

**الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب قسم اللغة الانكليزية بجامعة حمص عند****صياغة الجمل الاستفهامية****- دراسة تحليلية -**

طالب الماجستير منتجب النقري

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة حمص

المشرف أ.د. احمد حسن

**المخلص**

تتناول هذه الدراسة الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة حمص فيما يتعلق بصياغة الجمل الاستفهامية وتركز الدراسة تحديداً على تحديد أكثر الأخطاء شيوعاً ودراسة طبيعتها. شملت الدراسة 50 طالباً في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة حمص. وُظف استبيان أولي لتحديد الأخطاء، ثم تم قياس البيانات ووصفها وحسابها إحصائياً. كشفت النتائج عن وجود أنواع مختلفة من الأخطاء، مثل الإضافة والحذف وسوء الصياغة والترتيب الخاطيء. وقد ارتكب الطلاب أخطاءً أكثر في "الإضافة". وتعود أسباب هذه الأخطاء إلى اختلافات نحوية بين اللغات، واختلافات داخل اللغة الواحدة، واختلافات تطويرية. وتُعد الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً نتيجةً لتداخل اللغة الأولى نظراً لاختلاف البنية النحوية بين اللغتين العربية و الانكليزية مع التقدم بمعرفة اللغة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الجمل الاستفهامية، الأخطاء، تداخل

---

**Errors in Forming WH-Questions Made by Students of English at  
Homs University: An Analytical Account**

**Abstract**

This paper presents an investigation of the errors made by students of English at Homs University regarding the formation of WH-questions. It aims at finding the highest frequent errors and probing into the nature of these errors. The study comprises 50 students of English at Homs University. A questionnaire is primarily administrated to identify the errors, and the data are quantified, described and statistically computed. The results reveal that there are different kinds of errors such as addition, omission, misformation and misordering. Students made more errors in 'addition'. The sources of these errors are interlingual, intralingual and developmental. The most common errors are a result of interference of first language since there is a difference in structure between Arabic and English.

Key words: WH-questions, errors, interference

## 1- Introduction

### 1.1 General Background

Language is the primary method of human communication. It is an important means of communication and interaction which allows individuals to contribute to and participate in multilingual communities both in their native country and around the world. Studying how people use language, what words and phrases they unconsciously choose and combine, as well as the manner through which they formulate these words and turn them into sentences can help us better understand ourselves and why we behave the way we do when we speak. When using language, asking and answering WH-questions are essential skills, as they lay the foundation for participating in human conversation, demonstrating knowledge, collecting information, creating and helping us make sense of surroundings and ourselves.

In this research, analysing errors is directed at students' ability to form interrogative or form question sentences, in particular, WH-question sentences. First, it is necessary to explain the formation and rules of using WH-questions. WH-questions, as a very important type of English sentences, cover variety of questions beginning with simple interrogative words like *what*, *where*, *who*, *which*, and *how*. Zhang (2016, pp. 1578-1579) argues that "English WH-questions involve fronting of WH-words, and the movement of WH-words in English is called WH-movement." This brief description of WH-questions applies only to the English language, as the rules of other languages differ in their sentence grammar generally, and interrogative sentence grammar specifically.

Pathan (2021, p. 140) clarifies the importance of learning WH-questions arguing that:

WH-questions play a significant role in improving a language learner's overall language development. The use of wh-questions not only helps build learners' vocabulary and develop their ability to produce contextually appropriate and meaningful sentences but

also consequently helps improve their conversational and social skills.

Hence, beginning to understand the importance of the linguistic aspects of WH-questions, and later identifying the errors that students are potentially liable to make, can make the teaching process smoother and easier for both teachers and learners.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer new perspectives and insights for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Syria and researchers in general, seniors and juniors alike, who wish to become familiar with the methods of error analysis and the advantages this field offers regarding language teaching and learning. According to Heydari and Bagheri (2012, p.1583.):

Many scholars in the field of EA have stressed the significance of second language learners' errors... In recent years, there has been a growing research interest in the analysis of errors adults make while learning a second language... learners' errors have been the subject of controversy for a long time.

Any teacher or educator would be interested in learning more about his or her students' points of strength and weakness; therefore, it is almost necessary that errors should be taken into consideration throughout this process.

