

Wh-Movements in both English Language and Jordanian Arabic: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This research paper addresses a particular type of wh-movement; namely, focus wh-movement, which targets a different landing site in comparison with the normal wh-movement (Lee, 2001:10). In the former, a proposed interrogative wh-phrase moves to the specifier position (Spec) of the focus phrase (FocusP), whereas in the latter the fronted wh-phrase lands in the Spec of the force Phrase (ForceP). This research argues for the existence of focus wh-movement in Jordanian Arabic (henceforth, JA). In addition, it draws a comparison between JA and English which exhibit this kind of wh-movement with difference pertaining to the type of wh-questions (either direct or indirect). Additionally, this research argues the notion that Spec of FocusP serves as a landing site for focus wh-movement (like English) and an intermediate landing site for the normal wh-movement (unlike English).

Keywords: FocusP, wh-movement, direct and indirect wh-questions, comparison, languages.

Introduction

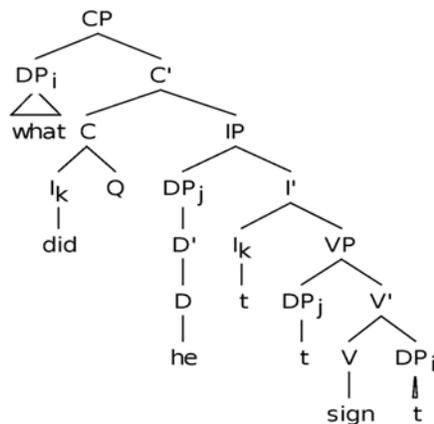
1- Wh-movement in English

1.1- Introduction to wh-movement in English

Wh-phrases in English move to the Spec of the CP in direct and indirect questions which are projections of an interrogative silent morpheme (+Q) contained within the head C° (Radford, 2009: 130). Furthermore, an interrogative wh-phrase moves to its scope-marking position by wh-movement or higher (Santorini and Kroch, 2007). Consider sentence 1 and its schematic derivation in 2:

1- What did she sign?

2-



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In 2, *what* leaves its canonical position as a complement of the verb *sign* and undergoes wh-movement to its scope position, the Spec of CP. On the other hand, under certain pragmatic and syntactic circumstances wh-phrases might not undergo wh-movement in English but remain *in situ*, instead. For instance, echo questions and wh-multiple questions exhibit *wh-in situ*. In fact, Copy Theory (Chomsky, 1993) provides a fine account for such questions: wh- *in situ* questions are derived by wh-movement, a hypothesis contrary to superficial appearances. Instead of indicating that movement leaves a trace, it leaves a copy. In normal direct and indirect questions, it is the highest copy of wh-movement that is pronounced, whereas the lowest copy is pronounced. Consider the echo-question in 3 and wh-multiple question in 4.

- 3- She signed *what*? [CP ~~what~~ [IP she sign what]]
- 4- Who saw *what*? [CP Who ~~what~~ [IP ~~who~~ saw what]]

Furthermore, English does not allow wh-multiple movement. Consider the ungrammatical sentence in 5:

- 5- *Who what ~~who~~ told ~~what~~?

1.2 Focus wh-movement in English:

Following his Split CP hypothesis, (Rizzi, 1997) maintains that wh-movement in direct questions in English is a kind of focus movement where the fronted interrogative wh-expression ends up in the Spec of FocusP in direct wh-questions (1997: 299). By contrast, the interrogative wh-phrase targets the Spec of ForceP in indirect wh-question and wh-relative clauses. Actually, this argument is supported by the idea that wh-phrases must appear to the right of topicalized constituents in direct questions, but to the left of the complementizer *that* in indirect questions.

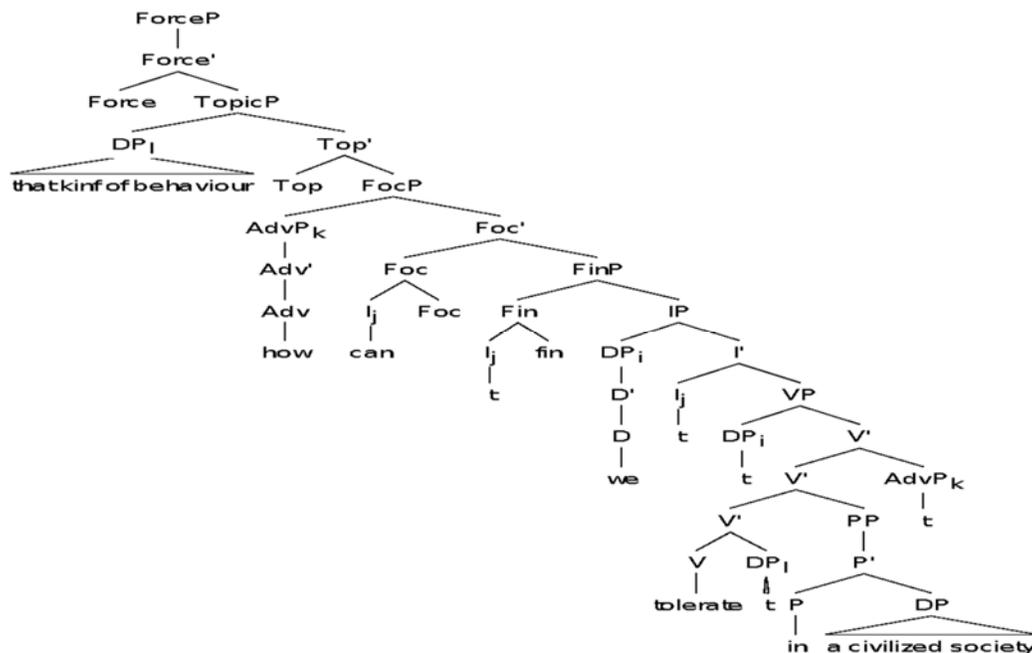
Firstly, consider the grammatical sentence in 6 and the ungrammatical sentence in 7:

- 6- That kind of behaviour, **how** can we tolerate in a civilised society?
- 7- ***How** can that kind of behaviour we tolerate in a civilised society?

(Radford, 2009: 232)

Given Rizzi's assumption that ForceP is always the highest projection in the split CP, it turns out that it is impossible to posit that *how* lands in the Spec of ForceP in sentence 6 since it is preceded by the topicalized constituent *that kind of behaviour*. If *how* is forced to land in the Spec of ForceP in presence of this topicalized constituent, the resulting sentence is ungrammatical as in 7. The plausible assumption is to suppose that *how* in 6 occupies the Spec of FocusP. Indeed, the rationale beyond this assumption is that *how* (and, presumably, other wh-phrases) ask for new information, which is basically what is targeted by the focused constituent (Radford, 2009: 230). Thus, sentence 6 has the schematic derivation in 8:

- 8- The schematic derivation of sentence 6:



Secondly, Rizzi mentions that the interrogative wh-phrases occupy the Spec of ForceP in indirect question instead of the Spec of FocusP. Consider sentence 9:

9- He asked what dress you were wearing. (Radford, 2009: 232)

In 9, *what dress*, the argument goes, occupies the Spec of ForceP. Indeed, there are various underlying indications supporting this argument. The first indication is that there is no subject-verb inversion which signals the existence of FocusP (Rizzi, 1997),(Drubig, 2003),(Green, 2007), among others. A further indication is the left position of the wh-phrase in relation to the complementizer*that*. Consider the indirect question in 10 and the relative clause in 11 (where the wh-expression is boldface and *that* is in italics).

10- I'm not sure [**what kind of ban***that* FIFA has in mind]

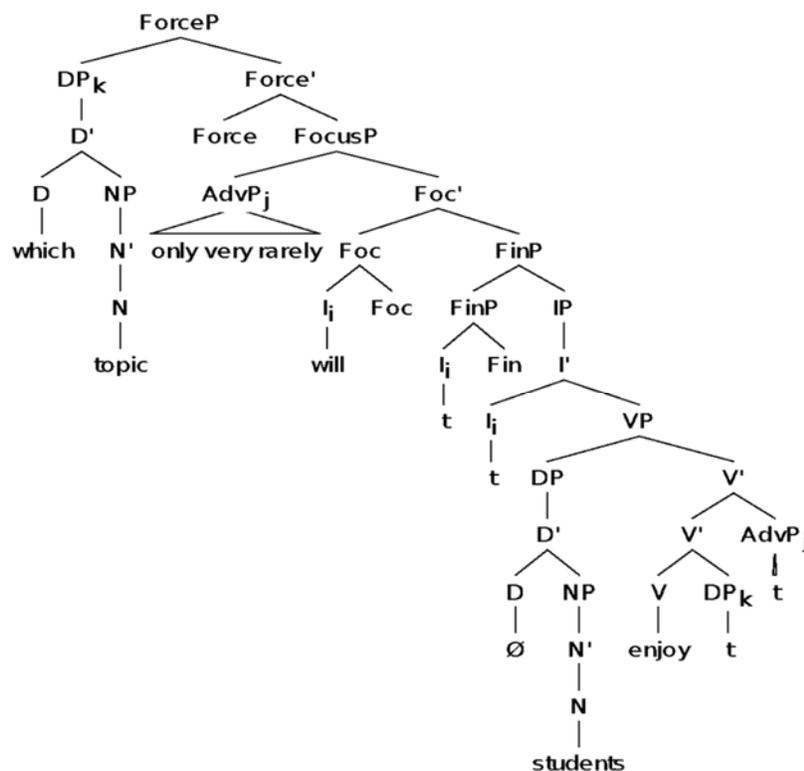
11- Here I am, in this room, because of an organization **whose work***that* I deeply, deeply admire.

