An Analytical Study of English Grammatical Errors Made by EFL Learners. A Case of Third Year Secondary School Pupils when Forming WH-questions

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دراسة تحليلية للأخطاء النحوية المرتكبة من طرف متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية دراسة حالة تلاميذ الصف الثالث الثانوي عند صياغة السؤال باللغة الإنجليزية

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Abstract:

  This study analyzes the findings of a study conducted with third year secondary school pupils, foreign languages stream. It aims at investigating the types of wh-question formation errors and the real causes behind their occurrence using error analysis method. The researcher chose this aspect for study because asking questions is a necessary tool for learning and mastering questions formation is very important in any language mainly English. One of the most important interests of this research was to determine whether the first language interference was the major cause of making such grammatical errors or the intralingual factors caused by the target language. At the end, the researcher attempted to suggest some practical solutions to avoid or at least reduce such errors. The final results reveal that the most frequent grammatical errors that learners committed when forming wh- questions were the misuse of wh-words, auxiliary omission, the absence of auxiliary/verb inversion, wrong verb form, verb omission and the unnecessary insertion of the auxiliary to be, but the most frequent ones were the misuse of wh-words and the auxiliary omission. Another significant finding is that most of such errors were not due to first language interference but to intralingual factors.

Keywords: grammar; grammatical errors; error analysis; wh-question formation; interlingual errors; intralingual errors.

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ملخص:

   تتناول هذه الدراسة باختصار نتائج العمل الميداني الذي أجري مع تلاميذ الصف الثالث الثانوي، شعبة اللغات الأجنبية. تهدف إلى البحث في أنواع الأخطاء النحوية عند صياغة السؤال في اللغة الإنجليزية والأسباب الحقيقية وراء ارتكابهم لهاته الأخطاء باستخدام طريقة تحليل الخطأ. اختار الباحث هذا الجانب للدراسة لأن طرح الأسئلة هو أداة ضرورية للتعلم وإتقان صياغة الأسئلة أمر مهم للغاية في أي لغة خاصة اللغة الإنجليزية. واحد من أهم اهتمامات هذا البحث هو تحديد ما إذا كان تداخل اللغة الأم هو السبب الرئيسي في ارتكاب مثل هذه الأخطاء أو العوامل المتداخلة التي تسببها اللغة الانجليزية. في النهاية، حاولنا اقتراح بعض الحلول العملية لتجنب أو على الأقل التقليل من هذه الأخطاء. تكشف النتائج النهائية أن الأخطاء النحوية الأكثر شيوعًا كانت إساءة استخدام الكلمات الخاصة بطرح السؤال وحذف الأفعال التامة والأفعال المساعدة، والترتيب الخاطئ للكلمات أي غياب تقديم الفعل التام أو الفعل المساعد على الفاعل، والشكل

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الخاطئ للأفعال، والإدراج غير الضروري للفعل المساعد، ولكن الأكثر شيوعًا هي إساءة استخدام الكلمات الخاصة بطرح السؤال وحذف الأفعال التامة والأفعال المساعدة. وثمة نتيجة هامة أخرى هي أن معظم هذه الأخطاء لم تكن بسبب تدخل اللغة الأصلية للمتعلمين ولكن بسبب عوامل ناتجة عن اللغة الأجنبية وهي الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النحو؛ الأخطاء النحوية؛ تحليل الأخطاء؛ صياغة السؤال في اللغة الإنجليزية؛ أخطاء سببها تدخل اللغة الأم؛ أخطاء سببها اللغة الأجنبية.

1- Introduction

Although secondary school teachers, inspectors and syllabus designers spend too many efforts to improve English learning in general and its grammar in particular, exam results especially the Baccalaureate results are not satisfactory. Exams mainly the official ones are very important for both teachers and learners. It is widely admitted that they are of vivid importance and their results can have a significant impact on people's lives and careers. They offer access to higher levels of education and professions. The exams results determine the future of pupils and pave them ways to chances for higher opportunities in life, and form determiners for measuring the teachers' effectiveness and success. However, what is remarkable is the greater weakness of grammar competence among secondary school pupils in general and third year pupils in particular. That is why, using diagnostic grammar assessments as one of the efficient strategies to improve instruction at the beginning of the year or before a grammar course starts is of paramount significance since it helps teachers to determine the learners' difficulties and tailor teaching to their needs. But it is just a waste of time and efforts if they don't take time to analyse and use the information obtained from these tests to target problems and set appropriate solutions. One of the most useful tools to do so is error analysis method to identify the types of errors and their possible sources.

