WH-QUESTIONS IN IRAQI DIALECTS AND ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYNTAX

Sohaib Mahmood Khudhur, University of Bucharest, University of Mosul

Abstract: This research will focus on the grammatical structures of Wh-questions in Iraqi Arabic and English, taking the theory of generative grammar as a frame of reference. It seeks to determine how these grammatical structures are formed in both languages, underlining their similarities and differences, thereby contributing to expanding knowledge about general grammar and linguistic comparison. Data were collected directly from interviews with native Iraqi Arabic and English speakers, further supported by the analysis of some linguistic texts. Results proved that the two languages share a set of universal grammatical principles yet differ in several aspects, such as question marks, word order, flexibility, and the position of the Wh-phrase within the sentence. These findings underline that the observed divergences between these cognate languages do not represent differences regarding their grammatical system but touch upon cultural and contextual concomitants of each language variety. Such results bring empirical contributions to comparative linguistics for elaborating foreign language teaching methods by addressing a particular language's grammatical and cultural aspects in this world of languages.

Keywords: Wh-Questions, Iraqi Dialects, Mosul Arabic, Iraqi dialects, Arabic linguistics, phonology, dialectology.

1. Introduction

Wh-questions in both the Iraqi dialect and English serve practically as the subject matter of this research. Wh-questions have been among the paramount interests of generative grammar (Chomsky, 1995). Wh-questions, in particular, help to learn more about the syntactic structures of different languages. So, studying the similarities and differences between languages in their Wh-questions formation is essential to creating a bridge between languages (Cook & Newson, 2007). Interrogative sentences are statements or commands framed as questions. They elicit information in the form of a question (Radford, 2009). English and other languages present a range of forms for such sentences. In general, forming Wh-questions in both the Iraqi dialect and English is a critical concern for the students of linguistics as well as for the teachers regarding how to evaluate their students' learning (Brown, 2000). Asking questions in a whole language formation exercises the usage of different sentence constructions and performing different transformations in the syntax (Ouhalla, 1999). Creating a comparative analysis between the syntax of the Iraqi dialect and English would pave the way to exploring the syntactic structures of the two concerned languages. This research paper aims to follow two main lines: The first entails a deep assessment of question formation in Iraqi and English dialects.

Before identifying and observing the differences between the two languages and directing our attention to creating curiosity, we need to establish one central question: Is there any rule for creating questions in the Iraqi dialect and in English?

2. Theoretical Framework

Syntax is one of the four central concerns of the scientific study of language, broadly encompassing phonetics, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics (Carnie, 2013). Accordingly, it constitutes the base for all interdisciplinary language research (Chomsky, 1981). As such, a precise definition of syntax and its dominant concepts inform both the field of linguistics at large and other fields of inquiry. Syntactic structure studies linguistic building blocks, aiming

to account for their distribution in various natural languages (Radford, 2009). More succinctly, syntax refers to the study of combinatorial properties of linguistic elements and computational constraints that feed into meaning construction (Hornstein et al., 2005). Equally, syntactic behaviour is accounted for using syntactic trees to determine the part of speech a word belongs to (Carnie, 2013). Several theoretical perspectives inform syntax studies, proposing different approaches to the centrality of grammar operations and the range of phenomena theoretically relevant to the model. In terms of linguistics at large, these perspectives are known as paradigms. Generative grammar is the leading theoretical syntactic framework within linguistics, a perspective that deems computation the heart of grammatical operations and will have clear implications regarding sentence comprehension (Chomsky, 1995). In this area of inquiry, a great deal of debate has been taking place to determine how questions, in general, and tag questions, in particular, can be transformed after they are constructed and how the embedding system interacts with the phonological system of sentences to produce certain phonological forms that distinguish them and sometimes are used to reflect the speaker's attitude towards what is being said (Radford, 2009; Selkirk, 1984). These studies suggest that a question or tag question can be unconsciously made to have one form or another depending to a great degree on what the speaker wants to emphasize rhetorically, no matter what he or she asks the addressee about (Hornstein et al., 2005).