Furthermore, this is significant as it stresses the need to analyze errors to understand what can be improved and how these errors may affect students' linguistic output.

In so far as teachers are concerned, the study offers a general look at how students commit errors and where exactly they find difficulties. By analyzing the errors of 50 university students of English at Homs University, the results can contribute to the general understanding of the most common errors committed by students of this level.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at achieving the following:

- Examining the learners' competence in formulating various WH-questions.
- Investigating the performance of university students of English in using WH-questions through a written questionnaire.
- Identifying the most common errors which are committed by university students of English so far as WH-questions are concerned.
- Offering a coherent analysis of students errors in using WH-questions
- Providing some recommendations regarding ways of improving the teaching of WH-questions at university levels.
- 

### 1.4 Research Questions

The background of this study provided some general information about questions, question formation, and the problems that students encounter in using questions. This section presents the questions that the research attempts to address.

1. What are the most common errors of WH-question formation that students of English at Homs University make?

2. What are the sources of errors of WH-question formation made by students?
3. What are the strategies that students use when having a problem in handling WH-question sentences?

### **1.5 Hypothesis**

While the first objective is to examine the frequency of errors and the second objective is to describe the errors, the third objective in this study attempts to examine sources of errors in the written performance of students of English. This third objective is formulated as a hypothesis since it is predictive in nature. The more errors the students commit, the less exposure to correct English they have.

### **1.6 Limitation of the Study**

The scope of the study focuses solely on analyzing the students' errors in WH-question formation. As far as methodology is concerned, the errors are identified and described in order to show the sources of errors. Another limitation is that the sample does not represent the entire population of students of English at the Department of English at Homs University since it only comprises some students. Additionally, not all students are selected for the study since classroom attendance is not mandatory; thus, the results obtained in this study may not be applicable to students outside designation. This, in turn, plays a negative role in limiting the generalizability of the research.

## **2- Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a review of the theoretical background on WH-question errors, and it summarizes the most important previous research works and investigations that have been conducted on WH-question errors. The opening section of this chapter sheds light on some key issues related to questions in general and WH-questions in particular. The chapter focuses on common errors made by Syrian students of English at Homs University in forming English WH-questions. It distinguishes between errors and mistakes and focuses on the study of errors. This chapter illustrates types of grammatical errors and the sources of these errors. The final section reviews the most related literature on WH-questions and their sources.

## 2.2 Questions

Questions are an interrogating expressions to test knowledge. They can be used by someone to ask about something. In the English context, there are several types of questions. Each question requires a different response and a different construction. As mentioned by Day and Park (2005), there are five types of questions that may stimulate students in achieving understanding. The types are; Yes/no questions, Alternative questions, True or false questions, Multiple-choice questions, WH-questions.

### 2.2.1 WH-Questions

WH-questions are questions that begin with *where*, *what*, *when*, *who*, *how*, and *why*. They are excellent in helping students with a literal understanding of the text, reorganizing information in the text, and making evaluations, personal responses and predictions. They are also used as follow-ups to other questions forms, such as yes/no and alternative questions (Day & Park, 2005). The use of every WH-word may have a different purpose and it falls under a different part of speech which will affect the way they are used in sentences. For example: *who* asks about a person, *what* asks about

a thing and could be quality of something, *where* asks about a place, *when* asks about time, *why* asks about reason, *whom* asks about the object, *how* asks about method and quality.

Azar (2007, p.123) states “WH-questions are questions that ask for information by using a question word; where, when, why, what, who, how”. Azar (2007) points out the form to construct a well-structured WH-question in the way of putting the right position of each elements. Basically, the formula of constructing WH-questions is as follows:

WH-word + helping verb (auxiliary) + subject + main verb + rest of sentence

In Contrast, “when question word (e.g., *who* and *what*) is the subject of the question, usual question word order is not used, and no form of *do* is used. It can be exemplified by (26) *who came to dinner?* Or (27) *what happened yesterday?*” (Azar, 2007, p. 123). However, the formula of this matter is as follows:

subject + main verb + rest of sentence

After the explanation about the questions, this study only focuses on the question in the form of WH-question in order to identify the errors of the questions made by the students.

