmatic functions of interrogative sentences. The findings of this study indicate that a total of 241 questions were identified, which consist of 132 (55%) yes/no questions and 109 (45%) WH questions. These questions were used to serve 21 pragmatic functions. Seeking/requesting information and seeking confirmation are the most frequent functions, making up 22.8% and 17.4% of the whole data, respectively. The analysis further shows that the identification of functions relies heavily on the context in which they are used. These findings contribute to linguistics studies by highlighting the diverse functions of questions. Pedagogically speaking, these findings should be taken into account by educators to enhance language learners' communicative competence.

Keywords:

*Pragmatic Functions;
Questions; Movie*

Editorial Record:

Submitted: 16/01/2025

Reviewed: 17/12/2025

Revised: 26/01/2026

Accepted: 27/03/2026

INTRODUCTION

When people talk, their words usually have meaning and function. However, the function of the utterance does not always align with its form (Khamzaev, 2021). For instance, an utterance that appears to be a statement might actually imply a question or a question might be a polite way of making a request. Questions, in particular, are a versatile linguistic tool that can perform a wide range of functions in communication. While their primary role may be to seek information, questions often go beyond this purpose (Fareh & Moussa, 2008). They can express curiosity, clarify doubts, or even make a strong point in conversation. In linguistics, it is called a pragmatic function.

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Yaman, N. 2026. Pragmatic Functions of Questions in the Movie “A Man Called Otto”.
Deskripsi Bahasa Vol.9 (1) 2026, pp.58-75. <https://doi.org/10.22146/db.19395>

A pragmatic function refers to the role or purpose that a linguistic element plays in a specific communicative context. It goes beyond the literal meaning of a word or sentence (its semantics) to focus on how language is used to achieve goals, convey intentions, or manage social interactions. For instance, the question “can you please open the door?” has a literal meaning related to the listener’s ability, but its pragmatic function in most contexts is ordering. Instead of directly telling the listener to open the door, the speaker frames the order as a question to soften the tone or make it sound less forceful.

The movie *A Man Called Otto* revolves around Otto Anderson, a grumpy old man who is isolated, has a heart problem, has recently lost his wife, and no longer has any reason to live. But then, his life turns around when a Mexican family with two children moves across the street from his house. This family, especially the wife, is constantly asking Otto for help with various tasks. The interaction between the characters in the movie requires asking questions and answering them. Given the central role of questions in shaping communication, character dynamics, and narrative development, this present study attempts to explore the pragmatic functions of questions in the movie.

The studies of questions have been conducted by several researchers in different languages (Sola & Torregrosa-Azor, 2023; Clausen & Scheffler, 2022; Westphal, 2022; Nakanish & Haneo, 2021; Grice, et al., 2019; Hennoste, et al., 2019; Tomaselli & Gatt, 2015; Lindawati, 2016; Yeganeh & Heidary, 2015). The studies also have been done across various types of discourse, including novels (Rondonuwu, 2015), TV series (Gustiarti & Hardjanto, 2023; Baihaqi & Hardjanto, 2020), and movies (Da’wa & Moehkardi, 2023).

In regard to the pragmatic functions of questions, Saifudin et al. (2008) did a study in which they examined the pragmatic function of questions in conversations between Japanese tourists and Indonesian guides in Borobudur temple. The result shows that there are four pragmatic functions of questions found in the conversation such as directive questioning act, expressive questioning act, assertive questioning act, and commissive questioning act. Rondonuwu (2015) analyzed the interrogative sentences in the novel *The Guardian* by Nicholas Sparks. Her study focuses on the form and function of the interrogative sentences in the novel. The result reveals that there are three forms, such as yes/no question, question tag, and WH question. In terms of the functions, the interrogative sentences serve as questions, requests, and commands. Another relevant study was carried out by Baihaqi & Hardjanto (2020). In their research, Baihaqi & Hardjanto (2020) analyzed the syntactic forms of questions and their pragmatic functions in the TV Series *The Office*. The results show that there are 27 pragmatic functions with seeking information being the most frequent functions found in the series. Omotunde et al. (2021) analyzed the pragmatic functions of questions in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The research identified nine functions in that novel. These include questions to indicate annoyance, questions to convey anxiety, questions to persuade somebody to do something, questions for showing

disapproval, and so on. A study conducted by Lumampak et al. (2021) explored the forms and functions of interrogative sentences in the film *Lucy* by Luc Besson. The result of the study indicates that WH question is the most frequent form in the film. According to its function, interrogative sentences can be functioned as questions and requests.