The interesting point here to consider is whether the wh-phrase moves to the Spec of ForceP in indirect questions and relative clauses directly or undergoes a successive cyclic movement where it first lands in the Spec of FocusP and then to Spec of ForceP. The former option is actually what occurs in English. Consider Sentence 12, where the indirect question is bracketed:

12- I do not know [which topic only very rarely will students enjoy].

It turns out that in 12, *which* co-occurs with the focused constituent *only very rarely* whose existence triggers subject-verb inversion. Given that there is only one focus phrase in a sentence (Rizzi, 1997), (Jayaseelan, 2001) among others, *which* does not undergo a successive cyclic movement via the FocusP to reach the Spec of ForceP since the former is filled by the focused constituent *only very rarely*. Thus, the bracketed indirect question in 12 has the schematic derivations in 13:

13-



Accordingly, it can be postulated that English exhibits focus wh-monument only in direct questions where the fronted wh-phrases occupy the Spec of FocusP.

2- Focus wh-movement in Jordanian Arabic:

2-1- Word order and wh-movement in JA:

Before investigating whether JA utilizes focus wh-movement, let's first introduce some basics pertaining to the unmarked word orders used in JA and the notions whether wh-phrases move or remain in situ and whether JA exhibits wh-multiple movement:

Firstly, JA allows for two unmarked word orders: SV(O) and VS(O) as shown in sentences 14 and 15, respectively (Alsarayreh, 2013:15).

14- l-walad(S)ʔχazʕ(V)ʕumar(O)ʕala l-madrasahimbarih.
The boy took Omar on the-school yesterday
The boy took Omar to the school yesterday.

15- ʔχazʕ (V) l-walad(S)ʕumar(O)ʕala l-madrasahimbarih.
took The boy Omar on the-school yesterday
The boy took Omar to the school yesterday.

Secondly, JA is not a wh-*in-situ* language, i.e., the wh-phrases obligatorily come to occupy their scope position by wh-movement (Yasin, 2013). Thus, when the adjunct *imbarih*, (yesterday), is questioned in sentences 14 and 15, the interrogative wh-word *mata*, when, must be proposed to the left periphery of the question in both unmarked word orders SVO and VSO. Consider sentences 16 and 17.

16- **mata** l-walad (S) ʔχazʕ (V) ʕumar (O) ʕala l-madrasahimbarih?
when the boy took Omar on the-school
When did the boy take Omar to the school? Ø

17- **mata** ʔχazʕ (V) l-walad (S) ʕumar (O) ʕala l-madrasahimbarih?
When took the boy Omar on the-school
When did the boy take Omar to the school?

Thirdly, multiple wh-movement is not a possible option in JA. Consider the ungrammatical sentence in 18 where two interrogative wh-phrases are preposed:

18- ***mata**weinʔχazʕ (V) l-walad (S) ʕumar (O)?
(When) where took the boy Omar
Meaning: when where did the boy take Omar?

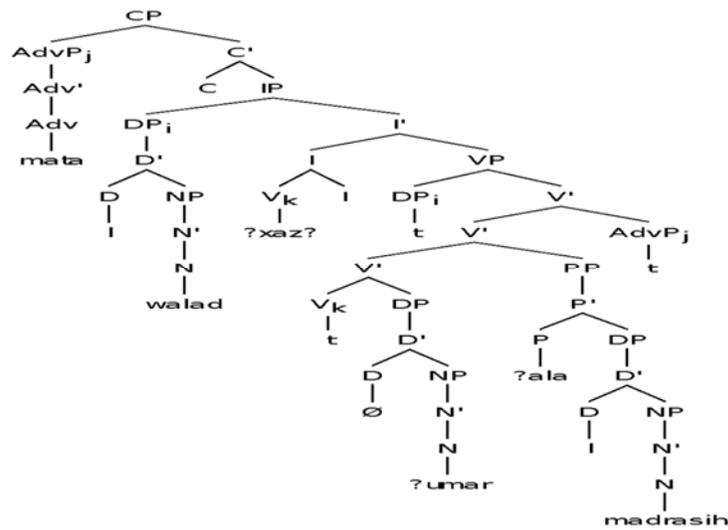
However, multiple wh-phrases can be preposed only when they are conjoined by an appropriate coordination conjunction (in fact, like English) such as *w* (and) as in 19:

19- **mata w-wein**ʔχazʕ (V) l-walad (S) ʕumar (O)?
When and-where took the boy Omar
When and where did the boy take Omar?