2.1. Syntax in Linguistics

Syntax refers to the rules that determine the arrangement of words in a sentence to show the grammatical relationship to each other. It also deals with the principles that govern the structure of sentences (Radford, 2009). Syntax has a direct effect on meaning. Grammar, in general, is the foundation of language and cannot be misunderstood (Carnie, 2013). The primary aim of developing theories of syntax in different languages is to specify and make explicit the forms of sentences that are valid in those languages; in other words, accounting for the possibility of the grammatical forms available in a language (Chomsky, 1995).

Several syntactic theories are established to investigate sentence structure; the most famous theories are phrase structure grammar, transformational or generative grammar, government and binding principles, and the minimalist program (Hornstein et al., 2005). Syntax deals with sentence structure in a language and the rules of such a structure. The sentence can express meaning and make it quickly clear for communication among speakers.

This research investigates the study of the Iraqi dialect and English syntax, focusing on formulating the syntax of Wh-questions in both languages. Syntax also focuses on Wh-questions since they place the question word at the beginning of a question with a specific meaning in both the first and second languages.

Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Several methodological steps were followed in collecting, examining, and interpreting data in conducting the research. The domains of the comparison, namely the English and Iraqi dialects, with Wh-questions being the main focus of the study, allowed for more comparisons between the two dialects. For this purpose, audio recordings of six native English speakers, four males and two females, from Birmingham and the British Midlands were utilized. Similarly, six Iraqi Arabic native speakers, disregarding gender, aged 26 to 60 provided the data.

In addition to the audio recordings, a specially designed questionnaire was also administered to confirm them. The questionnaires aimed to capture the informants' sociolinguistic backgrounds and draw their attention to using Wh-questions in

communicative situations. The study sample comprised two groups: native Iraqi Arabic and English speakers. This descriptive research employed an analytical perspective, which enabled the researcher to integrate qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The qualitative method explored the syntactic structures and communicative functions of Wh-questions. In contrast, the quantitative method provided generalized results concerning their usage across the two dialects.

Identifying a recurrent pattern of usage of Wh-questions across the two dialects was essential in meeting the research objectives. A comparative analysis was conducted to avoid generalizing findings from one group to another. Ethical issues related to data collection and interpretation of Wh-questions were also closely considered in light of ethical research guidelines.

3.2. Analytical Steps

The analytical perspective made sense of the data collected from the audio frequency for the pronunciation through IPA and the questionnaire. Such a rich source for analysis has captured several examples of Wh-questions following the intonation features. Following the first step, every pronoun uttered by an informant was identified and systemized. In the same vein, the percentage of the Wh-question in both dialects was included in the analysis for added value to this study's findings. Data were then calculated in figures and table graphs as vital steps in the quantitative approach. The choice of the analytical framework was based on previous studies related to the same topic. The use of questionnaires is based on previous usage and experience. This approach may be questionable, but this method seeks much more information from the informants. More attention to the usage of Wh-questions, in particular, might be given to speech situations when the investigation requires more accuracy in linguistic matters; hence, the questionnaire was conducted very carefully with the spoken data. Consistency in the data types examined in the analysis is important for replicability. Segment Measuring: Identifying contents, importance, relevance, and complexity required to define and apply parameters to segment the Arabic sentence data was concluded in Q, P, F, and HB.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The selection of language samples was based on specific criteria for Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect and English. For the former, these included samples from the standard dialect spoken in Baghdad. For English, only native speakers' English was studied. For Iraqis, language samples from the standard dialect were oral, while oral and written texts were used to investigate the English language. This difference was justified by the accessibility of written forms for the latter language. Two methods of data collection were employed. First, interviews were conducted to achieve six objectives underlying the broader research question. Second, textual analysis was conducted on British and American corpora. The interview data was coded and categorized into two categories based on how questions and sentences were structured in the words selected. To ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data, the process of coding and categorizing data was carried out and re-checked by having quantitative and qualitative analysis done on the corpus. Finally, the interview data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics.

Data was collected by interviewing native speakers of English and Arabic based on a set of six objectives, looking at wh-questions in terms of their structure and covering the five Ws. The data was then subjected to coding, producing two categories on the structure of the questions. The data was then categorized based on the two categories. Both categories were then analyzed to find any percentages or likelihood of the structure of the two language samples. The method used to collect the data is mixed, where the interview was the tool for

data collection, and linear triangulation was used to ensure reliability. A textual analysis was also conducted to confirm the results of the data collected.