Most of the previous studies above have primarily focused on their structural aspects of questions rather than an in-depth exploration of their pragmatic functions. To address this gap, this present study applies the framework proposed by Fareh and Moussa (2008) to analyze the diverse pragmatic functions of questions in the movie *A Man Called Otto*.

METHOD

This study focuses on the interrogative sentences in the movie *A Man Called Otto*. The data were collected in the following steps: First, watching the movie with the subtitle on Prime Video, a streaming video platform by Amazon. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the dialogues. Second, list all the interrogative sentences in the movie. Third, classify the interrogative sentences into two forms of questions (i.e., WH questions and yes/no questions). The pragmatic functions of questions in the movie were analyzed using the framework proposed by Fareh and Moussa (2008), which identifies 35 distinct pragmatic functions of interrogative sentences. This framework was chosen for its comprehensive approach to understanding the different functions of interrogative sentences. All the selected data were presented through a transcript of dialogues with timestamps, coded abbreviations, and contextual summary. For instance:

0:15:28 → 0:15:31 WH - SI

Context: Otto prepares to hang himself in his living room, but a loud noise from outside interrupts him. He looks out the window and sees new neighbors struggling to park a car with a trailer. He rushes outside confronts the new neighbors, Marisol and Tommy. After watching Tommy repeatedly mess up and damage the bushes, Otto orders him out of the car and takes over. When he is finally in the car, he notices their two daughters in the back seat. One of the daughters, Luna, politely says hello and asks his name.

Luna: What's your name?

Otto: Otto

The timestamp "0:15:28 → 0:15:31" indicates the specific time range in the movie during which the dialogue occurs in the movie. All timestamps were checked manually by rewatching the movie on Prime Video. As for the coded abbreviation, the first code "WH" represents WH Questions, which refers to the form of the questions. The second code refers to the pragmatic function. "SI" in the data above denotes Seeking Information.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Form of Questions

Based on the movie "A Man Called Otto", this study classifies the interrogative sentences into two types of questions: Yes/No questions and WH questions, with a total of 241 questions analyzed.

Table 1. Form of Questions

No	Form	Tokens	%
1	Yes/No	132	55
2	WH	109	45
TOTAL		241	100

(Research Data, 2025)

Yes/No question, with 132 instances, account for 55% of the total. This indicates that more than half of the questions in the movie require a simple affirmative or negative response. These types of questions typically prompt straightforward yes or no answers. This is a common feature in conversations. On the other hand, there are 109 or 45% of WH questions found in the movie.

Pragmatic Functions of Questions

A total of 241 questions were identified in the movie *A Man Called Otto*. Out of the 35 functions outlined by Fareh and Moussa (2008), the questions in the movie exhibit 21 distinct pragmatic roles. This suggests that the movie's dialogues employ a broad spectrum of question types to achieve various communicative purposes. Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of the pragmatic functions of questions in the movie.

Table 2. Pragmatic Functions of Questions

No	Pragmatic Functions	Tokens	%
1	Seeking/requesting information (SI)	55	22.8
2	Seeking confirmation (SCO)	42	17.4
3	Expressing irritation, or exasperation (EI)	23	9.5
4	Seeking clarification (SC)	20	8.3
5	Expressing surprise/ disbelief (ESD)	20	8.3
6	Expressing disapproval, or disagreement (ED)	14	5.8
7	Making an offer (MO)	13	5.4
8	Maintaining/ initiating conversation (MC)	9	3.7
9	Expressing sarcasm or irony (ESI)	9	3.7
10	Requesting non-verbal action (NV)	8	3.3
11	Seeking agreement, or approval (SAA)	7	2.9
12	Requesting verbal action (VA)	3	1.2
13	Asking for permission (AP)	3	1.2
14	Expressing suspicion (ESU)	3	1.2
15	Seeking advice (SAD)	3	1.2
16	Expressing a wish (EW)	2	0.8
17	Expressing disappointment, complaint, or dissatisfaction (DC)	2	0.8
18	Ordering (OR)	2	0.8

No	Pragmatic Functions	Tokens	%
19	Reminding (RE)	1	0.4
20	Suggesting (SU)	1	0.4
21	Threatening (TH)	1	0.4
TOTAL		241	100

(Research Data, 2025)

Based on Table 2 most questions are used to seek information and confirmation, making up 22.8% and 17.4% of the total, respectively. Other functions, like expressing irritation, seeking clarification, or showing disapproval, occur less often but still play important roles in conversations. Less common uses, such as expressing surprise, making offers, or maintaining conversations, highlight the flexibility of questions in social interactions. Rare functions, like reminding and threatening, appear only once, showing how questions can adapt to specific situations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that while questions are mainly used to gather or verify information, they also serve emotional, social, and practical purposes in communication. This diversity reflects the complexity and adaptability of questions in natural discourse.