Forming questions mainly wh-questions is one of the most important aspects of English grammar. Asking questions is very important in any language mainly English because communication develops into a long conversation with the combination of questions either yes/no questions or wh- questions and responses. However, it presents a serious difficulty for the target learners who have studied English for seven years. Thus, this study aims at investigating the types of wh-question formation errors and the real causes behind their occurrence. The researcher chose this aspect for study because asking questions is a necessary tool for learning and mastering questions formation is very important in any language mainly English. One of the most important interests of this research was to determine whether the first language interference was the major cause of

making such grammatical errors or the intralingual factors caused by the target language. At the end, the researcher attempted to suggest some practical solutions to avoid or at least reduce such errors. This research work was conducted through applying a diagnostic test and in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

> **1-** What kinds of errors will third year secondary school learners make when forming WH-questions?
>
> **2-** What are the causes of these errors for those learners?
>
> **3-** What solutions can be set to avoid or at least reduce them?

1. Literature Review
1.1. Diagnostic testing

Educational diagnostic assessment is very essential for teaching and learning. It has long been recognized as a useful means to improve the quality of teaching and learning. It is usually done before the beginning of the teaching learning process to identify the level of students and their needs in a particular area to be taken into account in the planning of the subsequent lessons. Hence, "teachers should first diagnose the needs and the differences of each student in the classroom" (Akdeniz, 2016, p.49).

It is administered at the start of the year, term or course; which means that it occurs before instruction begins. The purpose of such assessment is to determine what learners already know about the areas to be covered by instruction and to help teachers and learners identify problems that they have with the language and decide what areas of language need to be dealt with first in the syllabus. In the same vein, Akdeniz (2016) stated that "the diagnostic assessments continue throughout the learning process whenever the teacher needs to identify an attribute or pre-requisite learning for a new content" (p.49). It can be conducted through the use of different methods, techniques and tools such as observation, student portfolios, questionnaires, question-answer, attitude scales, interviews, etc (Akdeniz, 2016). However, the most effective tool can be tests. According to Mangal & Mangal (2019), "A diagnostic test stands for a type of test administered to a student or group of students for knowing about the nature and extent of learning difficulties, weaknesses or problems faced by them in a particular learning area, subject, topic or concept" (p. 110). A diagnostic test is "used to identify test taker's strengths and weaknesses, by testing what they know or do not know in a language, or what skills they have or do not have" (Davies et al, 1999, p. 43).

To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses for individual students, learners' responses should be analyzed using a well-organized approach. One of

the approaches that have been proposed for educational diagnostic testing is error analysis method. But before moving to the theoretical background of this method, it is important to make a distinction between the terms mistake and error.

1.2. *The distinction between error and mistake*

Most people consider them as synonyms, but indeed they are different from each other. The distinction between them relies on the ability of self-correction. This is what is called by Corder (1967, 1971) and James (1998) as the self-correctability criterion (AbiSamra, 2003). Mistakes can be self- corrected, but, errors cannot. However, Harmer (2007) uses them as a broad term that refers to three categories; slips that are mistakes which learners can correct themselves when noticing them, errors that are mistakes which pupils cannot recognize as errors and cannot correct themselves and attempts that are mistakes which pupils make when they attempt to do something but they do not know how (Harmer, 2007). Thus, the error is defined as a systematic and repeated deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis, 1994).

