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## Assessing Implicit Question Formations in English and its Realization in Arabic

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### Abstract

This study focuses on question formation in English and Arabic and studies questions formation in English and the realization in Arabic. It also focuses on semantic uses of this phenomenon that are limitedly used in Arabic in everyday use and it may be limited to religious texts. However, because of its low prevalence in Arabic, as well as its grammatical structure that coincides with declarative rather than interrogative question. This complicates the process of translating English questions into Arabic. Regarding the hypothesis of the study, it is hypothesized that the majority of students will face a difficulty in translation because interrogatives have its different structures in both languages. This leads the students to commit many errors in the process of translation. To test the hypothesis, 12 sentences were given randomly to the 20 students of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of English Department at Al-Hamdanyia University for the academic year 2020- 2021 to discover

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their abilities in translating questions. To conclude, most of the students are unable to provide the exact equivalents in Arabic because of its different structure from English .

**Key Words:** Errors, Questions, Tense, Writing Skills

## طبيعة الاستفهام الضمني في اللغة الانكليزية وما يقابله في اللغة العربية

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### المستخلص

يستعرض هذا البحث طبيعة الاستفهام الضمني في اللغة الانكليزية وما يقابله في اللغة العربية، حيث يهدف البحث الى دراسة هذا النوع من الاستفهام نحويا لمعرفة اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين اللغتين. كما انها تركز على الاستخدامات الدلالية لهذه الظاهرة علما ان استخدامه اقل شيوعا في الحياة اليومية في اللغة العربية، بينما نجده شائع في النصوص الدينية بالإضافة الى تركيبه النحوي الذي يشبه الى حد كبير تركيب الجملة الخبرية. افترضت الدراسة بان معظم الطلاب سيواجهون صعوبة في الترجمة بسبب اختلاف اللغتين وهذا ما قاد الطلاب للوقوع بأخطاء خلال عملية الترجمة لتطبيق الفرضية تم توزيع 12 جملة على 20 طالب /مرحلة رابعة/قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ جامعة الحمدانية للسنة الدراسية 2020-2021 لاكتشاف قابلياتهم في ترجمة الاسئلة بشكل عشوائي وهذا ما يزيد من صعوبة ترجمته. كما استنتجت الدراسة من خلال العينات التي وزعت على الطلبة بأنهم لا يملكون معرفة كافية فيما يخص هذا النوع من الاستفهام مما يؤدي الى ترجمته بطريقة غير صحيحة على انه جملة خبرية وليست استفهامية.

### Introduction

Questions in English are studied differently by different researchers around the world and are considered as one of the most studied areas in the field of linguistics. Implicit questions, on the other hand, are somehow gain no more interest by Arabic researchers in the field of English language teaching. This may be attributed to the fact that it is limited in daily life use. This study focuses on two aspects of this phenomenon. First, the implicit questions in terms of structure and meaning, given that it is of great importance in the method of the question in terms of politeness, commonest use, and the formal method of questioning in daily life for English speakers. The other side of the research focuses on the translation process and how to translate questions from English into Arabic. The analysis is based on Newmark's (1988) approach, which is divided into semantic and communicative while the second interested to find an appropriate equivalent in Arabic which is our focus here. Variables in culture and structure between the two languages are very important. Regarding the problems of the study, is related to the difficulty of translating this type of questions from English into Arabic. Secondly, is what are the methods and strategies that should be depended. Thirdly, is related to the limited use of this type of questions in Arabic and it can be seen more in literary and religious text. It aimed to shed light on the question in the English language and how to formulate its equivalents in Arabic in terms of structure, meaning and the extent of its use. This study