Seeking/requesting information (SI)

Interrogative sentences are commonly used to request specific details or obtain knowledge. Seeking/requesting information is the primary function of questions. By posing a question, the speaker explicitly asks the listener to provide information they do not possess. In other words, the speaker wants to know something and expects the listener to supply that unknown information. Below is an example of question to seek information:

0:29:40 → 0:29:44 WH – SI

Context: Otto meets Sonya for the first time at a train station. He notices her across the platform and immediately captivated. As Sonya walks along the platform, Otto notices her drop one of the books she carries. He calls to her, but she doesn't hear him. Otto rushes after her and jumps onto the departing train to return it. After a while, he finally finds her. She thanks him and invites him to sit with her, and they start a conversation. The train conductor then comes up alongside their seats to check their tickets. He realizes that Otto is on the wrong train and tells him that he must pay an additional fare.

Otto: Uh, **how much is it?**

Train Conductor: \$1.75.

In this dialogue, Otto's question serves the function of seeking/requesting information. He asks about the price because he simply does not know the price for the train ticket and expects the train conductor to provide him with the information. The train conductor answers Otto's question concisely by stating "\$1.75" without adding unnecessary details or diverging from the topic. This direct response fulfils the purpose of the question, which is to provide the specific price Otto asked for.

Seeking confirmation (SCO)

To validate assumptions or verify information, speakers often ask questions aimed at seeking confirmation. In this function, the speaker already has an idea or expectation but wants the listener to confirm it.

0:03:17 → 0:03:22 YN - SCO

Context: Otto walks his way through the aisles of a hardware store. He picks out a large screw hook and 5 feet of rope. When a teenage clerk approaches him and offers help, he starts to react defensively and gestures for the clerk to leave him in peace. At the counter a disagreement arises when the clerk charges him for 2 yards of rope instead of 5 feet, since the store only sells rope by the yard. Otto argues that the math should be calculated per foot and become frustrated when the clerk says the computer cannot process it that way. His irritation grows as he demands to see the manager, only to learn that the manager is at lunch. He then asks if there is anyone else in charge.

Otto: Is there anyone else in charge?

Clerk: **You want the assistant manager?**

Otto: Yes, I'd like the assistant manager.

The question asked by the clerk in this dialogue functions as seeking confirmation. He wants to check if their understanding of Otto's request is correct. In the previous dialogue, he asked for the manager to complain, but the manager was at lunch. Then, he asked, "*Is there anyone else in the charge?*" indicating that he wanted to speak to someone other than the clerk. The clerk assumes that he might be referring to the assistant manager so he seeks confirmation by asking the yes/no question. Otto's response provides the confirmation he was seeking.

Expressing irritation, or exasperation (EI)

Frustration or annoyance is often conveyed through questions, particularly in repeated or aggravating situations. This question is not really asking for an answer but is used to express the speaker's feelings.

0:35:25 → 0:35:29 WH - EI

Context: Otto is home repairing a hole in his ceiling when his neighbors, Marisol and Tommy, knock on his door. Tommy wants to return his wrenches and Marisol brings him cookies. Tommy then asks to borrow a ladder to fix the window in their house. When Otto brings the ladder out of his garage, Tommy notices a ramp inside and starts to lift it without Otto's permission. Otto is Angry and yell at him.

Otto: Put that down! **Who said you can touch that?!**

Tommy: Oh, sorry Otto.

"*Who said you can touch that?*" in this dialogue functions as expressing Irritation, or exasperation. Otto is not genuinely asking for an answer, instead, his question conveys frustration at Tommy for touching his belonging without permission.

Seeking clarification (SC)

When faced with ambiguous or unclear information, questions play an important role in seeking clarification. These types of questions are used to address uncertainties, ensuring that both the speaker and the listener fully understand the intended message. The dialogue below is an example of a question containing this function.

1:05:23 → 1:05:29 YN - SC

Context: Otto goes to Marisol and Tommy's house and tells Marisol to get her coat because it is time for a driving lesson. Marisol is excited. During the lesson the car jerks down the street as they approach a red light. Otto gives the instructions about using the clutch and brake.

Otto: You get the clutch and then press in on the brake.

Marisol: **Do I hit the brake or the clutch?**

Otto: No, keep the clutch in.

