INTERROGATIVE SYNTAX IN ABDURAUF FITRAT'S DRAMA "ABULFAYZKHAN": A SEMANTIC AND STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24184890 · Received: 7 November 2026 · Accepted: 10 November 2026 · Published: 13 November 2026

Abstract: This article presents a syntactic, semantic, and stylistic analysis of Abdurauf Fitrat's historical drama Abulfayzkhan, focusing on the structural and semantic characteristics of interrogative sentences and their pragmatic functions in literary discourse. Situated at the intersection of Uzbek syntax, linguostylistics, and pragmalinguistics, the study demonstrates the stylistic potential of interrogative constructions in dramatic texts.

Keywords: Abdurauf Fitrat, Abulfayzkhan drama, interrogative syntax, structural-semantic analysis, stylistic analysis, rhetorical questions, pragmalinguistics, psychological influence, Khanate period

I. Introduction

Historical themes occupy a prominent place in Abdurauf Fitrat's dramatic works. Among his most celebrated literary achievements, the play Abulfayzkhan is regarded as the first historical drama in Uzbek literature.

The play portrays the tragic events that occurred in Bukhara during the reign of Abulfayzkhan, the last representative of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty. The work vividly depicts Abulfayzkhan's rise to power through the elimination of potential claimants to the throne, including his father, brothers, and both close and distant relatives.

Having seized the throne of Bukhara, Abulfayzkhan becomes increasingly consumed by suspicion and fear of persecution. He subsequently begins eliminating his trusted associates, loyal military commanders, and provincial governors who had previously assisted him in obtaining political power.

Abulfayzkhan, also known as The Tragedy of Abulfayzkhan, is a dramatic work by the Uzbek writer Abdurauf Fitrat, published in 1924. The play is widely considered one of the greatest achievements of Fitrat's literary and artistic career.

The drama is devoted to events associated with the reign of Abulfayzkhan, the last representative of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty in the Bukhara Khanate, which the source text places in the seventeenth century.

Throughout the play, the author depicts how Abulfayzkhan, driven by his determination to seize and retain political authority, eliminates everyone who might claim the throne, thereby creating the conditions for his own tragedy.

The tragedy Abulfayzkhan became a major achievement of Uzbek literature in the 1920s.

II. Structural and Semantic Characteristics of Interrogative Sentences in the Drama

A textual analysis of Abdurauf Fitrat's historical drama Abulfayzkhan demonstrates that interrogative syntax functions as an important artistic, stylistic, emotional, and expressive device.

A total of 207 interrogative sentences were identified in the dramatic text. These constructions differ in their structural organization, methods of formation, and functional characteristics.

In particular, 200 interrogative sentences, accounting for approximately 96% of the total, were classified as genuine information-seeking questions.

By their nature, these constructions serve to obtain specific information during verbal communication, clarify the details of events, or explain previously unknown circumstances.

In Abulfayzkhan, such constructions frequently appear in questions asked by members of the royal court, ordinary officials, and ministers seeking information about particular situations.

For example:

Khan: "If he is my friend, why has he not sent his daughter yet?"

Ulfat: "Shall we bring Farhod Ataliq's daughter?"

From a syntactic perspective, these sentences are formed through interrogative pronouns and particles. They perform their primary semantic function and require an actual response from the interlocutor.

According to the findings of the study, approximately 7–8 interrogative sentences, representing 3.5–4% of the total, are rhetorical questions.

Although rhetorical questions possess an interrogative grammatical form, they do not require a separate answer.

Instead, they primarily express the speaker's logical affirmation, strong denial, emotional excitement, or internal resistance.

Such constructions serve as important devices for intensifying the ideological and emotional tension of the drama.

For example:

Ibrohimbiy: "How could I accomplish something that even such a capable man as Farhod Ataliq was unable to achieve?"

In this example, the interrogative structure conveys strong negation or profound despair.

Its purpose is not to obtain an answer from the listener but to express the intense emotional attitude of both the character and the author.

Interrogative-exclamatory and hybrid sentences also occupy an important position in the dramatic text.

According to the study, these constructions number approximately 10 and account for 4.5% of the total.

By their nature, such sentences simultaneously perform two or more syntactic and emotional functions.

In tragic works such as Abulfayzkhan, these constructions emerge in situations involving complex emotional states, including helplessness, extreme astonishment, intense anger, sarcasm, and humiliation.

For example:

Khan: "Why did you bring troops from Iran?"

Khan: "What am I supposed to do now?"

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As these examples demonstrate, the combination of syntactic and emotional features enables the author to portray the character's anger, anxiety, and sarcasm with considerable expressive force.

The statistical findings presented above indicate that genuine information-seeking interrogative sentences constitute the dominant category of interrogative constructions in Abulfayzkhan.