assumes that the majority of students will encounter different forms of structure than they are taught in constructing interrogative sentences. In terms of composition, the construction of this type of interrogation is very similar to the construction and structure of the declarative sentences. Therefore, this study assumes that there is an overlap and lack of distinction as whether the sentence is declarative or interrogative. Question verbs and phrases are a type of the most important denotation of the presence of the implicit question within the sentence. According to Lauri Karttunen in (1977), who identified these verbs and phrases into several groups in an appropriate way. Relying on these verbs, the students can know the implicit meaning of the sentence whether it is declarative or interrogative. Hence, This paper provides a descriptive account of question in English. The researchers follow several procedures. The first procedure includes the introduction about question, problems, aims, hypothesis and model. The second one deals with the literature review of question. The third procedure contains translation according to Newmark's (1977) semantic and communicative approaches, as well as the data analysis for the sentences (cf. Alshargabi et al. 2022; Kamil and Hazim 2020; Salman and Hazim 2022). The last procedure includes conclusions and suggestions. This study is limited to translating sentences that contain questions from English into Arabic. Throughout sentences that are distributed to students analysing the results of what are translated depending on specific methods of translation. It is also limited to how find the appropriate equivalence in Arabic language. This study deals with the phenomenon of the questions in English language in terms of syntax and it discusses how to translate this type of question into Arabic as a question located within the predicate sentence and how to infer it despite the absence of a question mark at the end of the sentence.

### **Review of literature**

Questions may be termed as interrogative sentences and can be described as the act of asking question and it requires an answer from the addressee. See among others ( Kamil and Hazim 2019). Interrogatives may be divided into two: ordinary questions and implicit questions. The first one is known by its order and the use of question mark whereas the second one can occur either as a declarative which ends with a full stop or interrogative which ends with question mark. (Groenendijk, 1984:33). We have several types of questions, we will cover each type briefly and our wide study will be on implicit questions type.

#### **a. Yes/No Questions or ( General questions)**

These types of questions require yes or no answers and the meaning will be completed.

- Do you like my new haircut? Yes I do.

#### **b. Tag question**

This type of questions is formed of two parts, the first one is an affirmative, and The second one is negative, or vice-versa.

-She sent him a gift, didn't she? Yes, she did.

#### **c. WH-Questions**

They are certain words which their meanings denote or refer to interrogative case, and these words are (who, what, where, when, why, how, how many, etc.)

-Where do you come from?

#### **d. Choice questions**

When we have a choice of several options as an answer.

-Does she like ice cream or sweets? – She likes ice cream

( *Randolph Quirk, 2008 : 81-88*)

**e. Implicit Questions**

An implicit question is a type of question which is included within another question or sentence. However, It is distinguished from other types of questions, as there must not be any auxiliary verb between the question word and the subject. Sometimes this type of question is not a part of another question then there’s no need to use a question mark at the end of that sentence.

If the implicit question is a part of a statement, there is no need to put a question mark at the end of the sentence. And if the question is in the present or past indefinite form, then the auxiliary verb should be omitted and the verb needs to be changed to its appropriate form.

Direct Question:	implicit question
What work did he do best?	-: I’d like to know what work he did best.
What is her name?	I wonder what her name is.

**Previous Studies:**

Questions may occur as subordinate clauses under a matrix verb. The matrix verb can be one of questioning, doubting or wondering, as in the following example:

Susan wondered/asked/did not know who was the murderer.

Susan wondered/asked/did not know whether Jones was the murderer Eckardt (2007:1),

The implicit clause here denotes a question and reports that the subject poses question, mentally or explicitly, to himself or to others. Regarding descriptive and theoretical study of the syntax of Algonquian language, Less attention has been paid specifically to the syntax of implicit questions : that is, when a main verb like “ask”, “wonder”, or a neglected main verb “*know*” takes a complement clause which is in the form of a question. Because of its complexity, many studies have done on this type of questions.

Heim ( 1994),on the other hand, suggested that implicit questions are ambiguous between weakly and strongly exhaustive reading.

1-Weakly exhaustive reading as: *Mary knows that Ann, Bill and Chris called.*

2-Strongly exhaustive reading as: *Mary knows that Ann, Bill and Chris called and that no one else did.* (Dahlstrom, 2017:37)

Karttunen (1977) focused on declarative sentences which contain questions (implicit, also called indirect questions). As all other declarative sentences should have meaning.