1.3. *Error analysis*

Errors mainly grammatical errors are no longer considered as indications of failure. Rather, they form fundamental foundations to target specific points that require specific reinforcement and tailor teaching for improving the teaching learning process. EFL learners make mistakes and errors during the process of developing their language. This seems to be an expected and usual part of language learning as a completely different opinion. Corder (1974) considers learners' errors as an indicator of their learning process and as a device to improve learning (AbiSamra, 2003). What is significant is to know how these errors can be exploited to benefit both grammar teaching and testing.

The analysis of errors that language learners make has been one of the most controversial issues in the field of applied linguistics for a long time. There have been two major approaches to studying language learners' errors; Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA) (Keshavarz, 1999, p. 11). Kim (2001) stated that through CA method, errors that learners make can be predicted by comparing the linguistic differences between the mother tongue and the target language (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). However, studies showed that not all errors resulted from L1 habits transfer, many others appeared during the process of learning which had no relation with L1 (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, as Kim (2001) explained, by the early 1970's it was replaced by EA because of its inaccuracy and the high criticism that it received (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012).

Error Analysis Method as a way to improve learning is viewed as a technique that provides evidence of the learner's knowledge of the second language (Ellis, 1994). In fact, its purpose is to find out what learners know and what they do not know (Corder, 1974, 170). However, learning grammar is the most essential part of learning a language. To be able to use a language properly, it is necessary to master its grammar. That is why error analysis mainly focuses on grammatical errors.

Error analysis has been described as "a set of procedures for identifying, describing, and explaining learners' errors" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 51). This explanation involves mainly identifying the sources of such errors for the adaptation of appropriate teaching strategies to help language learners learn better (Heydari and Bagheri, 2012). Corder as the founder of this new trend sets a model to analyze errors. According to Ellis, his model involves the following steps:

1- Collection of a sample of learner language

2- Identification of errors

3- Description of errors

4- Explanation of errors

5- Evaluating errors (Ellis, 1994, p. 48)

Many researchers were elaborated on Corder' s model such as Brown (1994) and Ellis (1995) (Dodigovic, 2005). Some of them provided clear examples of how to conduct the study such as Hubbard et al (1996) and Ellis (1997). However, Gass and Selinker (1994) identified six steps followed in conducting an error analysis; collecting data, identifying errors, classifying errors, quantifying errors, analyzing the source of error and remediating for errors (AbiSamra, 2003). Following these steps, we conducted our experimental side depending on these steps.

1.4.   *Sources of errors*

After the identification of the errors, an important stage in error analysis procedures is identifying the sources of errors. Several studies have been conducted to suggest different reasons why errors occur, in which the one done by Richards (1971) may be the first and most important (Heydari and Bagheri, 2012). According to them, he differentiated three sources of errors. First, interference errors result from the use of elements from the native language when speaking or writing another. Second, intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as overgeneralization of rules, incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rule restrictions and false hypothesis. Third, developmental errors occur during the process of building a hypothesis about the target language. However, the distinction between intralingual errors and

developmental errors seems to be unclear (Schacheter & Celce-Murcia, 1977, as cited in Ellis, 1994). Accordingly, Richards (1974) classifies errors according to their sources into two categories: interlingual errors caused by mother tongue interference and intralingual and developmental errors caused during the process of second language learning or caused because of the difficulty of the language itself (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012).

However, it is not easy to identify the real sources of errors as it is not easy to make differences between interlingual and intralingual errors. Furthermore, it is more difficult to make a difference between the different types of intralingual errors. As a result, other experts proposed other categories of learners' errors (Ellis, 1994). However, most researchers based their classification of categories on Richards' division and they elaborated their own classifications (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012).

1.5.   *Forming questions in Arabic and English*

Asking questions is very important in any language mainly English because communication develops into a long conversation with the combination of questions either yes/no questions or wh- questions. However, questions can perform a lot of other functions such as to suggest, to criticize, to request and so on.