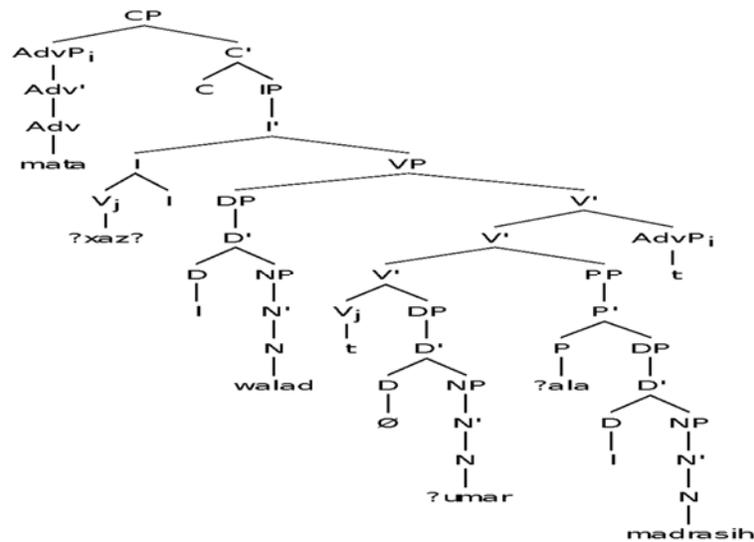
2.2- Focus wh-movement in JA:

Following Rizzi's assumption that C only splits into multiple projections only in structures containing a topicalized and/or focalised constituent (Radford, 2009: 236), it can be put forward that the wh-phrase *mata* occupies the Spec of CP in both 16 and 17. The schematic derivations for 16 and 17 are shown 20 and 21, respectively.

20- The schematic derivation of sentence 16:



21- The schematic derivation of sentence 17:



Accordingly, we can generalize that interrogative wh-phrases leave their canonical position in JA and occupy their scope position (Spec CP) in wh-questions. However, this generalization does not apply to indirect wh-questions where the wh-phrase appears in two different positions in relation to the complementizer *illi* (that). Consider indirect questions in 22 and 23 where the wh-word *meen* (who) occurs in two different positions:

22- b-tʃraf**meen**illibthib-uh l-binit?
 PRES.Know.2SG.PRES who that love.FEM-him the-girl
 Do you know whom the girl loves?

23- b-tʃraf**illimeen**bthib-uh l-binit?
 PRES.Know.2SG.PRES that who love.FEM-him the-girl
 Do you know whom the girl loves?

Thus, *meen* has two different landing sites: one above the complementizer *illi* and another positioned below. This gives rise to the assumption that wh-phrases leave their original position in JA and land in two different landing sites when preposed to the left periphery of wh-questions. The resulting question is what these two landing positions are? As for the first position, it is strongly argued that it is the Spec CP (as shown 20 and 21) or, more precisely, the Spec of ForceP when CP is split. As regards the second position, it is supposed that it is the Spec of the FocusP, an argument highly supported by three underlying sources:

- A- Subject-verb inversion in indirect questions
- B- Non-co-occurrence with focalized objects.
- C- The exhaustive answer of the focalized wh-questions.

A- Subject-verb inversion in indirect questions

Let's first investigate co-occurrence of the complementizer *illi* with wh-phrases in direct wh-question in JA, the complementizer *illi* can co-occur with a preposed wh-phrase providing that the latter is subject or direct object. Additionally, the wh-phrase must precede *illi*. Consider grammatical sentences 24 (the wh-word *meen* is subject) and 25 (the wh-word *ejf* is direct object) and the ungrammatical sentence in 26 (the wh-word *mata* is an adjunct):

24- meen illi saraq l-madrasah imbarih?
Who that burgled the-school yesterday
Who burgled the school yesterday?

25- ejf illi saraq l-walad imbarih?
what that burgled the-boy yesterday
what did the boy burgle yesterday?

26- *mata illi saraq l-walad l-madrasah?
When that urged the-boy b the school.
When did the boy burgle the school?
Consider the ungrammatical sentences in 27 and 28:

27- *illi meen saraq l-madrasah imbarih?
that who burgled the-school yesterday
Who burgled the school yesterday?

28- *illi ejf saraq l-walad imbarih?
that what burgled the-boy yesterday
What did the boy burgle yesterday?

However, in indirect wh-questions the same observations are held in comparison with the direct wh-questions. The only exception is that the fronted wh-words working as a subject or direct object may follow the complementizer *illi*. Consider sentences 29-a, 29-b, 30-a and 30-b which are indirect questions counterparts of the direct questions in 24 and 25, respectively:

29- a b-tʃraf meen illi saraq l-madrasah imbarih?
PRES.Know.2SG.PRES Who that burgled the-school
yesterday

Do you know who burgled the school yesterday?

29-b b-tʃraf illi meen saraq l-madrasah imbarih?
 PRES.Know.2SG.PRES that who burgled the-school yesterday

Do you know who burgled the school yesterday?

30- a b-tʃraf eif illi saraqh l-walad imbarih?
 PRES.Know.2SG.PRES what that burgled the-boy yesterday

Do you know what did the boy burgle yesterday?

30- b b-tʃrafillieifsaraqh l-waladimbarih?