**What is implicit Question?**

Sentences in implicit question carry hidden meaning and something beyond the clear lines. Specifically, each sentence indicates a certain context such as (location-source of motion-quantity – illustrates an expressing manner being questioned ) and the following examples will clarify what was just said:

a-location: - They didn’t know where the young man was.

b-source of motion: - She was asked where she came from.

c-quantity - He asked how many young women there were.

d-illustrates an expressing manner being questioned: - So I will go to ask them what they think of me.( Michelson 1930:118)

### **Verbs Type in Implicit Questions :**

Predicates taking interrogative complements and are divided into: rogative as (wonder, ask, depend on and investigate) and responsive which is divided into: Veridical and non- veridical. Whereas veridical consist of verbs like: know, remember, forget, discover, be surprised, amaze, tell, non- veridical consist of: be certain about, agree on.

All Veridical verbs are emotive predicates and do- not accept yes- no question. Whereas Non- veridical are unclear case which means decide. Lahiri (2002) classifies interrogative-embedding predicates according to syntactic and semantic criteria. However, Rogative predicates such as *wonder* exclusively take interrogative complement clauses; they cannot embed declaratives.

- I wonder whether/\*that the current president will win the election again.  
( Nadine Theiler,2014: 40- 41)

### **Whether vs If**

We can use both of *if* and *whether* in an interchangeable form, but within formal writings, it is important to distinguish between the both because the meaning can be different depending on which word that we use. However, In the following sentences, we can see that the meaning of *whether* and *if* is interchangeable:

- Ali didn't know whether Jack would arrive on Sunday.
- Ali didn't know if Jack arrives on Sunday.

Many other times these two words are not be used interchangeably. Look to the following example: -Ali didn't know whether John would arrive on Friday or Saturday.

Now there are two possibilities here by using the particle *whether*, either John will arrive on Friday or on Saturday.

Look to this other example: -Ali didn't know if John would arrive on Friday or Saturday. In addition that John would arrive on Friday or Saturday, or he may not arrive at all.

The main distinction is we use "if" when we have a conditional sentence. (That's a sentence that can only take place once a specific action has occurred.)

- Jane didn't know if Lili was going away for the weekend.

But we use *whether* when the sentence shows two possible outcomes:

- Jane didn't know whether Lili was going to the beach or the mountains for the weekend.

### **Using of the particle Whether :**

1-when we have the infinitive (to) as in: -Mary didn't know whether to invite Noor to the party on Saturday.

Saying "Mary didn't know if to invite Noor" is just unacceptable grammatically and considered informal form.

2-When the clause beginning with (a conditional is the subject of the sentence)as in:

- Whether Noor can come or not depends on whether her boss will let her have the day off work.

3-When there is a preposition before hand as in:

- Mary wanted to have a conversation with Noor about whether she was away for the weekend.

4-The only time 'or not' is not redundant is when( whether or not) means regardless or no matter what , we cannot use if in the same way, as in: -They will eat the cake whether or

not their friends come. not( ~~They will eat the cake if or not their friends come~~). (Eckardt, 2007:9)

### **Reasons of using implicit Questions?**

Direct questions as well as implicit questions provide the same purpose in terms of asking a question, but they are different in terms of structure as we mentioned previously. Furthermore, they differ in terms of politeness according to Yule 2010. Semantically speaking, direct question is less polite than implicit question, so it can be called sometimes an informal question or impolite question whereas implicit question is more polite than indirect. Therefore, the aims of using implicit question are as follows:

A. To be more polite. Distinguish between the following questions. - *What time is it?* This is a direct question, but it is a little polite and -*could you tell me what time it is?* this is implicit question and it is more polite.

B.To give more information. Look to the following examples: - *will she call me?* And - *I wonder if she will call me.* It is clear that with the second question, the speaker wishes in the second question to get more information than the previous one.

C. To express lack of knowledge. For example, if I say, - *where is my bag?* In this case, there is a lack of knowledge about the location of my bag, but if we say - *I don't know where my bag is.* So in this case I have a desire to find my bag.

D. To express reported speech. When we are reporting what someone else says to you, we often use implicit question. For example,- *Where you want to go?* This is direct question. In reporting this to someone else, we can say, - *He asked me where I want to go.*

### **Questions in Arabic:**

A question word is a word that is used to ask for information. Question in Arabic is divided into: interrogative particles **أَسْمَاءُ الاسْتِفْهَامِ** and interrogative nouns **حُرُوفُ الاسْتِفْهَامِ**. they are called **الاسْتِفْهَامِ ادَوَات** – interrogative particles. The former are used to asked a yes-no questions, while the latter are used to ask information questions.