Forming questions in English is characterized by some aspects as movement and inversion. A characteristic aspect of questions in English is the movement of auxiliary and the Wh-word. Another relevant aspect of the use of the question word in English is that it occurs in the initial position of the sentence and that they are followed by the subject - auxiliary inversion. Many researchers such as Al-Mekhlafi (1999), Faynan (1999) and Umale (2011) claim that in forming questions in Arabic there is no inversion or do support as in English (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013). Wh- questions can be formed by adding the wh- word (the interrogative pronoun) at the beginning followed by a declarative sentence. Yes/no questions can be formed with the interrogative words "a" or "hal" attached to a declarative sentence. Unlike English, Arabic question formation does not involve any kind of auxiliary verb and therefore Arab learners are expected to face difficulties in inserting the right auxiliary verb (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013). Another feature in Arabic is that the verb precedes the subject in a declarative sentence.

1.6.   Common Errors When Formulating WH-questions

EFL learners always make errors when trying to construct interrogative sentences. Swan (1980) discussed some typical errors learners committed when formulating wh-questions (Silalahi, 2017). These typical errors were:

1. Placing subject after the main verb and not after the auxiliary verb (e.g. When did go you there?
2. Missing auxiliary verb (e.g. What √ they do?)
3. Using auxiliary verb when not needed after special wh- question 'who/what'(e.g. Who does answer that question?)

However, there are other common types of errors such as those shown by Cowan (2008). One of the most frequent errors is the inability to insert 'do' either they let the sentence as it is such as shown in this example: Why you did so? Or invert the subject and verb without applying do insertion (e.g. When went James to school?).

3. Research Methodology

To carry out this research, a particular research methodology was followed to analyze and interpret the test results.

3.1.   Research Design

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches was used to obtain better results both at the level of data collection or analysis levels. Quantitative methods are research techniques that are used to gather information dealing with numbers and anything measurable (Holston, 2011). That's means procedures that gather data in a numerical form. The qualitative approach uses opinions and experiences to provide qualitative data.

3.2.   Setting and the Sample Population

A relevant element in the process of conducting any research work is the sample population, which is the group of people that represents the same characteristics of the total population and through which the researcher can generalize findings to the entire population.

The population of this study consisted of (20) pupils from the third year level of secondary education, Foreign Language stream, in Naama, Algeria. The test was administered in April 2018.

3.3. Research Instrument

The researcher used a diagnostic grammar test. The test papers were being corrected; the errors that the learners committed were identified, categorized and explained to find out the reasons behind making them. The designed test (see appendix A) was   based on the most important grammar points needed to form wh-questions correctly, and its instruction is as the   common grammar instruction that occurs in the Baccalaureate Exam. In general, this test was a discrete item test which consisted of 23 questions including different wh- words, tenses and forms.

4. Results

This work provides an interpretation of the results in an attempt to answer the questions raised by this research work. The grammar test analysis includes an evaluation of the pupils' marks and a study of the student's responses. This study identifies the types and frequency of errors committed by the third year pupils and the most common ones among them depending on Error Analysis Method.

4.1. *Evaluation of the Test Results*

The study of the learners' marks in this grammar test provided clear information about their level and the extent of their ability to form wh-questions correctly. In the following table, the test results are displayed in increasing intervals from the lowest level to the highest one.

Table 4.1. Percentages of the Test Results

Mark (out of 20)	Number	Percentage
0 - 4.99	13	65 %
5 - 8.99	6	30 %
9 - 9.99	0	0 %
10 $\geq$	1	05 %

Depending on the above table, the pupils' level in forming WH-questions in English was very weak since most of the marks were less than five (5) out of twenty (20), representing 65%of the total number of the marks. Furthermore, the total number of marks below the average represented nineteen (19), representing a percentage of 95%. This low level was confirmed also when calculating **the mean of this test that was (4.8).**

4.2. *The Percentage of Correct Questions*

To get a complete picture of the grammatical competence of the pupils in forming wh-questions, the pupils were asked to form 23 wh-questions which are different in forms. As we had 20 pupils, the total number of questions was

460.The following table provides an overall impression of the degree of difficulty of such task through displaying the frequencies and percentages of the correct answers and the wrong answers.