PRES.Know.2SG.PRES that what burgled the-boy yesterday

Do you know what did the boy burgle yesterday?

On the other hand, when the preposedwh-phrase follows *illi*, the unmarked word order VSO is a must. Put it differently, subject-verb inversion is obligatory. Consider the ungrammatical sentence in 31 which is similar to sentence 30B in all aspects but without subject-verb inversion.

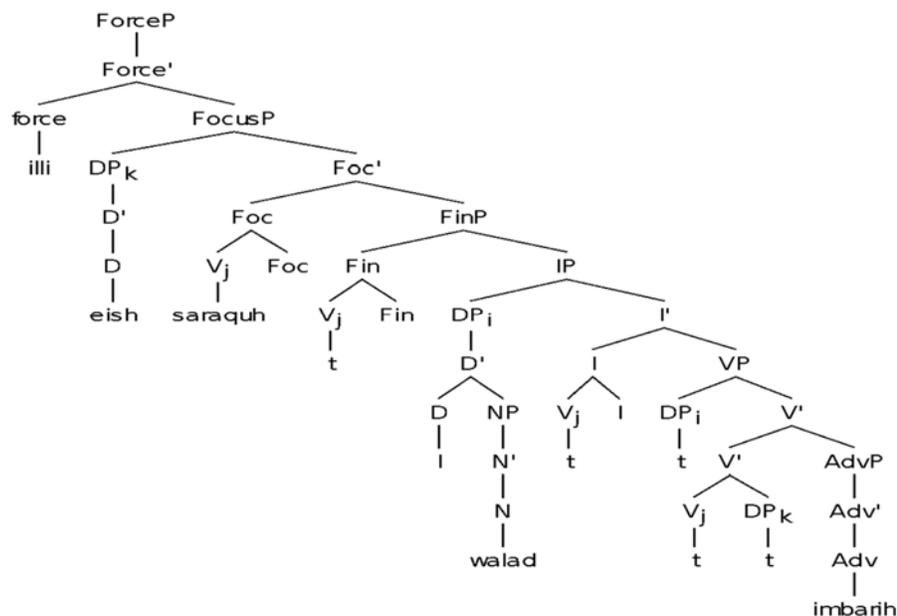
31- *b-tʃrafillieif l-walad(S) saraqh(V) imbarih?

PRES.Know.2SG.PRES that what the-boy burgled yesterday

Do you know what did the boy burgle yesterday?

By contrast, when the wh-phrase precedes *illi*, the indirect question stands grammatical without subject-verb inversion. In relation to this, when the fronted wh-phrase follows *illi*, it lands in a position under the ForceP, and since subject-verb inversion is triggered, we are in position to postulate that wh-phrases in such cases occupy the Spec of FocusP. So, the indirect wh-question in 30B has the schematic derivation in 32, where the CP is split due to the existence of a focalized constituent, *eif*:

32-



The next key issue is whether focus wh-movement is idiosyncratic to indirect wh-questions in JA or it can be manifested in direct questions. In fact, there is hard-evidence for the existence of focus wh-movement at the level of direct questions, non-co-occurrence of wh-words with fronted objects.

B- Non-co-occurrence with focalized objects.

JA allows for one marked word order, OVS, in which the object must be resumed by a pronoun on the verb as in 33.

33- ʃumar(O)ʔʒazʕ-uh (V) l-walad(S)ʃala l-madrasahimbarih.

Omar took -him the-boy on the-school yesterday
 It is Omar the boy took to the school yesterday.

It is widely argued that resumption in general is a clear indication for movement (Aounet *al.*, 2010),(Gervain, 2009),(McCloskey, 2000), among others. Thus, the fronted direct object *ʕumar* leaves its original place as a complement of the verb *ʔʕazʕuh* and then undergoes an upward movement to a position higher than IP. This position is, the argument goes, the Spec of FocusP. Indeed, this argument is motivated by two sources. Firstly, the subject-verb inversion is obligatory. As shown in sentence 37, the subject *lwalad* must follow the finite verb *ʔʕazʕuh*. If the order of the verb and subject is reversed, the resulting sentence is ungrammatical as in 34:

34- *ʕumar(O) l-walad(S)ʔʕazʕuh (V)ʕala l-madrasahimbarih.
 Omar the-boy took -him on the- school yesterday
 It is Omar the boy took to the school yesterday.