### **Implicit Questions in Arabic Language**

Implicit questions are rare in Arabic, but it can be occurred more in formal texts as well as in literature . The omitted questions in Arabic language can be divided into:-

1-The deletion of AL Hamza : this particle is considered the most important interrogative tool in Arabic. It may be deleted from the sentence and the meaning of the question remains, but still implicit. Arabic grammarians permitted the deletion of Al Hamza, in this case,the omitted question can be inferred from the context. We can find this example in The Holy Quran:

وجاء السحرة فرعون قالوا ان لنا لاجر ان كنا نحن الغالبين. (-31)113

«قال نعم وإنكم لمن المقربين».

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The sentence appears to be affirmative, but Al-Hamza here is deleted and you can notice it from the context.. **أن لنا لاجر ان كنا نحن الغالبين؟**

2- The deletion of the whole interrogative style:

The whole interrogative style may be deleted and this may depend on the full understanding of the listener and the context of situation. One of the best examples what is said by the Prophet Mohammad ( ص ) in the Holy Hadith to ask Salema's ancestors:

"انه قد بلغني انكم تريدون ان تنتقلوا قرب المسجد؟" - 34

and they answer him yes Prophet.So the question here is indirect one and the original may be:

"أحقا انكم تريدون ان تنتقلوا قرب المسجد؟" -الصالحين رياض(٥٧)

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The study discusses the translation of implicit question depending on Newmark's approach of translation (1988) which is divided into: semantic approach and communicative approach. However, The data analysis that have been discussed in this paper are applied to 4th year students /English Department / College of Education / University of Al-Hamdaniya for academic year 2020 2021. A set of examples including 12 sentences which have been collected from different books and websites are distributed to twenty students randomly. The Modal that is depend on analyzing the sentences are according to Lauri Karttunen (1977), who suggests a group of verbs that are used with the implicit question in the sentence.

**Sentence 1:** Do you happen to know where the printer is?

This type of implicit question is clear since there is a question implicit within another question. The renderings received by the the students as follows:

هل تعرف مكان الطابعة، هل لديك معلومات عن مكان الطابعة، هل تعرف موقع الطابعة. But actually, the implied meaning of the sentence is more than these translations. In the mentioned sentence we have the verb (Happen + to ) which can mean if you know something by chance. Programmatically speaking, it is used in this way to be more polite. So the suggested translation can be: Suggested Translation: الطابعة؟ وجود مكان عرفت ان صادف هل. This translation sounds better because it satisfies English readers' knowledge culture. This doesn't mean that communicative translation is better than a semantic one. But it is more polite than to translate it as: هل تعرف مكان الطابعة؟ as well as to satisfy the Arabic reader.

**Sentence 2 :** She is thinking about how she's going to do it.

All translations are semantically translated into: انها تفكر في كيفية القيام بذلك، انها تفكر كيف ستقوم. انها تفكر في كيفية القيام بذلك. بذلك، هي تفكر في كيفية قيامها بذلك. The students here are very faithful in their renderings to the source text maybe because they lack techniques of translation or they do not have a full understanding to find an appropriate equivalent to the source text. However, there is no clear hint that this is an interrogative sentence. For this reason, all students don't give the exact renderings into Arabic which is a question since this type of structures is rarely used in Arabic.

According to the types of verbs that may be used with implicit question, we will find that the verb *thinking* refers that there is a process of thinking for the speaker, but the word (how) that is used after the verb confirms that this sentence is interrogative. So there is a relation between the verb and the instrumental interrogative to show that the sentence is implicit regardless to the absence of question mark at the end of the sentence. Above all, the speaker here has a future plan concerning something maybe difficult and he tries to ask about how to do this thing in future. Suggested Translation: تتساءل عن كيفية القيام بها؟

**Sentence 3 ;** I have forgotten why I started this.

As what was said previously, that the verb *forgotten* lays within the group of retaining knowledge. Throughout this sentence, we discover that the speaker did something in the past and he does not remember the reason which leads him to do that and he asks himself about the reason by using *why* which confirms the interrogative behind the sentence as if the reader asks himself. Semantically speaking, all students translated this sentence literally into: لقد نسيت لماذا بدأت، هذا انا نسيت لماذا بدأت، نسيت لماذا بدأت بهذا العمل. In fact, there is no problem in translating this sentence literally because the meaning is clear and is understood by the reader, but there is no indication that a sentence is an interrogative and not affirmative.