The relatively small proportion of rhetorical questions reveals one of the most significant and innovative aspects identified in this research.

This phenomenon is interpreted not merely as a stylistic preference but as a linguistic reflection of the extremely complicated and dangerous internal political environment of the Khanate period.

In communication between Abulfayzkhan and the upper-ranking representatives of the royal court, the need to exercise strict control, interrogate others, impose authority, and manipulate interlocutors through speech predominates over emotional digressions or questions without practical purposes.

Therefore, the considerable proportion of genuine interrogative sentences in the drama demonstrates that they function not only as instruments of information exchange but also as psychological weapons reflecting distrust, oppression, and the struggle for political power among members of the ruling elite.

III. Lexical-Semantic Classification of Interrogative Sentences

Considering the quantitative and structural characteristics of interrogative syntax, the classification of the 207 interrogative sentences into lexical-semantic groups provides an opportunity to reveal the deeper semantic layers of the drama.

In Abulfayzkhan, interrogative sentences are not merely grammatical constructions. They also reflect the worldview of individuals living during the Khanate period, the psychological atmosphere surrounding the throne, and the complexity of interpersonal relationships.

The analysis demonstrates that these interrogative sentences can primarily be classified into three major lexical-semantic categories:

- The semantics of power, the throne, and distrust.
- The semantics of threats, pressure, and domination.
- The semantics of helplessness, despair, and supplication.

IV. The Semantics of Power, the Throne, and Distrust

Among the identified semantic categories, interrogative sentences associated with political power, the throne, and distrust are particularly significant.

These questions frequently occur in Abulfayzkhan's speech and clearly reflect his internal fears, paranoia, and anxiety concerning political conspiracies within the royal court.

In such contexts, interrogative constructions become linguistic instruments for expressing the speaker's psychological distress and fear of losing political authority.

For example:

Khan: "Why did you bring troops from Iran?"

Khan: "What are they going to do to me?"

Through these interrogative constructions, the drama reveals the inability of a political ruler to trust even his closest associates.

The questions express a psychological condition characterized by constant suspicion, uncertainty, and fear.

V. The Semantics of Threats, Pressure, and Domination

The second major category consists of interrogative sentences expressing threats, psychological pressure, and domination.

Such constructions are primarily found in the speech of influential political figures, including Rahimbiy, and other powerful individuals seeking control over the throne.

Their purpose is not simply to obtain information from the interlocutor.

Rather, these questions are intended to weaken the listener's determination, eliminate opportunities for resistance, and establish dominance within communication.

For example:

Rahimbiy: "Where is your money?"

Rahimbiy: "Uncle Ataliq, will you not congratulate me?"

As demonstrated by these examples, the interrogative form conveys an underlying meaning of direct psychological pressure and intimidation.

This indicates that verbal strategies aimed at controlling individuals and society were widely employed within the ruling circles represented in the drama.

VI. The Semantics of Helplessness, Despair, and Supplication

The third semantic category includes interrogative sentences expressing helplessness, despair, and supplication.

These questions appear in the speech of oppressed characters who become victims of palace conspiracies or find themselves in desperate circumstances.

In such situations, interrogative syntax serves to communicate psychological suffering and an individual's inability to resist a tragic fate.

For example:

Khan: "What are they going to do to me?"

Khan: "Will they not kill the children?"

In these examples, the interrogative structure effectively expresses the speaker's vulnerability and helplessness in the face of tragic circumstances.

Pragmalinguistic and Linguostylistic Potential of Interrogative Syntax in Dramatic Discourse

When examined from the combined perspectives of Uzbek syntax, linguostylistics, and pragmalinguistics, the 207 interrogative sentences identified in Abulfayzkhan emerge not merely as elements of dialogue but as psychological and manipulative mechanisms reflecting changes in political authority and social dominance.

Pragmalinguistic analysis demonstrates that the distribution and dynamics of interrogative sentences among the characters reveal the gradual disintegration of political power throughout the drama.

At the beginning of the play, when Abulfayzkhan stands at the height of his authority and exercises complete control

over the state, he also possesses absolute dominance in verbal communication.

During this period, Abulfayzkhan continuously questions others and maintains strict control over the situation.

Meanwhile, those surrounding him, including Farhod Ataliq and other officials, scarcely dare to ask questions.

The Khan's verbal superiority indicates that he maintains constant pressure on others through interrogative syntax.

However, as the dramatic events progress and the political system enters a period of crisis, the distribution of communicative initiative changes significantly.

When Abulfayzkhan becomes politically and psychologically weakened and approaches the loss of his throne, the right and initiative to ask questions begin shifting toward other characters.

The fact that Rahimbiy uses 35 interrogative sentences and Hakimbiy uses 24 demonstrates, from a syntactic perspective, the gradual transfer of political authority to those previously subordinate to the Khan.