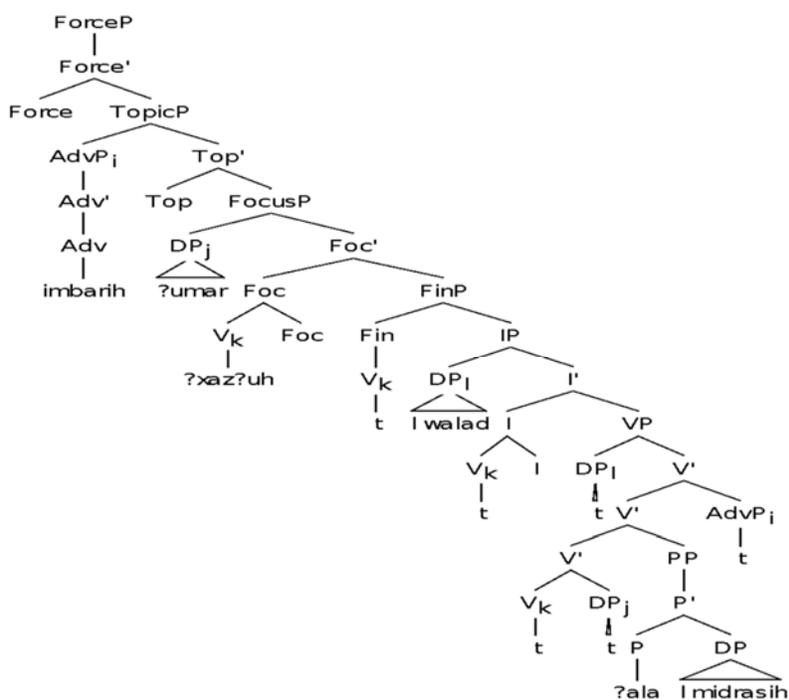
Secondly, when another constituent is topicalized, it has to precede the fronted object as in 35 (where the topicalized element is boldface). The topicalized element cannot follow the fronted object as in the ungrammatical sentence in 36 (where the topicalized element is boldface). This obligatory word order goes in harmony with the Split CP hypothesis which predicts that a topicalized constituent lands in a higher position than the focalized constituents.

35- **imbarih**ʕumar (O) ʔʕazʕuh (V) l-walad (S) ʕala l-madrasahimbarih.
 yesterday Omar took -him the-boy on the-school
 It is Omar the boy took to the school yesterday.

36- *ʕumar (O) **imbarih**ʔʕazʕuh (V) l-walad (S) ʕala l-madrasahimbarih.
 Omar yesterday took -him the-boy on the-school
 It is Omar the boy took to the school yesterday.

So, derivation of sentence 35 is shown in 37:

37-



Now, if the adverb *imbaarih* is questioned in sentence 33 in which the object *ʕumar* is focalized, the resulting sentence is by no means grammatical either wh-phrase appears to the left of to the right of the fronted direct object as in 38 and 39:

38- *mata ʕumar (O) ʔʕaz^ʕ-uh (V) l-walad (S) ʕala l-madrasah?
When Omar took -him the-boy on the-school
When did the boy take Omar to the school yesterday?

39- *ʕumar (O) mata ʔʕaz^ʕ-uh (V) l-walad (S) ʕala l-madrasah?
Omar when took -him the-boy on the-school
When did the boy take Omar to the school yesterday?

It turns out that the focused object blocks wh-movement. This blockage demonstrates that both the fronted direct object and wh-phrase occupy the same position, Spec of FocusP. More importantly, this mutual exclusion of wh-phrase and the focalized object entails that wh-movement in general occurs in a successive cyclic fashion. Even if the target of the preposedwh-word is the Spec of ForceP, the preposedwh-phrase must land first in the Spec of FocusP. What supports this assumption is the unfixed behaviour of moved wh-phrases in relation to other fronted (topicalized) phrases. Consider sentences 40 and 41 where the preposedwh-phrase *mata* can appear either to the left or to the right of the fronted constituent, *ʕalalmadrasah* (to the school):

40- **mata**ʕalalmadrasahraahlwalad?
when on the school went the boy?
≈ To the school when did the boy go?

41- ʕala lmadrasah **mata** raah lwalad?
on the school when went the boy?
≈To the school, when did the boy go?

In 40, *mata* occupies the Spec of ForceP, whereas it occupies the Spec of FocusP in 41, subject-verb inversion is obligatory. Consider the ungrammatical sentence in 42 which is similar to sentence 16 in all aspects except for that there is no subject-verb inversion.