(Lauri Karttunen ,1977:384 - 385). Suggested Translation: لا اذكر لماذا فعلت ذلك؟

**Sentence 4 :** Let's find out what time the show start.

According to the students' translations, we discovered that all students translate this sentence by following the semantic approach like: دعنا نكتشف ما الوقت - دعونا نعلم ما وقت العرض: لنكتشف الوقت الذي يبدأ فيه: العرض. The students here do not provide the exact meaning, since it is very weak and the gap is very wide between Arabic and English. This type of interrogative sentences is less common in Arabic and it may be limited to Qur'anic texts and in literature. According to Lauri Karttunen, the verb *find out* means that the speaker wants to know the time of the show as well as the interrogative instrument like *what* emphasizes that the sentence is interrogative not a statement, so the true translation is : (Lauri Karttunen ,1977:384 - 385).Suggested Translation: متى سيبدأ العرض؟

**Sentence 5 :** I have no idea where they have gone.

Semantically speaking, majority of the students translated this sentence wrongly into: ليس لدي فكرة الى اين ذهبوا، ليس لدي فكرة عندما ذهبوا . Strictly speaking this sentence is clear, but lacking the rules of using implicit question leads to such types of renderings. Concerning verbs that are used in such constructions, we can categorize the phrase *I have no idea* ..... within the group of opinion verb. However, by uttering this statement, the speaker wants to know something and it is supposed that there is an answer by the hearer. Alternatively, instead of using direct question *where have they gone?* He used this long and embedded question. In fact, the context which identify the reason behind his use of such type of structure.Suggested Translation: ليس لدي فكرة اين ذهبوا

**Sentence 6 :** Can you tell me how much the lunch costs?

If we look to this sentence, we will see that the sentence has two question tools: can and how much as well as the question mark at the end of the sentence. Because the sentence is short, clear as well as using the phrase like *can you tell me*, all the students translated it into the same way as: هل يمكن ان تخبرني كم تكاليف الغداء؟ هل لك .اتخبرني سعر وجبة الغداء؟. These types of interrogative sentences are translated semantically since they are apparent. Suggested Translation: هل بإمكانك اخباري تكاليف وجبة الغداء؟

**Sentence 7:** I wonder what you want to know about the research .

Throughout renderings of the students, we found that most of them -except one - follow the same structure of English without taking into their considerations the structure of Arabic. In other meaning, although they aware that the sentence is interrogative and not affirmative, they don't use the question mark at the end of the sentence which is obligatory in Arabic. Also the existence of the verb **wonder** indicates there is a person asks someone else and wants an answer but indirectly, so this verb confirms it is interrogative and not affirmative. Finally, these types of sentences should be translated communicatively since Arabic lacks such as this structure. Suggested Translation: ماذا ترغب ان تعرف عن البحث؟

**Sentence 8 :**George wonders whether the Red Aliens drink soda with a straw or with a spoon.

It seems from the context of this sentence that it is a part of children's stories since there are strange creatures which are Red Aliens. However, most of students(13 to 15) translated this sentence to: يتساءل جورج ما اذا كانت الكائنات الفضائية الحمراء تتناول الصودا مع الحساء او بالمعلقة . It



is clear that the students have a good background knowledge about these types of creatures and they are in contact with western culture regarding this point because they may succeed to give the meaning of the phrase Red Aliens. Concerning implicit question, the word *wonder* is a clear signal that refers to that there is a question behind this sentence. Consequently, most of students give the exact meaning and they know that this is a type of indirect question. Suggested translation: يتساءل جورج فيما اذا تحتسي المخلوقات الغريبة الصودا باستخدام القصبه ام المعلقة