One of the most remarkable pragmalinguistic features appears toward the end of the drama.

Even Qurbongul, an ordinary female servant in the prison, begins questioning the former ruler.

During one episode, Qurbongul repeats the same question twice:

Qurbongul: "Why are you crying, my lion?"

This repetition can be interpreted as a form of mockery directed at the Khan.

Through this artistic technique, Fitrat depicts not only the tragedy of an individual ruler but also the process through which absolute political authority collapses.

The author demonstrates how political control is lost and how representatives of the lower social classes may eventually gain superiority over those who previously ruled them.

Interrogative syntax thus becomes a powerful artistic instrument for portraying the reversal of social and political relationships.

VII. Quantitative Distribution of Interrogative Sentences Among the Characters

A comprehensive examination of the quantitative distribution of interrogative sentences reveals that the largest proportion of the 207 questions identified in the drama belongs to Abulfayzkhan himself.

Specifically, 73 interrogative sentences occur in his speech.

From a pragmalinguistic perspective, this figure demonstrates that the Khan initially possesses absolute communicative dominance and controls interactions through continuous questioning and psychological pressure.

However, as political tensions intensify and the struggle for the throne becomes increasingly severe, verbal dominance gradually shifts toward other political figures.

Rahimbiy, one of the principal conspirators and claimants to power, uses 35 interrogative sentences.

Hakimbiy uses 24, while Doniyolbiy uses 13.

These figures become linguistic indicators of the changing distribution of political authority within the drama.

Interrogative constructions also occur in the speech of other characters occupying different social and political positions.

The quantitative distribution is presented below.

Character	Number of interrogative sentences
Abulfayzkhan	73
Rahimbiy	35
Hakimbiy	24
Doniyolbiy	13
Ibrohimbiy	12
Ulfat	8
Qurbongul	6
Abdumo'minkhan	5
Nodir	5
Qozinizom	3
Xayol	3
Ahmadkhan	3
Bozor Oxund	3
Executioner	3
Tog'oyqulbek	2
Xojakalon	2
Children	2
Davlat	1
Yo'ldosh	1
Husaynkhan	1

The occurrence of six interrogative sentences in the speech of Qurbongul, an ordinary female servant, is especially meaningful.

It demonstrates the complete collapse of Abulfayzkhan's former authority.

Individuals from the lower social strata, who previously had no opportunity to question the ruler, eventually acquire sufficient communicative power to interrogate him.

By employing this pragmalinguistic strategy, Fitrat effectively portrays the crisis of the characters' moral and political positions through the distribution of interrogative sentences.

VIII. Linguostylistic Functions of Interrogative Syntax and Syntactic Gradation

An examination of the linguostylistic potential of interrogative syntax reveals Fitrat's exceptional skill in constructing dramatic climaxes.

Interrogative sentences in the drama are not always used independently.

Instead, they frequently appear in successive, chain-like sequences, forming a stylistic device known as syntactic gradation.

This technique intensifies dramatic tension and psychological pressure during communication.

The growing confusion, anger, and suspicion experienced by the characters are represented through the increasing frequency and intensity of interrogative constructions.

Consequently, interrogative sentences function as one of the principal stylistic devices that accelerate dramatic action and vividly communicate the characters' internal psychological conditions to the reader.

Within the linguostylistic structure of the drama, the intensity of such interrogative constructions is particularly evident in political disputes between Rahimbiy and Hakimbiy, as well as in conversations between Rahimbiy and the Khan.

Successive questions exchanged during these dialogues do not merely serve the purpose of exchanging information.

They vividly express mutual distrust, ruthless competition for the throne, and psychological pressure between the opposing sides.

For example:

Rahimbiy: "Father, is everyone well?"

Hakimbiy: "Well, my son, how was your journey?"

In such passages, the rapid alternation of interrogative sentences accelerates the rhythm of the scene and contributes to the development of dramatic conflict.

Similarly, the intense sequence of questions exchanged between the Khan and Rahimbiy effectively illustrates the psychological tension associated with the transfer of political authority.

The Khan gradually loses his power, while his political opponent becomes increasingly dominant.

Another distinctive manifestation of stylistic gradation occurs when a single character asks several questions consecutively.

For instance, Abulfayzkhan sometimes uses as many as ten interrogative sentences in succession.

Likewise, Rahimbiy and Nadir Shah continuously question their subordinate servants and officials, considerably increasing the intensity of verbal interaction.

The following examples illustrate this phenomenon.