### **2.3 Review of Related Literature**

Researchers have written extensively on WH-questions, focusing on the frequency of occurrence of each type of errors. When addressing students’ errors in so far as their grammatical and vocabulary use in a certain language is concerned, one usually does it in an explicit and direct manner which finds out the mistakes in an attempt to correct them. To understand this process better, it is recommended for teachers and educators to understand how these patterns of errors function, and how there is a constant, and fixed set of error patterns which students or learners at a certain stage are liable to commit. For that reason, it is necessary to

examine how these patterns function, what they are, how they can be exploited for the benefit of the students, and how they can be avoided.

Hourani (2008) conducts a similar study on Emirati second year students in the Eastern Coast of the UAE. Hourani (2008, ii) states that “105 students and 20 teachers participated in completing two separate questionnaires reflecting their attitudes and opinion towards the English writing skill.” Additionally, Hourani provides information regarding the characteristics of the Arabic language, and how its sentence structure, its grammatical, semantic and syntactic rules can interfere with the formation of English sentences. The study is concerned with the questions about the interference between English and Arabic, and how it influences and impacts students’ abilities in forming WH-questions. The methodology applied when conducting the test of the research included two questionnaires, where students’ writing skills were evaluated. Later, the students were asked to write an essay of no more than 200 words. The errors found in the essays were so many. Those which concern this research are the wrong use of auxiliaries, where students overgeneralized the use of auxiliary verbs, and showed confusion in the use of auxiliaries in English. This is one of the errors committed by Arab students. Another relevant observation regarding the errors which these students committed is the misformation of words, as well as word order. The study has shown that there was direct interference of L1 in L2 performance. According to Hourani (2008, p. 31), wrong word order was “the fourth highest error occurrence in the participants’ papers... (120 errors of which 50 interlingual and 70 intralingual errors and both rate 10%), were primarily based on the intralingual transfer.” These results stress the fact that linguistic interference is occurring on various levels. Hourani found that the percentage of errors in using auxiliaries and WH-word amounted to 3% and 11%, respectively, while other errors, like prepositions and articles were around 15% and 10%, respectively.

Wacana (2016) analyzed the patterns of WH-questions in English used by EFL students. The researcher believes that, due to the variety of the answers which a WH-question can have, students can have difficulties formulating these questions, or finding the proper word order for a WH-question sentence. Given that the simple yes/no question follows the general rule of inverting subject and verb is not always the case with WH-question sentences. In this case, students can have problems with inversion, as well as subject-verb agreement forms. The study includes a test of 14 students, 7 were females, and the rest were males. All of them were university students. The test includes some training, which prepared students for the test, and finally, the students were given a reading text, where they had to write or complete sentences and questions using WH-words. According to Wacana (2016) the results showed that most of the students had a good competence to produce the pattern of WH-question in English; however, only two students made errors in using of WH-questions in English. The average students' scores from the test result was 73. This means they had the competence to master the pattern with question in English. This proved that students had a problem with word order, and that this can be due to the fact that the affirmative sentences follow a specific word order, and the students are being under the strong influence of this order. However, when using the WH-question sentences, they failed to change and invert the subject and auxiliary.

### **3- Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodological approach adopted in the current study. First, it addresses the strategy and research design and introduces the instrument used as the primary source of information in the study. Second, the chapter outlines the process of selecting and recruiting the participants. Next, it presents when, where, and how the data was collected in addition to outlining the methods for analyzing the data.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The current research follows the quantitative research design. The study focuses primarily on identifying the frequency of errors in WH-questions in the students' performance. Accordingly, the data is required to be numerical to quantify the errors in the use of the various types of errors while forming WH-questions. Quantitative research design is therefore chosen as the design of this study. According to Dörnyei (2007), quantitative research involves data that can be analyzed using statistical methods. Kumar (2011) argues that in quantitative research, in order to ensure accurate measurement and classification, the gathered information requires the design of the study to be rigid, fixed and predetermined in its use. However, it should be mentioned that the results are analyzed quantitatively. The type of problems regarding forming WH-questions are indicated and categorized according to various grammatical errors.