The question in this dialogue functions as seeking clarification. Marisol is trying to resolve confusion about Otto's instructions. Otto initially tells her, "*You get the clutch and then press in on the brake.*" This instruction includes several steps. Therefore, Marisol's question seeks clarification of which action she should prioritize. Then, Otto's response provides the clarification she needs, confirming that she should maintain her focus on the clutch.

Expressing surprise/disbelief (ESD)

Questions that express surprise/disbelief are used to show the speaker's strong emotional reaction to something unexpected, unusual, or hard to believe. In these cases, the question is not necessarily asking for an answer but serves as a way to emphasize the speaker's astonishment or skepticism.

1:50:14 → 1:50:18 YN - ESD

Context: At the garage, Otto shows Malcolm and Jimmy how to put oil in the car engine. Afterward, he hands Malcolm the car's registration and then gives him the keys.

Otto: It's your car.

Malcolm: **Are you kidding me?**

Otto: Nope.

Malcolm's question, "*Are you kidding me?*" functions as expressing surprise/disbelief. He finds it hard to believe that he now has a car, and it is from Otto. Malcolm is not actually asking for confirmation but using the question to express his emotional reaction—his disbelief at the situation.

Expressing disapproval, or disagreement (ED)

Questions that function as expressing disapproval or disagreement are used to indirectly show the speaker's dissatisfaction or opposing to something. These questions often carry a

tone of critique or challenge, signalling that the speaker does not agree with what was said or done.

0:37:40 → 0:37:57 WH - ED

Context: Otto goes to Anita and Reuben's house to ask for his hose and offers to fix their radiators. When Anita leads Otto into the living room, she tells him that the real estate agents are pressuring her and Reuben to move of their own home. She explains that their son, Chris, believes she can no longer take care of Reuben and wants to place him in a care facility while sending her to a retirement home.

Anita: They have been talking to our boy, Chris. Now he's saying that I can no longer take care of Reuben, that he needs to be in a special care place. And I should move into a retirement home.

Otto: **What does Chris know about it?** He's an idiot. He always has been.

In this question, Otto expresses his disapproval or disagreement. Otto uses the question not to seek information but to criticize Chris's judgment and dismiss his perspective. He challenges the validity of Chris's opinion since Chris left home for 10 years and never come back to his parents (Anita and Reuben). Therefore, Otto thinks that Chris is unqualified or lacks the knowledge to make such decisions about Anita and Reuben's situation.

Making an offer (MO)

Questions can be used to express a willingness to help or provide something to someone. These questions are typically polite and considerate, as they seek to offer assistance without being imposing. The speaker usually presents the offer in a way that leaves room for the listener to accept or decline.

0:39:37 → 0:39:42 YN - MO

Context: After Otto fixes the radiators, Anita returns to the house with Jimmy and gives him back his hose. She thanks him for his help and apologizes for keeping the hose so long. Then, she invites him to stay for lunch.

Anita: **Um, you wanna stay for lunch?**

Jimmy: Yeah, Anita made a pork tenderloin.

Otto: No, I have a lot of things I have to do.

In this dialogue, Anita's question, "Um, you wanna stay for lunch?" demonstrates the use of a question to offer something. She is politely offering the option for Otto to stay and have lunch, showing willingness to include him in the meal.

Maintaining/ Initiating conversation (MC)

Questions are vital in social interactions for initiating or maintaining conversations. They are used to keep a dialogue going or to begin a new topic of discussion. These questions help establish communication, keep it flowing, or encourage the listener to engage further. They

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often prompt the listener to share information, offer their opinion, or provide more details, allowing the conversation to continue smoothly.

0:59:02 → 0:59:04 YN - MC

Context: Otto sits alone in his car in front of his garage when Marisol approaches and suggest that he become her driving instructor. Otto refuses and saying that he does not have time. As they talk, Jimmy arrives carrying a cardboard box with a cat inside.

Otto: **Cat in there?**

Jimmy: Yeah.

Otto's question in this dialogue functions as maintaining/initiating conversation because it serves as a simple and direct way to keep the conversation going after Jimmy arrives with the box.

Requesting non-verbal action (NV)

Questions that function as requesting non-verbal action are used to politely or indirectly ask someone to perform a physical action rather than verbal responses.

0:28:33 → 0:28:35 WH - NV

Context: Otto meets Sonya for the first time at a train station. He notices her across the platform and immediately captivated. As Sonya walks along the platform, Otto notices her drop one of the books she carries. He calls to her, but she doesn't hear him. Otto rushes after her and jumps onto the departing train to return it. After a while, he finally finds her. She thanks him and invites him to sit with her.