A. Khan: "Did you say that Farhod Ataliq was an old servant of mine?"

B. Khan: "Farhod Ataliq was the leader of the Chinese Kipchaks, was he not? Do you not know that?"

C. Khan: "Look and see whether they dare to cross the line I have drawn."

D. Khan: "Why is Hakimbiy Inaq communicating with Nadir Shah?"

E. Khan: "Did you hear the information that Qozinizom received earlier from Farhod Ataliq?"

F. Khan: "Who is in the quarters?"

G. Khan: "How is your father, Rahim Qurchi?"

H. Khan: "Have any guests from Iran visited you recently?"

I. Khan: "Who were they?"

J. Khan: "Why can you not accomplish it? What is so difficult about it?"

This method of syntactic gradation serves several communicative purposes.

First, it deprives the interlocutor of sufficient time to think or justify their actions.

Second, it creates a state of psychological confusion and anxiety.

Third, it emphasizes the speaker's absolute dominance within the communicative situation.

Through the repeated use of interrogative constructions, Fitrat skillfully depicts the atmosphere of interrogation prevailing within the royal court.

He also reveals the social divisions between rulers and their subjects and the extreme psychological pressure characteristic of their relationships.

K. The Pragmalinguistic and Linguostylistic Climax of the Drama

The pragmalinguistic and linguostylistic climax of the drama reaches its highest point in the sequence of questions addressed by Ibrohimbiy to Qozinizom and the religious scholars of the royal court.

Ibrohimbiy's speech contains the following accusatory questions:

"Was it not you who, only yesterday, called Abulfayzkhan the 'Shadow of God' and kissed his feet?

Have you forgotten how, on the morning after Abulfayzkhan spent the night drinking with his wives, you came before him and said, 'Last night I saw the Prophet in my dream, and he sent his greetings to you,' and received a robe of honor?

Yesterday, you accepted a robe from the man you called the Shadow of God, yet today you issue a religious decree authorizing his death. Have you no shame?

If the Prophet who asked about Abulfayzkhan in your dream were to appear to you again and ask about him, what would you say?

And as though all this were not enough, do you also intend to abolish the laws of Genghis Khan?"

These sharp interrogative constructions do not function as ordinary requests for information.

Rather, they constitute powerful pragmatic instruments of exposure and moral accusation.

Through the technique of syntactic gradation, Fitrat arranges the interrogative sentences in a successive chain to expose the hypocrisy, self-interest, and moral inconsistency of the court officials and religious scholars.

As a result, interrogative syntax becomes a central stylistic weapon that removes the characters' metaphorical masks and establishes the tragic and moral climax of the drama.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of interrogative syntax in Abdurauf Fitrat's drama Abulfayzkhan is not merely a grammatical or stylistic ornament.

Rather, it constitutes a fundamental linguostylistic and pragmatic mechanism through which the ideological and artistic conception of the drama, the psychological conflicts experienced by the characters, and the complex political environment of the Khanate period are revealed.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 207 interrogative sentences identified in the dramatic text makes it possible to formulate the following scientific conclusions.

First, the relatively small number of rhetorical questions that do not require an answer—approximately 7–8 instances, or 3.5–4%—and the overwhelming predominance of genuine and hybrid interrogative constructions represent an important innovative characteristic of Fitrat's dramatic technique.

This phenomenon indicates that the communicative environment of the Khanate period is represented as highly realistic, tense, and characterized by suspicion.

Rather than engaging in purely emotional expressions, the characters attempt to obtain information rapidly from one another and exercise verbal manipulation.

Second, the semantic analysis of interrogative sentences makes it possible to distinguish three principal categories: the

semantics of power and distrust, threats and domination, and helplessness and supplication.

Within the ruling circles, interrogative syntax functions as a means of expressing constant paranoia, ruthless competition for the throne, and strategies designed to psychologically corner opponents.

Third, from a pragmalinguistic perspective, the distribution of interrogative sentences among the characters—Abulfayzkhan with 73, Rahimbiy with 35, Hakimbiy with 24, and others—clearly reflects the gradual disintegration of political authority.

At the beginning of the drama, the Khan possesses absolute dominance in questioning others.

However, during the decline of his political power, this communicative privilege gradually passes to his opponents and, eventually, even to representatives of the lower social classes, such as Qurbongul, an ordinary female servant who uses six interrogative sentences.

This transformation demonstrates a fundamental shift in verbal and political initiative.

Fourth, through the successive arrangement of interrogative sentences, known as syntactic gradation, Fitrat brings dramatic tension and the intensity of moral exposure to their highest point.

The sharp questions employed by Ibrohimbiy and other characters function as powerful stylistic instruments for revealing the hypocrisy and moral degradation of the royal court.

Therefore, interrogative syntax in Abulfayzkhan represents a distinctive and artistically significant syntactic phenomenon through which the collapse of absolute political authority, the failure of manipulative strategies, and the disintegration of psychological domination are demonstrated by linguistic means.

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