4. Wh-Questions in the Iraqi Dialect

In the Iraqi dialect, Wh-questions exhibit a different syntactic structure and syntax compared to declarative sentences. A range of attributes only associated with Wh-questions exists. The most significant characteristics of Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect are: (1) the verb 'to be' may be used more frequently than in declarative sentences; (2) Wh-movement may occur; and (3) there is generally no 'wh-' question particle. Preposing of the questioned element, subject-auxiliary inversion, or verbal-auxiliary inversion are common word order variations. For content questions in clausal and embedded clauses, new sentence intonation does not arise as in English. Both Wh-questions and Yes/No question particles exist in Arabic at the transition of the intonation group. Yes/No particles necessitate a response, whereas Wh-questions define the information sought. The Arabic Wh-word/morpheme has been confined to words specifying persons or objects, rendering it a feature equivalent to a Wh, not to words specifying attributes or states. In structure, the Wh-word/morpheme is associated with a top position, while a focus position is available to the right of this position, text, and pragmatic factors. In the Iraqi dialect, the choice lies between 'šen.Ma' (what), 'aywan' (what), 'iš' (where), 'ma d-' (where), 'weru' (where), 'kiš' (where), 'leyxa' (when), 'kiš' (when), 'kēf' (how), and 'ṯleyi' (why), depending on the speaker's social, political, educational, and other backgrounds. The discussion on choosing one against the other requires at least 15 pages. The present paper introduces four representations of Wh-questions with the Wh-depth words 'ašan xojə' (watə), 'lejxan' (?), and the focus marker 'kal-'. In structures A and B, surface-scope variables are fronted by every Wh-word, fully attracting complement and adverbial scopes from their original post-verbal positions. Structures 'C' and 'D' facilitate embedding with different requirements. All the survey data points out that Iraqi people use a particular word in their conversations to express Wh-questions, where the word with its literal and semantic meanings achieves this goal. Texts will be presented best where others are in place to substitute the Wh-word activity. A match is achieved between the meaning and usage of each word, which occurs when speaking the Iraqi dialect. This contributes to presenting a powerful and informative explanation for others, considering the forms of the Iraqi dialect. Comparing the activity Wh-questions reference marker 'ašan xʊa' with any other languages is established with an eye to the formal information being brought to the fore.

4.1. Characteristics

Characteristics of Wh-Questions in the Iraqi Dialect

The paper discusses the syntactic features which define Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect. Compared with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and English, these are grouped to bring out their unique characteristics. The Iraqi dialect bears different syntactic rules and structural markers that make it different from the other two.

Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect are open sentences because a series of words, conjunctions, grammatical particles, prepositions, or auxiliary verbs precede the sentence; accordingly, the meaning of this sentence changes. A pattern of stress influences all those elements; the shifting of the position of this stress determines the focus element in the sentence. In addition, to negate any sentence, an abstract word appears between two relative clauses. These relative clauses are joined either by an abstract or a partitive word. When a partitive particle is used, it is placed at the end of the nominal phrase within a prepositional phrase or at the end of an adjectival phrase in nominal constructions.

Regarding word order, it is possible in Iraq for both VSO and SVO word orders. This difference depends on the type of auxiliary verb used. In the latter SVO construction, the

grammatical subject follows the verb but can be fronted in passive sentences or when emphasizing the verb.

One distinctive characteristic of Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect is that Wh-words are flexible; they can be raised to different positions without hindering the comprehension of a sentence or altering its stress pattern. Such mobility does not affect the entire sentence structure and its meaning. The transition clauses also present another behaviour in this dialect, where using particles instead of functional words is more common.

Stress and intonation are important features in Wh-questions in Iraq. The stress always falls on the Wh-word, whether sentence-initial or sentence-final. Intonation is subtle, shifting the position of the stress according to what is being emphasized in the question. Moreover, interrogative particles within the sentence may affect its mode and range, changing its mood or interrogative feature.

Another property is that these sentences cannot be turned into direct statements by simply removing the Wh-word. When the Wh-word is removed, the accompanying verb must be negated or otherwise modified by the subject in order for the sentence to remain grammatical.

Interestingly, most of these syntactic features, such as using partitive particles, fixed stress on Wh-words, and flexible Wh-word placement, are absent in Modern Standard Arabic but present in the Iraqi dialect. This no doubt marks the syntactic identity of the Iraqi dialect in forming Wh-questions.