Table 4.2. Type and Frequency of Answers

Types of answers	Correct questions	Absence of questions	Wrong questions
Number	36	84	340
Per cent	7.82 %	18.26 %	73.91 %

Note 1. Adapted from (Zhang, 2016, p. 1580)

As it has been shown in the table, asking wh-questions presented a serious difficulty for learners since the percentage of the correct answers in comparison with the other answers was (7.82 %). Within 36 correct questions, 22.22% were the sentence type "who answered the questions correctly?"; 16.66% correct questions were the sentence type as "what is important?"; 13.88 % correct questions were the sentence type as "How was George's grandfather?". Therefore, the percentage of 7.82% correct questions are made of three main sentence types "who +verb + stem?" And "what + be+ stem?" "How + be+ stem?" in the proportion of 52.76%.

4.3. The Frequency of the Incorrect Wh-words

The present table presents the frequency of the incorrect use of Wh-words.

Table 4.3. The frequency of the incorrect wh-words

Wh-words	What	How much	How	Who	When	Where
Frequency	49	17	15	14	14	7
Percentage	39.51%	13.70%	12.09%	11.29%	11.29%	5.64%

Adapted from (Zhang, 2016, p. 1581)

From the table above, it can be seen that learners generally prefer to use "what" to ask questions since its percentage represents the highest one at 39.51%.

4.4. Abbreviations of Error Types

The grammatical errors made by the target pupils in forming wh-questions were analyzed using error analysis method. They were identified and used in a form of abbreviations. An explanation of each one was also presented. The following table is an illustration of these keys.

Table 4.4. Abbreviations of Error Types

Abbreviation	Full words	Explanation
1. WQW 2. WT	1. Wrong Question Word 2.Wrong Tense	1. Wrong question word was used. 2. Pupils used the wrong tense instead of the correct one.

3. WFV	3.Wrong Form of Verb	3. Tense was correct but the verb form was wrong.
4. WF-Aux	4. Wrong Form of Auxiliary	4. Tense was correct but the auxiliary form was wrong.
5.Aux-O	5. Auxiliary Omission	5. Auxiliary was omitted in asking *wh*-questions.
6. VO	6.Verb Omission	6. Verb was omitted in asking *wh*-questions.
7. WV	7. Wrong Verb	7. Another verb was used instead of the given one.
8. BR	8.*BE* Redundancy	8. Unnecessary insertion of *BE*.
9. Be-D	9..*BE* replacing *DO*	9. Auxiliary *BE* was used where the auxiliary *DO* was required.
10.Do-B	10.*DO* replacing *BE*	10. Auxiliary *DO was* used where the auxiliary *BE* was required.
11.DR	11.*DO* Redundancy	11. Unnecessary insertion of *DO*.
12.WWO (inv)	12.Wrong Word Order (no inversion)	12. The question form was wrong, there was no inversion of auxiliary and subject.
13.WWO (VS)	13.Wrong Word Order (The verb preceded the subject)	13. The question form was wrong, the verb preceded the subject.
14.WWO	14. Wrong Word Order	14. The words were not in the right order.
15.WO	15. Word Omission	15. Necessary words were omitted from the sentences.
16.UIW	16.Unnecessary Insertion of Words	16. Pupils inserted other words which they did not require.
17.WFS	17. Wrong Formed Sentences	17. Ill- formed sentences.

Note 2. Adapted from (Mukattash, 1981, p. 262).

4.1.5. Types of Errors Made by the Learners

In the following table, the types of errors made to do such task are presented according to the number of their frequency and in a form of percentages:

Table 4.5. Frequency of Error Types

Examples of error identified	Definition of error type	Number	Percent
Where did Hong Kong revert to China?(When)	QW	247	28.10 %
What √child labour means? (What does child labour mean?)	Aux-O	141	16.04 %
What did the Arabs √? (What did the Arabs do?)	VO	66	07.50 %
What is the Arabs do? (What did the Arabs do?)	Be-D	8	00.90 %
Who is answered the questions correctly? Who answered the questions correctly?	BR	44	5 %
Where does violence found? Where is violence found?	Do-B	8	00.90 %
What do is important? What is important?	DR	18	02.04 %
What did your parents feel after work? How do your parents feel after work? Tired	WT	16	01.82 %
What is he do? (What was he doing?) What does the girls do? (What do the girls do?	WFV/ WF-Aux	102 7	11.60 % 00.79 %