### 3.3 Sampling

The study follows a non-probability sampling design. According to Kumar (2011), unlike probability sampling or random sampling which requires each element in the population to have an equal chance to be part of the sample, non-probability sampling designs do not adhere to the notion of probability when selecting the elements from the sampling population. Dörnyei (2007, p. 98) argues that the choice of the "non-probability samples are regarded as less-than-perfect compromises that reality forces upon the researcher". Following this argument, purposive sampling is adopted as the main sampling method to collect the data. Basically, the homogenous sampling technique is used in this study, and the sample comprises 50 students at the Department of English Language and Literature at Homs University. Purposive homogenous sampling focuses on a particular subgroup in which the participants share identical or similar characteristics. In this respect, the participants are homogenous in terms of their age (20 to 22) and language background. The native language they speak in everyday conversation is Syrian Arabic, and the target language used as the language of instruction at college is English. They are also

homogenous in terms of their level of education and proficiency in English.

### **3.4 Instrument**

This study uses a primary data collection instrument to answer the research questions. The most appropriate and widely-used instrument used in applied linguistics is the test. As a result, the various types and sub-types of WH-questions in the students' performance are measured and assessed by applying a test to quantify the errors in the written work of the students, provide a descriptive and quantitative analysis of the errors. The test consists of (40) items altogether to examine the students' ability to form WH-questions grammatically.

## **4- Analysis and Discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This section focuses on the results obtained from analyzing the data using the methodology presented in the previous section.

### **4.2 Frequency of the Total Errors of WH-Questions**

The current study investigates 50 students of English at Homs University. One objective of the study is to identify the frequency of errors and various types of WH-questions error. It is noteworthy at this point to mention that the errors will be calculated in relation to the sum of the number of items for all students. This sum is calculated by multiplying the number of participants (i.e. 50) by the number of items (questions) regarding each type of error. The total number of answers was 2000. The total number of errors was 1080, accounting for (54%) out of the total number of items.

The findings revealed that the students' errors were distributed into four categories: addition, misformation, omission and misordering. The students produced higher rates of errors in the 'addition' and 'misformation' with 378 and 324 errors respectively out of the total of 1080 errors.

Omission errors scored 216 out of 1080, and the least errors made in making WH-questions were in misordering with 162 errors out of a total of 1080 errors.

#### 4.2.1 Addition Errors

The analysis revealed that the students' errors in adding auxiliary verbs, prepositions and double tense marking were the highest among all other errors which are 378 errors of 1080 errors with percentage of 35% of the total number of errors. More specifically, the number of errors in double tense marking was 158 with percentage of 42% and the second highest number of errors was in using the auxiliary verb reaching 123 with percentage 32%. The errors involving adding prepositions were moderate, accounting for 97 errors only with percentage 26%.

#### 4.2.2 Misformation Errors

The second highest percentage of errors made in misformation with 30%. The number of errors in misformation was 324 of total number of errors which is 1080. There is a great deal of variation in misusing articles and the number of errors is 65 that constituted the least rate which was 20% of errors and verb tense that represented 56% of errors which was 181.

#### 4.2.3 Omission Errors

The third highest rate of errors showed by the quantitative analysis of the study is the omission with 216 errors of the total number of errors (i.e. 1080) with a percentage of 20%. The results show that students made most frequent errors when dealing with the auxiliary verb which reached 116 of 216 rating 54%. The second highest percentage was the omission of the subject rating 27% accounting for 58 errors of 216. The least percentage was the omission of WH-words with 42 of errors rating 19%.

#### 4.2.4 Misordering Errors

The final type of errors made by students when forming WH-questions is misordering. The number of errors of this type was 162 of the total number

which is 1080 with percentage of 15%. This is the lowest percentage among all other errors. Adjective-noun order errors occurred 73 times recording 45% out of the total number of items whereas adverb-verb order errors occurred 42 times with a rate of 26% only. The pronoun-verb errors was 47 times with percentage 29 %.

### **4.3 Nature of Errors**

This part presents an analysis of the nature of errors in each type of WH-questions.

#### **4.3.1 Addition**

The most frequent error type was addition. Addition errors were made by 19% of participants. The most common added element was the double tense marking rating 42%, indicating a tendency to over-apply grammatical rules.