Sonya: Oh, here. **Why don't you join me?**

In this context, Sonya's question, "Why don't you join me?" functions as requesting non-verbal action because she is inviting Otto to take a specific physical action—sitting next to her on the train

Expressing sarcasm or irony (ESI)

Questions that function as expressing sarcasm or irony are not intended to seek genuine answers but to convey a meaning opposite to their literal interpretation. They are often used to mock, criticize, or highlight absurdity in a situation.

0:02:04 → 0:02:08 YN - ESI

Context: Otto walks his way through the aisles of a hardware store. He picks out a large screw hook and examines various kind of rope. When he finally settling on one, he measures five feet of repo and pulls put a pocket knife to cut it. A teenage clerk approaches him and offers help but Otto starts to react defensively and gestures for the clerk to leave him in peace.

Otto: **Do you think I don't know how to cut rope?**

Clerk: No, it's just we usually do that for ya.

Otto's question, "*Do you think I don't know how to cut rope?*" functions as expressing sarcasm or irony. Otto is not genuinely asking whether the clerk doubts his ability to cut rope; instead, he uses the question to sarcastically criticize or mock the implication that he might need help with such a simple task. The question highlights Otto's frustration at being underestimated or offered unnecessary assistance.

Seeking agreement, or approval (SAA)

Speakers may use questions to gain agreement or approval from their listeners. They are used to check if the listener shares the same opinion, supports an idea, or agrees with what the speaker has said. These questions often help the speaker feel reassured or validated about their thoughts or actions.

0:37:15 → 0:37:20 YN - SAA

Context: Otto goes to Anita and Reuben's house to ask for his hose and offers to fix their radiators. When Anita leads Otto into the living room, she attempts to make small talk about Otto's new neighbors.

Anita: So those new neighbours of yours, **they seem quite lovely, don't you think?**

Otto: Lovely.

Anita is asking Otto for his opinion on the new neighbours, hoping that he agrees with her positive assessment of them. The phrase "*don't you think?*" is a classic way to invite the listener to validate her opinion. She essentially seeking Otto's approval or alignment with her view that the neighbours are "lovely".

Requesting verbal action (VA)

These questions typically require a spoken response or some form of verbal interaction. The speaker is not asking for a physical action but instead seeking a verbal reply, which could be an answer, opinion, or clarification.

1:56:35 → 1:56:46 YN - VA

Context: Outside the reception hall of Otto's funeral service, Shari stands with a camera crew and delivers a report about his death. She then turns to Jimmy and invites him to say a few words on camera.

Shari: Jimmy, **would you like to say a few words about Otto?**

Jimmy: Yeah. Otto, we love you. In your honour, Malcolm and I are doing all of your rounds without fail around lunch and on weekdays.

Shari is asking Jimmy to speak about Otto during the interview at Otto's funeral. The question is not asking for physical action but instead encourages Jimmy to engage in a verbal action—sharing his thoughts and feelings about Otto. Shari's question is requesting Jimmy to speak, making it clear that she is asking for a verbal contribution, which fits the typical role of a reporter conducting an interview. Jimmy's response is a direct verbal reply, fulfilling Shari's request for him to say a few words.

Asking for permission (AP)

Politeness plays a significant role in how we request permission, and using questions is a key way to show respect for others' authority or boundaries. When the speaker asks for permission, framing it as a question—rather than making a direct statement or command—acknowledges that the listener has the right to approve or deny the request.

0:53:10 → 0:53:14 WH - AP

Context: Marisol finds a cat frozen in a snowdrift and calls Otto for help. He responds coldly, saying he is not good with cats. Jimmy arrives and he pulls the cat from the snow. They then rush it into Otto's house to warm it up. Inside the house, Marisol reaches for a coat to help warm the cat.

Marisol: Okay, **how about this one? Please?**

Otto: No, no. Don't touch that coat. It'll stay here.

Marisol notices there is a coat and asks for Otto's permission to use it to help the frozen cat. Marisol wants to ensure that Otto is okay with her using the coat, so she politely asks for his permission. The addition of "please" emphasizes her courtesy and desire for approval, showing that she recognizes Otto's authority over the coat and is not simply assuming she can use it without asking.

Expressing suspicion (ESU)

Suspicion or doubt can be effectively conveyed through questions. The function of these questions is to voice the speaker's skepticism or suspicion about something, prompting the listener to clarify or justify their actions, words, or motives.

1:43:23 → 1:43:34 WH - ESU

Context: The real estate agents arrive at Anita and Reuben's house to take Reuben from his home, claiming that the decision is final. Anita refuses to let them take her husband. Jimmy, Marisol, and Tommy record the confrontation, and Jimmy says he will help Anita and Reuben. Shari, a social media journalist, arrives and confronts the agents on camera.