What people <u>should protect</u>? What <u>should</u> people <u>protect</u>?	WWO (inv)	85	09.67 %
Where <u>is found</u> violence ?(where <u>is</u> violence <u>found</u>?)	WWO(VS)	42	04.77 %
Where <u>she live</u> since she was a child? Where <u>has she been</u> since she was a child?	WV	9	01.02 %
What is studying? What is <u>he</u> studying? Who answered the questions <u>correctly</u>?	SO WO	18 9	02.04 % 01.02 %
What is <u>the/an</u> important? What is important ?	UIW	35	03.98 %
Forbidden he is to kill whales? Why is it forbidden to kill whales?	WFS	24	02.73 %

(Adapted from Mungungu, 2010, p. 54)

The total number of errors was found to be **879** errors. What has been understood from the previous table is that the learners **did not use the correct wh-words** to ask *wh*-questions since they used the wrong words instead of the correct ones. This is noticed in its percentage that presents **the highest one (28.10%)**. The next most common error type was **auxiliary omission (16.04%). The** third common error type is **the absence of auxiliary/verb inversion in a percentage of (14.44%), 4.77 % of such type of errors were** the wrong position of the verb (**the verb preceded the subject**). The fourth type was **wrong verb form (11.60 %).** Pupils knew the suitable tense but they did not know the correct form of verbs, most of the time they did not put the verb in the infinitive. The next most common error type was verb omission **(7.50 %)**. **5 % o**f the errors were unnecessary insertion of the auxiliary to be. In this type of task, some other errors were found in different degrees such as the unnecessary insertion of words, the use of the wrong tenses, unnecessary insertion of the auxiliary to do, and the use of the auxiliary to do instead of to be.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the most frequent errors committed by those learners depends on Richards' division and subdivision (1974). According to him intralingual errors are subdivided into three main types: overgeneralization (from one structure to another), ignorance of rule restrictions (within the structure itself) and incomplete application of the rule (Richards, 2015). Through studying some examples taken from the test papers illustrating the most frequent errors made by the learners, the major sources of such errors could be determined. However, it was difficult to prove that the studied error has a specific cause but the researcher tried to consider the greatest probability. This is what has been confirmed by Mukattash (1981) who states that there is no way of proving that any given error type has a specific cause (Mukattash, 1981). That means if it is due to L1 interference, learners' communication strategies, or target language interference.

Some examples of errors were studied to identify the sources of making such errors.

As shown previously, Swan (1980) discussed some typical errors learners committed when formulating wh-questions. The errors found in this research corresponded with the typical errors mentioned by Swan (1980) such as:

- Placing subject after the main verb and not after the auxiliary verb

- Missing auxiliary verb

- Using auxiliary verb when not needed after special wh- question 'who/what'.

However, Cowan (2008) discussed other types such as the inability to insert '*do'* either the learners **let the sentence as it is** or **invert the subject and verb without applying** *do insertion*.

It is possible that these errors are due to the native language interference as in the case of Arabic. Wh- questions can be formed by adding the wh- word (the interrogative pronoun) at the beginning followed by a declarative sentence without changing or adding anything however a typical declarative sentence in Arabic initiated by verb - subject order. Moreover, because of the absence of auxiliary and modal verbs in questions in Arabic, forms like does, has, is and should are omitted in questions made by Arab learners. In an other hand, a variety of ungrammatical questions that English language learners produce seems to be resulted from the influence of their native language. However, some deviant questions were formed by different learners with different language backgrounds (Richards,1974, as cited in Mukattash, 1981). This can be explained by the fact that there is also a possibility of developmental sequences for the acquisition of English questions (Cowan, 2008). Depending on what has mentioned above, we discussed the erroneous questions produced by the target learners.

∗The most common error type among third year learners at the target school when forming wh-questions was the use of the wrong wh question words. These are some examples:

Whom mother is Russian?   (**whose** mother is Russian?