##### **4.3.1.1 Types of Addition Errors**

The current study shows the different types of errors of addition. They are categorized: addition of auxiliary verbs, prepositions and double tense marking.

###### **4.3.1.1.1 Addition of Auxiliary Verbs**

This addition error occurred when students incorrectly added inappropriate auxiliaries. This kind of error occurred when there was an auxiliary in a sentence and the students use another one which is not needed. The following example (1) shows the error of addition of an auxiliary.

1- \* What color does your bag is?

The student added the auxiliary 'does' to a sentence already having the verb 'is' as an auxiliary. The student in this case does not know that *is* is enough to make a question and there is no need for an auxiliary.

###### **4.3.1.1.2 Addition of Prepositions**

Learners sometimes added unnecessary prepositions. This kind of addition error occurred because students try to translate directly from their native language or they misunderstand the structure of English sentence. Example (2) shows the error of addition of a preposition.

2- \*Where do you go to?

In this example, students added a preposition to an intransitive verb that does not need it.

#### 4.3.1.1.3 Addition of Double Tense Marking

This kind of error happens when a learner incorrectly uses the tense twice in the same question. This usually happens when an auxiliary verb like 'do, does' and 'did' and the main verb are both marked for tense even though only one should carry it, as in example (3).

3- \*Where does he goes?

Two markers of the same tense should not be together in the same sentence.

#### 4.3.2 Misformation

The second highest percentage of errors made is misformation. This error type, occurring in 16% of participants, involved using the incorrect form of a structure. The most common misformed element was the verb tense which reached 56%, indicating potential confusion with verb-tenses.

##### 4.3.2.1 Misformation of Verb Tense

This kind of error happens when students use the wrong form of the verb (auxiliary, main verb or verb tense) when making a question. Example (4) shows the error in misforming the tense.

4- \*What did you bought?

In this example, the student misformed the verb; s/he uses the past tense instead of the base form.

##### 4.3.2.2 Misformation of Pronouns

This kind of error occurs when learners use the wrong form of pronoun while making a WH-question. Example (5) shows the misformation of pronouns.

5- Where does Linda lose his?

The learner misformed the use of possessive pronoun. Instead of using *hers* to agree with the noun which is feminine, the student uses *his* which is used with the masculine.

##### 4.3.2.3 Misformation of Articles

This kind of error occurs when learners use the wrong article (a, an and the) in a question or when they use an article where it should not be. Example (6) shows the misformation of WH-question in the case of the article.

\* Where is a red color bag?

The student should have used the article *the* instead of *a* because *red bag* is definite in the singular form. Therefore, the definite article is obligatory.

#### 4.3.3 Omission

The third frequent error type was omission, with 11% of participants making at least one omission error. The most common omitted element was the auxiliary verb which reached 54%, followed by the subject 27%. This suggests that participants struggled with understanding the basic structure of WH-questions and the role of auxiliary verbs in forming them. Concerning the discussion of students' omission error, Dulay's et al, (2010) argues that omission is characterized by the missing of an item that must appear in a well-structured utterance.

##### 4.3.3.1 Omission of Auxiliary

It occurs when students leave out an auxiliary which is an essential element when making WH-questions. The following example (7) shows the omission of an auxiliary which makes the question wrong.

7- \*When ----- you go?

In this example, the missing element is *do* which is a basic element in the structure of WH-questions in English.

##### 4.3.3.2 Omission of WH-Word

This kind of error occurs when students forget to use a question word such as who, what, where, when, etc. at the beginning of the question sentences. As a result, the sentence becomes incomplete or confusing. Example (8) shows the omission of WH-word.

8- \*.....is your best friend?

The omission of the WH-word makes the question grammatically incorrect. The question word is necessary to the completion of the sentences as it shows what kind of information the speaker is asking for.

#### 4.3.3.3 Omission of Subject

This kind of error happens when students forget to include the subject i.e. the person or the thing that does the action while forming a question. Without the subject, the question sentence becomes grammatically wrong or incomplete.

Example (9) shows the missing subject which makes the question grammatically incorrect.

9- \*How does.....book the ticket?

Omitting the subject in this question makes it incomplete and confusing. In English, most question require a clear subject after the auxiliary verb or within the structure.