Shari: You told Anita's son, Chris, that she had Parkinson's, but Anita never told anyone about her diagnosis. **So how did you know?**

Dye & Merica Agent: I-I'd have to check the records.

Shari is doubting how the Dye & Merica Agent knew about Anita's diagnosis. Shari's question implies that there is something unusual or questionable about the situation. Since Anita never disclosed her condition, the agent's knowledge of it raises suspicions, and Shari is challenging the agent to explain how they came to know such personal information.

Seeking advice (SAD)

When someone needs guidance or recommendations, they often ask questions in a way that encourages others to give helpful advice. By asking this way, the speaker wants the listener

to offer useful insights, suggestions, or recommendations that can help solve a problem or make a decision.

1:48:55 → 1:48:57 YN - SAD

Context: At Marisol and Tommy's house, friends and family gather to celebrate the arrival of their new baby. When Otto arrives, Marisol introduces him to the guests. Feeling uncomfortable with the attention, Otto asks her to step aside and shows a crib he built for the baby. Marisol is deeply touched and thanks him before placing the baby in his arms so she can show Tommy the gift.

Otto: Uh, **should I put this thing back in him?**

In the previous dialogue, Marisol has asked Otto to hold her baby for a moment because she wants to go to her husband, Tommy. Then the baby starts crying. Otto isn't sure how to calm the baby down, so he asks, "Uh, should I put this thing back in him?" referring to the pacifier. This question is seeking advice because Otto is asking Marisol if using the pacifier would help stop the baby from crying. Otto doesn't know for sure what to do, so he looks to Marisol for guidance. He trusts her knowledge about her baby and wants to make sure he takes the right action.

Expressing a wish (EW)

Some questions express aspirations or hopes. These questions reflect a longing or desire, but unlike direct requests, they do not necessarily expect an immediate response or action. Instead, they convey the speaker's feelings of wanting or hoping for a specific situation or event to occur.

0:43:00 → 0:43:05 YN - EW

Context: Otto meets Sonya at the train station. They both are late and missed the train. Then they talk about his visit to the military center, and Otto says he wanted to repay her for the train ticket she covered the other day. Sonya gently suggests that instead of paying her back, he could invite her to dinner.

Otto: I wanted to pay you back for the train ticket.

Sonya: **Wouldn't it be nicer if you invited me to dinner?**

Otto wants to pay Sonya back for the train ticket she bought him the other day, but Sonya responds with the question, "Wouldn't it be nicer if you invited me to dinner?" This question functions as expressing a wish because it reflects her hope for a kind gesture and indicates that she values this idea more than the straightforward exchange of money for the ticket. It's a polite way of showing her wish without directly asking for it.

Expressing disappointment, complaint, or dissatisfaction (DC)

Questions can also express disappointment, complaint, or dissatisfaction. It is often used when the speaker feels let down, frustrated, or unhappy about an action or a situation.

1:37:38 → 1:37:59 YN - DC

Context: Otto goes to Marisol house and asks to use her phone because his phone has been disconnected. Marisol says no and confronts him about his recent behavior, how he refused to explain what happened in the street the day before, and left her worried about his safety. She admits she was scared for him. Marisol tells Otto that he cannot keep pushing people away and pretending he does not need anyone.

Marisol: You won't tell me why your phone is disconnected? You won't tell me why you need to use my phone? You won't tell me what happened to you in the street yesterday? And then you went inside and you wouldn't even open the door? You scared me, Otto. Do you know how long I was out there?

Marisol's series of questions above reveal her frustration and emotional distress caused by Otto's actions. Her repeated use of "*You won't tell me...*" emphasizes her dissatisfaction with Otto's refusal to communicate, which has left her feeling ignored and upset.

Ordering (OR)

Sometimes, questions are used as a polite or indirect way of giving commands. Instead of directly telling someone what to do, the speaker frames the request as a question to soften the tone or make it sound less forceful. This approach maintains a level of politeness and often encourages cooperation without creating conflict or resistance.

0:53:15 → 0:53:18 YN - OR

Context: Marisol finds a cat frozen in a snowdrift and calls Otto for help. He responds coldly, saying he is not good with cats. Jimmy arrives and he pulls the cat from the snow. They then rush it into Otto's house to warm it up. Inside the house, Marisol reaches for a coat to help warm the cat but Otto says no. Then Marisol asks him to bring a blanket instead.

Marisol: Okay. **Can you please bring a blanket?**

Otto: For the cat?