What did your parents feel after work? (**How** do your parents feel after work?)

This type of errors was intralingual errors type; they had no relation with the mother tongue but with the target language which is English. It may be due to the

incomprehensibility of the underlined words or the ignorance of the wh question words.

∗What √child labour <u>means</u>? (What **does** child labour <u>mean</u>?)

   Auxiliary to do was omitted when it is necessary for asking *wh*-questions and this is due to lack of knowledge about the form of questions in English.

   ∗What **means** child labour?   (What does child labour mean?)

   Where **is found** violence?   Where is violence found?

In this interrogative sentence, the verb preceded the subject while the correct order in English is (wh-word + aux + S + V). This error of word order can be due to L1 interference since one of the forms of questions in Arabic is an interrogation tool (*wh* –word +V+ S).

   ∗What he is studying?   (What is he studying?)

The error presented in the position of the auxiliary (is). In this way, the error is the absence of the obligatory inversion of the auxiliary and the subject. This type of error had no relation with the mother tongue. It can be considered as an incomplete application of the rule.

∗How who does tired after work?   How do your parents feel after work?

This sentence has no sense and it is due to the incomprehensibility of the words and sentence structure.

   ∗Other types of errors related to tenses and verbal form were persistent in most of the test papers, such as: wrong verb form verb omission, unnecessary insertion of the auxiliaries (to be) and (to do). Wrong replacement of auxiliaries (to be) and (to do). These are some examples of each type:

   a- What does child labour means? (What does child labour **mean**?)
   b- What did the Arabs √?
   c- What <u>is</u> the Arabs do?
   d- Where <u>does</u> violence found?

The verb should be written in the infinitive form in a sentence a. In sentence b, the verb is omitted whereas, in sentence c. the auxiliary (to do) is replaced by (to be). However, the contrary occurs in sentence d.

   The use of verbs in question forms in the right tenses and forms seemed to be difficult to learners. The verb auxiliaries have also been omitted or misused.

This shows that learners have more difficulties in using auxiliaries in asking wh-questions as it is stated that the auxiliary verbs are often problematic for L2 learners since there are certain rules on how to use them (Taher, 2011). In all the sentences above except sentence b, these error types are classified as an incomplete application of the rule. This type of error is probably due to lack of knowledge about the form of questions, tenses, verb forms and auxiliaries. However, the source of error in questions b seems to be a direct translation from Arabic.

Depending on what has been said above, it can be revealed that the errors made by the third year pupils at the target school were both from interlingual and intralingual interference. However, their biggest number of errors is due to intralingual factors. Those caused by L1 interference were in a small proportion compared with those resulted from English. That means that most of them were independent of the learners' mother tongue and were caused by the influence of the English language. More precisely, most of them were caused by overgeneralization or incomplete application of rules. According to Richards (1970), they are items produced both by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but problems based on partial exposure to the target language (AbiSamra, 2003).

Some techniques are suggested to deal with those errors to process correct English grammar.

6. Suggestions to Deal with Grammatical Errors in Forming Wh-questions

Testing is a vital means to measure the learners' progress in learning grammar. This progress is evaluated through the degree of correctness of their responses and the grammatical errors identified. Drawing pupils' attention to grammatical errors and identifying their sources can be effective in calling their attention to grammatical forms. This can be also fostered through correcting them and involving students in rich structured input of the target structures related to those errors. Furthermore, teaching these structures in gradual sequences can be beneficial to make learners avoid committing persistent errors. The development in the processing of these types of structures involves gradual stages in which some frequent grammatical errors appear. The role of the teacher is to address the kinds of errors that occur in each stage and puts more emphasis on the last ones to achieve accuracy. If the errors occur, recasting may be beneficial to draw the learners' attention to the grammatical errors to be corrected. *Recasting* is drawing the student's attention to what he has just said and expecting from him to correct

himself (Cowan, 2008). Otherwise, his classmates or the teacher supply the correct answer.