**Sentence 9 :** I am not sure where you heard about this company.

Most of the students also translated this sentence literally as:

except two of them. The first translated this sentence into interrogative, so he added question mark at the end of the sentence as: لست متأكد من اين سمعت عن هذه الشركة. Another student translates it communicatively but he also did not recognize it as interrogative into: لست متيقنا من اين جلبت. Pragmatically speaking, by using the phrase: *I am not sure*, there is a hidden meaning behind the sentence, so the implicit meaning in this sentence is interrogative not affirmative, because there is a person did not sure of his information about the company or he requires true information about it but indirectly. Though Arabic requires a question mark at the end of the interrogative sentence, so all renderings are inappropriate. Consequently, for this reason we suggest the following translation: Suggested Translation: لست متأكد من اين حصلت على معلومات بخصوص الشركة؟

**Sentence 10:** We must find out who is the first speaker, and also if he doesn't need a beamer.

Students translated this sentence differentially according to their levels, their comprehension of the sentence. Some of the translations were as: علينا ان نكتشف من هو المتحدث الاول وفيما اذا كان لا يحتاج الى مركبة. This translation is literal, word to word translation. The student translated it without paying attention to the context of the sentence. Another translation were as the following: علينا ايجاد المتكلم الاول وفيما اذا كان لا يحتاج الى كشف. This translation is also semantic one. Unfortunately, all students follow the same style of the ST without taking the culture of the TT into their consideration as well as they ignore the structure of Arabic which is completely different from English. Finally this sentence can be translated communicatively into declarative as: Suggested Translation: من هو المتحدث الاول و الذي لا يحتاج الى مساعد؟

**Sentence 11:** Would you mind explaining if badge reader works

If clause can be used in these types of sentences to refer to interrogative as we see most students translated the mentioned sentence as: هل تمنع في شرح اذا قارئ الهويات . يعمل. This translation is a literal one, may because implicit questions aren't familiar to students and they don't use this type of questions a lot. While, the communicative translation is target language bias, free and idiomatic as in Suggested Translation: هل ستوضح لنا فيما اذا كان قارئ الشارة يعمل؟. This translation sounds more better and more communicative. We can regard it as a suggested translation.

**Sentence 12:** I wonder if you are happy joining us.

Most of the translations for this type of question were semantic ones as : انت سعيد بالتحاقك معنا؟ اتسائل اذا كنت سعيد بانضمامك معنا؟. However, the verb *wonder* here is one of the inquisitive verbs. It expresses the curiosity to know something related to the speaker and hearer. Students translated it semantically to stay as long as possible close to the semantic and syntactic structure of the source language. While the communicative

meaning or translation would be the speaker's curiosity to know about one of his friend's states. Suggested Translation: اتسائل ان كنت تشعر بسعادة بأضمامك الينا؟. The translation shouldn't be only semantic, but communicative, to know the intended meaning of the sentence. Newmark in these two types of approaches refers that translation as a complex process. Most students translated the sentences adhering to their culture, the word order of their language. They didn't pay attention to hidden meaning in translation.

### **Results and conclusion:**

The analysis of data brings out some remarkable findings: Eight out of twelve of the students translated the sentences wrongly as affirmative and not interrogative for many reasons : The form and structure of such a type of interrogatives is similar to the form and structure of affirmative. The absence of the indicators of interrogative sentence. The limited use of implicit question as a tool of politeness in every day life in the context of situation. Less interest of teachers concerning this type of interrogatives is also another cause for improper translation. So, different cultures and different languages systems cause a real problem in translation.

Concerning translation of the students, 50% of the students depended on the semantic approach of translation by neglecting the question mark at the end of the interrogatives whereas 40% of the them depended on google translation through the process of translation. Communicative approach of translation is less depended. This may be attributed to the limited thinking of the students. As a result this type of structures must be translated communicatively rather than semantically because of the missing of their equivalences in the TT.

To distinguish between declarative and interrogative sentences, we distributed 12 sentences to the 20 students of English department/ fourth year students in AL Hamdaniya University to see their abilities in rendering and understanding this type of questions. Regardless to the method chosen in translation, semantic or communicative, most of them were unable to present the exact equivalent in Arabic due to the absence of this phenomenon in Arabic and it may be limited to religious texts.

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