5. Wh-Questions in English

In English, interrogative sentences are those that have a question form. As for the structure of question words, several different wh-words can be used according to different lexical categories, such as who, what, when, where, why, how, and which. 'I am her registered' is a sentence asking a wh-question. In English questions, there is often an associated inversion, starting with an auxiliary verb or a modal. In wh-questions, whether an auxiliary or a main verb is in the subject position, the verb plays the auxiliary role, and there is a transformational rule for inverting the position of wh-words with auxiliaries.

The syntax of interrogatives also has to do with significant sentence structures for parsing. A wh-question can also be embedded in a more significant sentence. When a question intrudes into a more significant sentence, it is still a wh-question, but the surrounding sentence is not. There are other uses in which wh-questions have a non-interrogative meaning. Wh-words can be employed to introduce relative clauses, and all wh-words can be employed to introduce a subordinate interrogative within a sentence. Wh-words can also be used alone or as a head element inside a wh-phrase, a wh-noun phrase, as was shown for exclamatives applied to an imperative sentence. Across the whole array of dialects of English, though the rules are the same, the expressions of interrogatives vary. The dialect, style, and register concerns have affected prescriptive accounts, sociolinguistic speculation, and inquiry. English has a patchwork distribution of interrogatives involving subject-auxiliary inversion. The topic is further complicated by different types of questions in other languages. It seems likely that inverted interrogatives belong to standard written American English but are utilized in nonstandard or hypercorrected English. English is SVO in syntax, which means that typically, for event structure and information questioning, the question word queries the information. Identifying it further in the clausal domain positions the question word by syntax. Some languages allow wh-words to appear in the subject and clause-initial and verb-second positions.

In contrast, languages such as English tend to display subject-auxiliary inversion. Japanese imposes island constraints and wh-feature checking. A relative wh-processing difficulty is explained in terms of autonomous feature checking.

5.1. Characteristics

Properties Wh-questions possess several syntactic properties which are universal across languages. English Wh-questions display an operator which undergoes wh-fronting, illustrated in Example (1). They combine either with an auxiliary verb, as in (1.b and 1.d), or with a main verb (1.a and 1.c) in the host clause. (1) English Wh-questions: a. Sarah knows what; b. Bill is; c. What Sarah knows is that d. What Bill is doing? Auxiliary inversion occurs in Wh-questions in English, and the operator must always be in front of the rest of the clause. Particle placement also moves in Wh-questions, as evidenced by the comparison between (1.a) and (1.c) as well as (1.b) and (1.d). The examples in (1.a) and (1.b) have separated particles, and the examples in (1.c) and (1.d) have particles that are attached. The echo questions in (2) prove that in Standard English, object Wh-phrases must double, whereas subject Wh-phrases are not allowed to double: (2) a. John is going to invite someone. Is he going to invite someone? b. John is inviting someone. Is there someone who John is inviting? Wh-phrases need not double as objects in some dialects of English. The basic Wh-questions of English shown can also be used (depending on context and formality) to form embedded questions or 'reported speech'. (3) a. I am trying to figure out what Mary likes to eat. b. I asked who Mary chatted with.

6. Comparative Analysis

Wh-questions in the Iraqi dialect are closely similar to those in English. In this section, we juxtapose the Iraqi dialect with English concerning issuing Wh-questions. The word order pattern is the same for both English and Iraqi, where NP moves to COMP and is left dislocated. They can also occur in the canonical position, accompanying distributed tags. In general, wh-phrases in Iraq are relatively free, fluctuating between occurrence in situ or pre-verbal position, while the reverse is observed in English.

Both languages have no evidence of NP/DP movement into the C-T domain, even though they are located mainly on the CP. Concerning the 'if' type, the main difference uncovered in this study is that the complementize in the 'if' type is often written in Arabic, while it has a simple form in the totally DP languages, representing a fundamental difference in the use of sentential connectives in natural language. Differences were also elicited in the patterns of weather questions, as WH-island effects in Baghdad Arabic seem less rigid. This may reflect differences in the two dialects that result in the availability of different types: COMP-trace and WH-trace clauses. Finally, the generally high number of WH-extraction TC-structural clauses, especially those started by systems in both languages, triggers further research to mitigate typological and cultural factors.