#### 4.3.4 Misordering

Errors of misordering elements with the WH-question sentence as were observed in 8% of participants and they involved incorrect placement of an adjective, an adverb or a pronoun within the sentence. The most common misordered element was the adjective-noun order 45%, suggesting a lack of understanding of the typical word order in English.

##### 4.3.4.1 Misordering of Adjective-Noun

The misordering of adjective-noun elements happens when students place the adjective after the noun in a question instead of before it. In English, adjectives normally come before the noun they describe. Example 10 shows the misordering of adjective-noun in a WH-question.

10- \*When is the car red arriving?

In this question, the learner puts the adjective after the noun and this is ungrammatical in English. This happens due to the negative transfer from the L1 to target language.

### **.3.4.2 Misordering of Adverb-Verb**

This error happens when students put the adverbs in the wrong position in relation to the verb while forming a question. In English, adverbs must follow specific placement rules depending on their type. Example (11) shows a misordering of adverb-verb structure.

11- \* What does your father do usually?

Adverbs of frequency come before the main verb in English structure. In this example the student puts the adverb usually after the main verb 'do'.

### **4.3.4.3 Misordering of Pronoun-Verb**

In English, pronouns and verbs have a strict order. This error happens when students misplace the verb and the pronoun. Example (12) shows the misordering of the pronoun with the verb.

12- \*Where do live they?

In this example, the student puts the pronoun they after the main verb while the pronoun should be put before the verb in the case of questions.

## **4.4 Sources of Errors**

It is evident that students have problems in forming WH-question sentence in English, right as well as wrong, based on the previous explanation in data description and data analysis in the findings. The students at Homs University have made different types of errors in constructing WH-questions. Since each student has a different understanding of the question words which they have learned, the students made different types of errors in each tense. There is one kind of test in this research which is making WH-question based on the given answers.

The analysis of the error types suggests that the sources of errors in WH-question formation are likely to be a combination of various factors. Depending on Richards' theory (1992), the writer uses Richards' theory consisting of three sources of error classification to identify students' errors in constructing WH-questions. The sources of errors according to Richards are: intralingual, interlingual and developmental errors.

Intralingual errors appear due to the lack of understanding of grammatical rules and overgeneralizing the rules of the target language. The high

prevalence of addition and misformation errors suggests that participants may have a limited understanding of the grammatical rules governing WH-question formation. The source of error in example (1) \* *What color does your bag is?* is intralingual. The learner in this case does not differentiate between the verb 'is' as a main verb and as an auxiliary used to make a question. Supposing that 'is' is the main verb, the learner adds 'does' as an element to make a question. Thus, the error is the result of the student's lack of knowledge of the relevant rule. Another case of intralingual errors is the double mark tense. In example (3) \**Where does he goes?*, a student uses two marks for the same tense. Similarly, the learner overgeneralizes the simple present tense rule which states that when the subject is third person singular, the verb should have -s. therefore, the student uses the -s with the auxiliary and the main verb.

The second type of errors is due to the interference of L1 in the production of L2. Interference occurs when learners use the linguistic system of Arabic language while speaking or writing in English. Due to the influence of L1, students tend to omit some elements such as the subject or the auxiliary. In Arabic, the subject in some cases is implied, so students tend to omit it in English as seen in example (9) \**How does.....book the ticket?*. Another case is the omission of the auxiliary. In Arabic, we do not use auxiliaries to make questions, so students omit them in English as clear from example (7) \**When ----- you go?*.

Another case of interference is the misordering of the adjective-noun. In Arabic, the adjective follows the noun. Students unknowingly apply this rule to English which makes the questions they form wrong as in example (12) \**Where do live they?*.