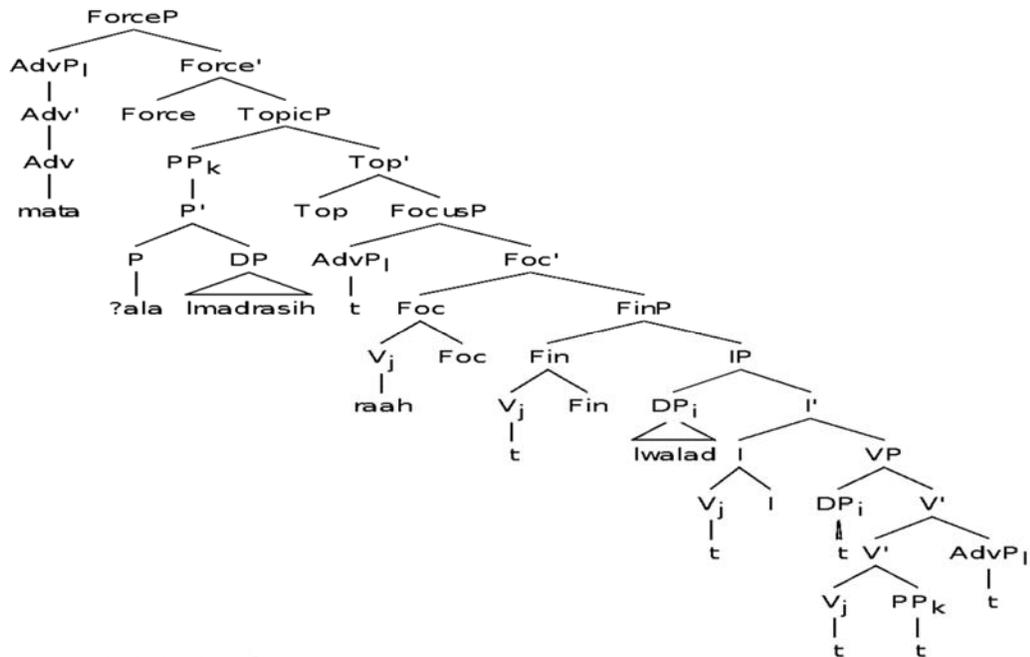
42- *ʕala lmadrasah **mata** lwalad raah?
on the school when the boy went?
≈when, to the school, did the boy go?

To the contrary, with absence of the wh-phrase *mata*, subject-verb inversion is not important for the grammaticality of the sentence. Consider sentence 43.

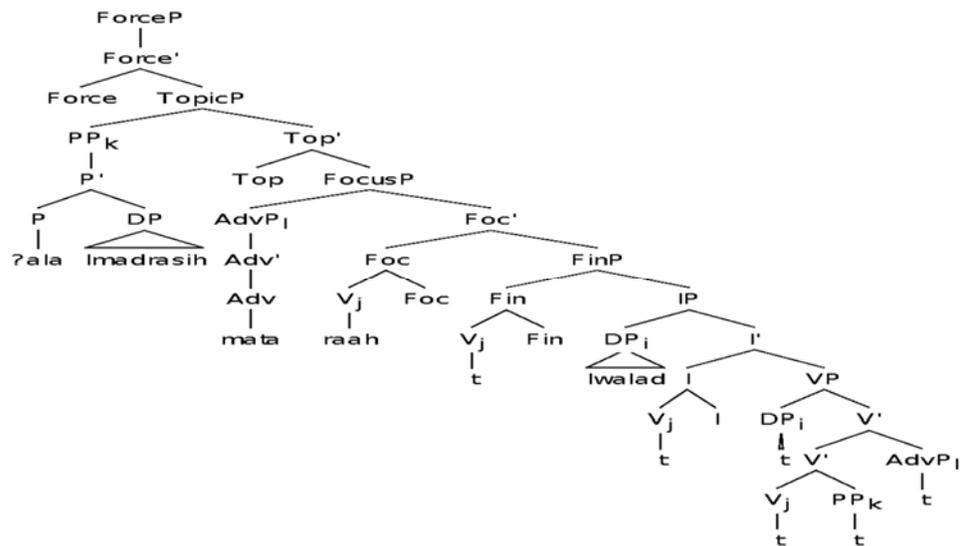
43- ʕalalmadrasahlwalad (S) raah (V).
On the school the boy went.
To the school, the boy went.

Hence, it can be extrapolated that both questions 40 and 41 exhibit focus wh-movement with a difference that in 41, the wh-phrase undergoes a further movement to Spec of ForceP as shown in the schematic derivations in 44 and 45, respectively.

44- The schematic derivation of 40:



45- The schematic derivation of 41



C- The exhaustive answer of the focalized wh-questions.

The last indication for the existence of focus wh-movement in JA is that the exhaustive answers to the questions with focused wh-phrases must be initiated by the new information with (obligatory) VSO order as is shown in sentence 46 (the question containing the focalized wh-element) and its exhaustive answer in 47.