Marisol's question, "*Can you please bring a blanket?*" is an example of how questions can be used as indirect commands or orders. The structure of the question softens the command, making it sound less direct, but the expectation is clear: Marisol wants Otto to get the blanket.

Reminding (RE)

Questions that serve as reminders are often used to bring up something the listener has previously been told or something that is expected of them. These questions typically serve

as a gentle nudge or prompt, rather than a direct request or command. The purpose is to ensure that the listener remembers something important and to encourage them to follow through on their responsibilities or commitments.

1:15:01 → 1:15:03 YN - RE

Context: Marisol asks Otto to stay with her daughters so she and Tommy can go out for one last dinner before the baby arrives. Although he is reluctant at first, he agrees to help. Later that evening, as Marisol and Tommy head out, she reminds her daughters to behave to Otto and listen to Otto.

Marisol: **Be good to Abuelo Otto please, okay?**

Abbie & Luna: We will!

In this dialogue, Marisol's question functions as a reminder rather than a direct request or command. While it is phrased as a question with "okay?", the purpose of the question is not to seek confirmation but to gently remind Abbie and Luna to be kind to Otto, likely because Marisol wants to ensure they behave appropriately. The children's response, "We will!", shows that they acknowledge and accept the reminder.

Suggesting (SU)

Questions can subtly propose an idea, plan, solution, or course of action. These questions often present an option or possibility for consideration, allowing the listener to evaluate the suggestion and decide whether or not to follow it.

1:05:03 → 1:05:13 YN - SU

Context: Otto goes to Marisol and Tommy's house and tells Marisol to grab her coat for a driving lesson. A few minutes later, she rushes outside but pauses nervously when she sees Otto's car. She admits she's only ever driven an automatic and wonders if she can use her own car instead.

Marisol: Ah. Otto, **can we go in our car?** Because I've only ever driven automatic.

Otto: No. I'm teaching you how to drive. Get in.

Before the driving lesson starts, Marisol suggests using her own car. She feels more comfortable driving it because it is automatic. However, Otto rejects her suggestion. He insists on teaching her to drive a manual car, sticking to his original plan. The question in the dialogue above is a classic example of how suggestions can be framed as questions, offering an alternative while still allowing the listener to decide whether or not to accept the idea.

Threatening (TH)

Threatening is the act of deliberately frightening or intimidating someone to control their action or behaviour. By using a question, the threat becomes more urgent and confrontational, prompting the listener to consider the potential consequences without directly ordering them.

1:07:03 → 1:07:07 YN - TH

Context: During the driving lesson, Marisol struggles with the clutch and brake at the intersection. An impatient driver named Nick honks behind them and nudges their car, Marisol panics and begins to cry. Otto is furious. He confronts Nick, yelling at him for being impatient and for not understanding that she's just learning. He physically pins Nick against his truck, warning him not to honk again.

Otto: If you honk that horn one more time, it'll be the last thing you do. **You hear me? Huh?**

The context of the question above is during Marisol's driving lesson with Otto. When the traffic light turns green, Marisol panics because she cannot move the car. The driver behind them grows impatient and honks then rolls forward, nudging the back of Otto's car. This infuriates Otto, who gets out of the car and confronts the driver, and says, "*If you honk that horn one more time, it'll be the last thing you do. You hear me? Huh?*" Otto's question here functions as a threat. He is not actually asking if the driver hears him. Instead, he is warning him to stop honking or he will face serious consequences. The question intensifies Otto's anger and emphasizes the threat, making it clear he's serious about his words.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of 241 questions in *A Man Called Otto* reveals two primary forms: yes/no questions and WH questions. yes/no questions dominate with 132 instances (55%), while WH questions comprise 109 instances (45%). This distribution highlights the tendency of dialogue to rely on straightforward exchanges for clarity and efficiency, with yes/no questions prompting simple affirmations or denials. These findings were in line with the study conducted by Baihaqi & Hardjanto (2020). Baihaqi & Hardjanto (2020) found that questions in the TV series *The Office* are presented in the form of yes/no questions and WH questions, with yes/no questions occurring more frequently than WH-question.

In terms of pragmatic functions, the study reveals seeking/requesting information as the most frequent function, constituting 22.8% of the total data. This finding is predictable since the direct function of questions is to ask for information. Following this, seeking confirmation ranks second at 17.4%, reflecting the characters' frequent need for validation and assurance, which aligns with the emotional undertones of the story. These two dominant functions emphasize the importance of questions as tools for advancing the plot and building interpersonal connections among the characters, particularly in moments of uncertainty or emotional tension. These findings were consistent with Rondonuwu (2015) and Saifudin et al. (2008). Both studies show that questions are often used to request and confirm information. However, this present study identifies 21 different purposes for questions, showing a wider range of pragmatic functions compared to the smaller number found in previous studies.