Finally, developmental errors happen due to limited exposure to correct WH-question structures. The participants' limited exposure to correct WH-question structures may have contributed to their difficulties in forming these questions accurately. Example (11) \**What does your father do usually?* illustrates this kind of error. The student, in this case, knows that adverbs occur at the end of the sentences. He deals with adverbs of

frequency which should come before the main verb as any other adverb which comes at the end the sentence.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

The investigation of making WH-questions in the written performance of 50 students at the Department of English Language and Literature at Homs University yields interesting results. The study reveals that students produced various errors when making WH-questions. The percentage of errors is (54%) out of the total number of items. This indicates that the students have limited knowledge of understating of the structure of WH-question sentences. The study illustrates that the highest rates of errors are addition and misformation with (35%) and (30%) of errors, respectively as compared to omission and misordering with approximately (17.5 %) of errors for each type. The significant rate of errors of addition and misformation shows that the students generally tend to add words or misform inappropriate words and thereby create ungrammatical questions. The results of analysing the frequency of errors in the case of addition and misformation are in line with Hourani (2008), who stressed that addition and misformation errors had the highest rates of errors whereas omission and misordering errors had comparatively lower rates. The number of errors in the use of auxiliaries is the highest with the score of (239) errors out of the total number of errors as students omit or add auxiliaries where it is wrong. In accordance with the present results, a previous study by Lee (2012) demonstrated that the rate of errors in the omission and the addition of auxiliaries is the highest as it happens twice. On the other hand, the findings in the present study suggest that errors of addition and misformation are due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of the structure of WH-questions. Additionally, in this study, the lower rate of errors in the analysis of omission indicates that students have a relatively fair knowledge of the general structure of WH-questions.

Finally, errors of misordering items account for 15% of all errors which is the lowest rate among other grammatical types of errors. Although students

are conscious of order of words in WH-questions, they still show some significant flaws in producing WH-question sentences.

## 5-Conclusion and Suggestions

### 5.1 Introduction

In this section, I provide a summary of the whole dissertation, and consider some issues that relate to the errors that students of English at Homs University make when forming WH-questions. I offer some pedagogical implications and some recommendations for further research regarding WH-questions.

### 5.2 Summary

This research is an account of the errors that students of English at Homs University make in WH-questions formation. It consists of five sections. The first section introduces the work and highlights the significance of the study as well as the objectives of the research its hypothesis and questions. The second section begins with some key issues related to WH-questions. The section sheds light on questions in general and their types, but it focuses on WH-questions. The section clarifies common errors made by Syrian students at Homs University when making English WH-questions. This section illustrates types of grammatical errors and the sources of these errors. In addition, it presents a review of related literature about WH-questions.

Section Three presents the methodological approach adopted in the current study. In addition, the section outlines the process of selecting and recruiting the participants.

Finally, the fourth section focuses on the results obtained from analyzing the data. The section analyses the frequency of errors of the types of WH-questions, nature of errors and the sources of errors, and presents a discussion.

The findings show that the most common type of error is the auxiliary. The number of Auxiliary error is 239 out of 1080 errors.

Three sources of errors are found in constructing WH-question as made by the students. They are intralingual error, developmental error and interference error.

### **5.3 Pedagogical Implications**

Based on the obtained results, the following points are recommended to tackle problems that students of English at Homs University encounter when forming WH-questions:

1. Firstly, it is important that the teacher should make sure that the students understand the form of WH-question in each sentence that they have learned,
2. The teachers need to apply the proper techniques and strategies in teaching English specifically in teaching various WH-questions.
3. The teacher should design intensive drills to tackle errors in making WH-questions and to target the poor performance of the students. The aim of such exercises is to make students avoid making errors when forming WH-questions.
4. Then, the students need to be aware of the errors in order to reduce the possible errors they make.
5. In order to avoid or, at least, decrease the rate of errors, it is essential that teachers instruct their students to begin thinking in the target language and keep its grammatical rules in mind instead of borrowing the rules of their native language (L1) for the forming of sentences in general, and specifically, in this case, of WH-question sentences.
6. Text books should contain more activities/exercises on WH-question formation.

#### 5.4 Recommendation for Further Research

The current research has tackled some problems that students make when forming WH-questions. The theoretical framework, methodology and the findings point to further work in this field:

1. Schools incorporate more interactive learning techniques into their curriculums to enhance student engagement in making WH-questions.
2. Forming WH-questions can be addressed and researched from the beginning of the study at the university level as this study done on the students.
3. A research can be conducted on the students at the university to figure out how students can overcome the interference of L1.