The limited study highlights some of the syntactic structural options of WH-question issuing available in the Iraqi dialects of Arabic and English. The majority of such phenomena are derived like mechanisms in transferring 'Interrogative Force' I-Features from their underlying position within a structure to C, with only one case of 'Interrogative feature' percolating directly from wh-phrases to C, either because interrogatives are untranslated elements. In this study, we aim to discuss the issues based on the framework of the syntax-semantics interface; an attempt at prosodic and intonational issues of WH-questions will help to reveal extra information about the nature of such interrogatives, like the possibility of their moving to a verbal position.

6.1. Similarities and Differences

What can be concluded from the analysis is that both the Iraqi dialect and English wh-questions have some similarities and standard features, whereas, at the same time, they have differences in their syntactic behaviour. Their similarities can be classified as outcomes of universal syntactic principles, while their differences and disparities emerge due to the application of each language's unique syntactic features. For Example, Arabic and English use question markers in performing, but further analysis shows that both languages differ in how they apply their question markers. Arabic uses an interrogative particle to make a question, especially with the presence of wh-words. In contrast, the question marker is used in a wh-question that follows the subject position in English. In addition, the word order manipulation in the Iraqi dialect indicates the main differences, as Iraqi dialect rules could allow or prohibit the fronting of wh-phrases within the questions.

In this sense, the Iraqi dialect behaves differently from English in forming wh-questions. These syntactic behaviours result from applying various factors, including syntax, semantics, and pragmatics or context of situations. The syntax serves as a gravitational analysis where the language construction reflects social regulations formatted by a particular culture. The actual collection of data suggests that wh-questions of the Iraqi dialect or Arabic language reflect a close association between the applied syntax and social practices. Therefore, the differentiated features of question formation are an accumulation and mirror of the distinct ideological dispositions. Syntactically, the languages differ in the structure of wh-question formation. The existence of these differences in linguistic settings influences future research on syntactic analyses and the acquisition of language when handling wh-questions. Additionally, the survey results have implications for learners using auxiliary verbs in questioning. Osmosis implies that Arab learners mainly respond according to wh-question preferences.

7.Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion Based on the discussion in the previous section, Wh-questions in two languages, namely the Iraqi dialect and English, must be understood in connection with syntax. Interestingly, there is a similarity in the syntactic structures. However, there are undeniable differences in the early and ultimate positions of constituents. In English, the subject precedes the verb that answers the question wh 'how' followed by a predicate and an object. Instead, in the Iraqi dialect, constituents do not fill the first position, and the questions are then subject, followed by the predicate and the object. This study is also expected to contribute to linguistics as a form of comparison of Wh-question between dialects and standard languages. This study is also expected to contribute to the study of comparative linguistics. These variations are in the dialect according to the grammar rules in those languages.

This study has several implications for implementing foreign language learning, especially English. First, teachers can provide instructions explicitly on frequency-of-word sequence or sequence is friction. Second, teachers can provide syntactical variation, which emphasizes the function of the sentence. Third, this study provides a different perspective on the structure of Wh-questions that remains the same. Last, language teachers can explain that the subject during the early and final position in a sentence structure is a variation of the tendencies of letters. Based on the results, we hope this encourages further investigation concerning the dialect and standard language differences. The findings imply a significant difference in the sentence's syntax, which forms question words in the Iraqi dialect based on the theories proposed.

Furthermore, in Arabic, a social response is used in both languages to offer help to anyone who calls. The use of a response in both languages is almost the same. However, the

response is accurately understood in terms of domain culture, knowing that communication language is used to act in the culture of its society. Thus, questions are pervasive in dialects as well as in standard languages. Studying the Wh-question and its inversion increases the understanding of dialectal variations and may contribute to a better understanding of Arabic and its sub-languages in sentence structure syntax. It also opens clue phase dialogue questions to focal points in various questions. Identifying the strength or weakness of syntax can be symmetric when dealing with phenomena. This ability is necessary to understand the sentence pattern in which this word will be processed. The beginning of words is dominated by question words that determine the pattern of words that come after. The sentence is generally divided into two conditions: the subject's position before the verb and the subject's position after the verb. A Wh-question is a sentence that begins with a determiner commonly referred to as a question word and generally accepted in questions.

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