Beyond seeking and confirming information, questions also serve to express emotions and manage social dynamics. For instance, expressing irritation or exasperation accounts for 9.5% of the questions. This shows that interrogatives can convey emotions. Similarly, expressing surprise or disbelief (7.1%) and expressing disapproval or disagreement (6.2%) highlight how questions can reflect interpersonal conflict and emotional reactions. These findings illustrate the flexibility of questions in fulfilling both direct and indirect functions, adding depth to the characters and their interactions. These were in line with Omotunde et al.'s (2021) research on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where interrogatives also function to express annoyance and anxiety.

Certain pragmatic functions appear less frequently, such as maintaining/initiating conversation (3.7%), requesting non-verbal actions (3.3%), and expressing sarcasm or irony (3.7%). Despite their lower frequency, these functions demonstrate the nuanced use of questions in shaping conversational flow and adding layers of meaning. For example, sarcasm or irony can introduce humor or critique, while maintaining/initiating conversation ensure continuity and engagement. These subtler roles highlight the adaptability of questions in fulfilling diverse communicative needs.

The study identifies several rare pragmatic functions, such as, reminding, suggesting, and threatening, each occurring only once in the data. While infrequent, these functions are contextually significant, often carrying weight in important moments of the narrative. For example, a single question used to threaten might underscore a critical plot point or reveal a character's intentions. These rare instances underline the specificity with which questions can be tailored to fit situational demands, showcasing their precision and versatility in movie dialogue.

Furthermore, the analysis also reveals that questions are much more complex and even confusing since the same structure may perform different functions. For instance:

1. Reuben, **what are you doing?**
2. **What are you doing?**
3. Jimmy, **what are you doing?**

The function in (1) is expressing surprise. In this scene, Otto goes to Anita and Reuben's house to ask for his hose, which they borrowed. After Anita returns it to him, Otto begins to leave but suddenly realizes that Reuben has a firm grip on the hose. Then, Anita asks *Reuben, what are you doing?* This question is not intended to seek information, but to express surprise. She is startled by Reuben's sudden action, especially given his condition after the stroke and the tension between them due to past conflicts. Since Otto has just begun to open up and has agreed to help fix their broken radiator (something Reuben can no longer do), Anita fears that Reuben's action might irritate Otto again. Then, in example (2), the question *what are you doing?* functions as an expression of Irritation or Exasperation. That is when the real estate agents arrive at Anita and Reuben's house to take control of their

property. Jimmy, one of their neighbors, steps forward and starts to record the agent's action on his phone. That is when the power dynamic shift. The agent and immediately turns and says "what are you doing?" to express his frustration at being challenged and publicly scrutinized. In the third example, the question serves yet another function: maintaining/initiating conversation. Otto and Marisol are talking when Jimmy approaches then carrying a cardboard box. Then, Marisol asks the question in (3). She uses this question to acknowledge Jimmy's presence and to invite him into the ongoing interaction.

Overall, these findings show the complexity of questions and their functions in both narrative progression and character development. It is difficult to know the function without a clear understanding of the context. These findings correspond to Fareh & Moussa's (2008), claim that the immediate context of an utterance distinguish the different functions of interrogative sentence that share the same structure.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the pragmatic functions of questions in the movie *A Man Called Otto*. The findings show that 241 questions were identified, consisting of 132 (55%) yes/no questions and 109 (45%) WH questions. These questions perform 21 distinct pragmatic functions, demonstrating the richness and versatility of interrogative forms. The most prominent function, seeking/requesting information accounts for 22.8% of the total instances. This is closely followed by seeking confirmation (17.4%) and expressing irritation, or exasperation (9.5%). In contrast, certain pragmatic functions like advising, reminding, suggesting, and threatening occur minimally, with only one instance of each function. This study highlights that questions are not limited to simply asking for information—they serve a wide range of purposes that go beyond their surface function. The analysis further shows that the identification of functions relies heavily on the context in which they are used.

Furthermore, this study has implications for language teaching and material development. By understanding the diverse functions of questions, teachers can help learners develop not only grammatical accuracy but also pragmatic competence. Traditional language instruction often emphasizes sentence structure, but this study highlights the need to teach how questions function pragmatically in different contexts, whether to seek information, express emotions, or manage interactions. Incorporating pragmatic functions into language teaching can improve learners' ability to interpret and respond to questions, reducing misunderstandings and enhancing their overall communicative competence.

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