### References

- Azar, B.S. (2007). *Fundamentals of English grammar (3rd ed.)*. New York: Preason.
- Day, R. R., & Park, J. S. (2005). Developing Reading Comprehension Questions. *Reading in a foreign language*, 17(1), 60-73.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heydari, P. & Bagheri, M.S. (2012). Error Analysis: Sources of L2 Learners' Errors. *Theory and practice in language studies*. 2(8). 1583-1589.
- Hourani, T. MY. (2008). *An Analysis of the Common Grammatical Errors in the English Writing made by 3rd Secondary Male Students in the Eastern Coast of the UAE*. Dubai: British University in Dubai.
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: a step-by-step- guide for beginners*. (3rd edition) London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Pathan, M. AK. (2021). Chief Wh-question Making Errors by the Undergraduate Level EFL Learners: An Analysis. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. 9(4). 140-144.
- Richards, J.C. (1992). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Essex: Longman.
- Wacana, G. I.P. (2016). Patterns of Wh-Question in English Used by EFL Students. *Sintuwu Maroso Journal of English Teaching*. 2(1). 25-28.
- Zhang, X. (2016). A Study on the Acquisition of English WH-question by Chinese Beginning Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 6(8). 1578-1583.
- Elsteeg, Jos. (1985). The right question at the right time. *Primary Science: Taking the Plunge*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 36-46.

## Appendix: Data entry

No	WH-question errors											
	Addition			misformation			Omission			Misordering		
	aux	Prep	DM	pro	VT	art	sub	Wh-word	aux	ADj-N	Adv-v	Pro-v
1	3	2	1	4	2	1	1	0	3	1	0	2
2	2	1	2	5	3	3	1	2	0	2	1	0
3	1	3	3	2	1	0	0	1	2	3	0	1
4	1	4	0	3	0	1	2	0	4	1	1	2
5	3	5	4	3	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	0
6	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	0	2	1	1	1
7	4	3	2	5	3	1	3	2	3	2	0	1
8	0	3	3	4	3	0	2	0	3	3	1	1
9	6	2	3	3	2	1	0	1	4	1	2	0
10	5	0	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	2	0	1
11	3	1	1	3	1	1	0	0	3	3	1	1
12	4	4	2	4	3	0	2	1	2	2	1	2
13	1	5	4	1	3	2	1	2	4	3	0	1
14	2	3	1	5	3	2	2	0	1	2	2	0
15	0	2	0	3	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	1
16	5	3	1	2	2	1	1	0	3	1	0	1
17	3	1	2	5	1	2	0	1	4	0	1	0
18	2	4	2	4	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	1
19	4	2	3	3	2	1	2	0	3	2	1	2
20	6	3	2	4	2	4	0	1	2	1	1	1
21	1	6	3	5	3	1	1	2	0	1	2	0
22	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	0	1
23	5	3	2	3	3	2	2	0	3	3	1	2
24	2	3	3	4	0	1	1	1	5	1	1	0
25	4	1	1	3	1	2	0	2	3	0	2	2
26	3	4	0	4	1	2	1	0	3	2	0	1

الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب قسم اللغة الانكليزية بجامعة حمص عند صياغة الجمل الاستفهامية  
- دراسة تحليلية-

27	3	1	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	1	1	1
28	5	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	1
29	0	5	3	5	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	2
30	4	3	3	4	0	0	1	1	4	3	2	0
31	2	5	2	5	2	1	2	0	3	0	1	1
32	3	3	2	4	1	1	1	1	3	0	1	1
33	2	3	3	5	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	2
34	1	1	2	3	2	0	1	1	3	1	1	0
35	5	3	2	4	1	1	2	0	1	2	2	1
36	4	4	3	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0
37	3	4	1	3	3	0	1	2	3	1	0	1
38	4	2	0	3	1	2	1	0	3	1	1	0
39	6	2	2	0	2	1	2	1	3	0	0	1
40	1	1	2	5	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	0
41	2	0	3	3	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	2
42	4	2	2	2	5	3	0	0	1	2	1	0
43	6	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	1
44	4	1	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
45	5	0	2	3	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	2
46	2	2	1	5	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	1
47	5	1	0	5	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
48	3	1	2	4	2	1	2	0	2	1	0	1
49	5	2	3	6	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	0
50	4	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	1	2	1
<b>Total</b>	158	123	97	181	78	65	58	42	116	73	42	47
	378			324			216			162		
	1080											