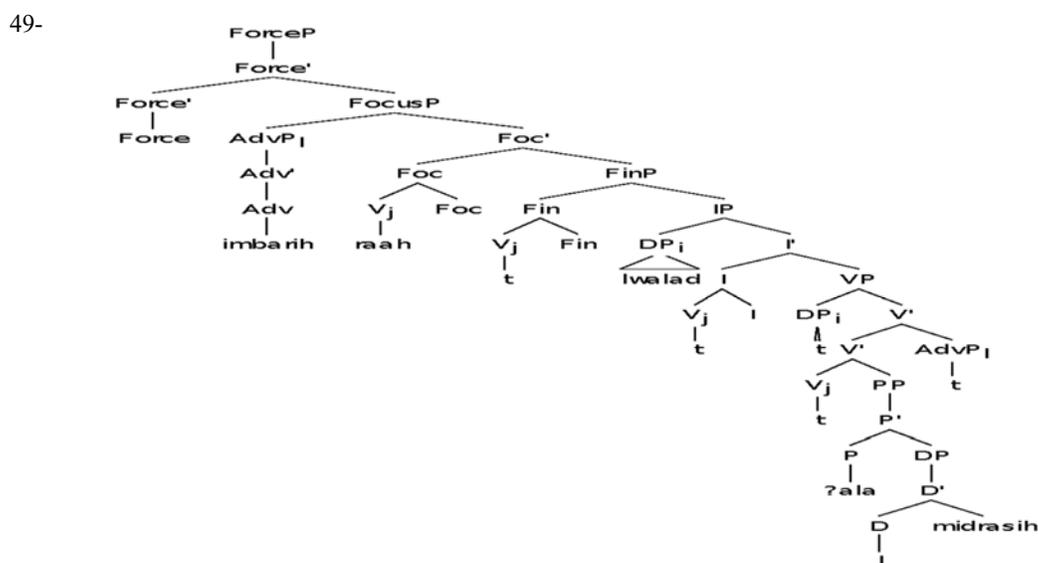
- 46- ζ ala Imadrasah mata raah lwalad?
 on the school when went the boy?
 To the school, when did the boy go?

47- Imbarihraahlwaladʕalalmadrasah.
 Yesterday went the boy on the school
 It was yesterday the boy went to the school.

The variant without subject-verb inversion is ungrammatical. Consider the ungrammatical answer 48 for the sentence 46:

48- *Imbarihlwaladraahʕalalmadrasah
 Yesterday the boy went to the school
 It was yesterday the boy went to the school.

Accordingly, it can be hypothesised that the fronted word *Imbarih*, the new information asked by the question in 46, occupies the Spec of FocusP as illustrated in 49.



3- **Conclusion:**

Focus wh-movement is utilized in both languages examined in this research: English, and JA. Following (Rizzi, 1997), in English this type of wh-fronting is only exhibited in direct wh-questions where the Spec of FocusP is the highest landing site for all wh-phrases in overt syntax. However, wh-phrases do not undergo focus wh-movement in indirect questions and wh-relative clauses.

Concerning JA, this research concludes that the preposedwh-phrases move first the Spec of FocusP, a notion supported mainly by the fact that the preposedwh-phrases appear to the right of the complementizer *illi* in indirect questions and non-co-occurrence with focused direct objects in direct questions. Once the preposedwh-phrase lands in the Spec of FocusP, it can undertake a further movement to the Spec of ForceP which is the highest position the preposedwh-phrases can occupy in JA in both direct and indirect wh-questions. Thus, this research answers its questions: JA does actually exhibit focus wh-movement, where the landing site for the focused wh-phrases is the Spec of FocusP. In addition, the main hypothesis is rejected since wh-phrases in JA must (not may) undergo focus wh-movement both in direct and indirect questions, even if the target is the Spec of ForceP not the Spec of the FocusP.

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حركة الأسئلة الاستفهامية في اللغة الإنجليزية والعربية الأردنية: دراسة مقارنة

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية نوعاً معيناً من البنية النحوية للأسئلة الاستفهامية، ألا وهي التركيز في حالة الحركة النحوية للأسئلة الاستفهامية التي تستهدف موقعا نحويًا مختلفًا للهبوط مقارنة بالحركة العادية. (Lee, 2001:10) في الأولى، تتحرك المكونات الاستفهامية المقدمة إلى موضع المحدد للجملة الموكدة أو المركزة، في حين أن في الثانية أن المكون الاستفهامي الابتدائي يهبط في موضع المحدد للمكون الثابت ذات الصيغة الاستفهامية. ويشير هذا البحث إلى وجود التركيز في حالة تغيير البنية النحوية للأسئلة الاستفهامية في العربية الأردنية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإنه يرسم مقارنة بين العربية الأردنية والإنجليزية التي تظهر هذا النوع من الحركة مع الاختلاف المتعلق بنوع الأسئلة (سواء مباشرة أو غير مباشرة). وعلاوة على ذلك، يدل هذا البحث على أن العربية الأردنية تظهر وجود التركيز في حالة تحريك الأسئلة الاستفهامية المباشرة وغير المباشرة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يناقش هذا البحث فكرة أن موقع المحدد يعمل بمثابة موقع هبوط للتركيز في حالة تحريك الأسئلة الاستفهامية (مثل الإنجليزية) وموقع هبوط وسيط للحركة العادية للأسئلة الاستفهامية (على عكس اللغة الإنجليزية).

الكلمات الدالة: التركيز النحوي، الحركة النحوية للأسئلة الاستفهامية، الأسئلة الاستفهامية المباشرة وغير المباشرة، مقارنة لغات.