Recasts take different forms. Harmer (1991) suggests several strategies to indicate incorrectness, which are *repeating, echoing, denial, questioning* and *expression* (Sárosdy et al, 2006, p. 127). *Repeating* involves asking the student to repeat what has just said with questioning intonation to show that something is wrong. In *echoing technique*, the teacher repeats what the pupil has just said with questioning intonation and asking for correction. Another technique of indicating errors is through simply saying that the answers are not correct. The teacher can also indicate correctness by a *questioning* technique which means asking the whole class 'Is that correct?'. Facial impression or other gestures may also be used to draw learners' attention that something is wrong.

Producing grammatically correct *wh*-questions is one of the tasks suggested in BAC Exam. Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley (1988) identify four stages in which learners go through in an attempt to produce *wh*-questions:

Stage 1: (Fragments or single words with rising intonation)

Speak English?

Charles in house?

Stage 2: (Subject-verb order with rising intonation)

He speak English?

Charles is in the house?

Stage 3: (Insertion of do at the beginning of the sentence)

Does he speaks English?

Does Charles is in the house?

Stage 4: (Base from in the main verb; inversion of subject and verb)

Does he speak English?

Is Charles in the house?   (As cited in Cowan, 2008, p. 43)

Errors shown in stages two and three are common among EFL learners and they reflect imperfect learning. Learners may make progress in learning *wh*-questions if they are received instruction in advance, which emphasizes the next stage beyond the current one.

However, Larsen-Freeman (2009) proposes adopting a 'grammar checklist' in which "teachers have an unordered set of grammar structures they need to teach in a way that attends to their pupils' readiness to learn" (p. 530). This checklist may include grammatical structures that are not included in the syllabus, but needed as a basic step to teach certain structures such as teaching how to transform affirmative sentences into the negative forms and then how to transform them into the interrogative forms to teach how to ask *wh*-questions. Another technique based on the diagnostic test results is to bring learners with similar learning difficulties together for additional help, time and practice. However, learners who do not have many difficulties engage in enrichment practice.

7. Conclusion

This research described the case study which concerned the types of the grammatical errors committed by the third secondary pupils when forming wh - questions, through analyzing the test results, focusing on the most frequent errors and on the most common sources behind making them. What has been noticed is that the most common errors types made by the third year pupils **were the misuse wh-words, auxiliary omission**, the **absence of auxiliary/verb inversion, wrong verb form,** verb **o**mission **and the** unnecessary insertion of the auxiliary to be. In this type of task, some other errors were found in different degrees such as the unnecessary insertion of words, the use of the wrong tenses, unnecessary insertion of the auxiliary to do, and the use of the auxiliary to do instead of to be. The causes behind making such errors were both due to interlingual and intralingual interference. Whereas, the errors caused by the learners' mother tongue were in a small proportion. However, intralingual errors are mainly due to overgeneralization and incomplete application of the rules.

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Appendix A: The Grammar Diagnostic Test

<u>**Name:**</u>   ……………………….

<u>**Class: …**</u>

A diagnostic grammar test

<u>**Task 1:**</u> Ask questions on the underlined words

1- Kareen went to the United States of America **<u>three years ago</u>**.
2- Hong Kong reverted to China **<u>in 1997</u>**.
3- She has been in **<u>London</u>** since she was a child.
4- It is forbidden to kill whales **<u>because they are in danger of extinction.</u>**
5- **<u>James</u>** answered all the questions correctly.
6- **<u>George's</u>** mother is Russian.
7- He is studying **<u>architecture</u>**.
8- **<u>Respect</u>** is important.
9- My parents feel tired after work
10- The girls **<u>watch a Turkish serial</u>**.
11- Lila likes to wear **<u>the green jacket</u>**, not **<u>the black</u>** one.
12- My father met **<u>the headmaster</u>** yesterday.
13- Helen has read **<u>ten</u>** books.
14- Children brush their teeth **<u>twice a day</u>**.
15- The football team **<u>had won the match</u>** several times.
16- He **<u>was painting a nice picture.</u>**
17- People **<u>should respect each other</u>**
18- George's grandfather was **<u>strong</u>**.
19- This girl **<u>sells newspapers</u>** there.
20- People should protect **<u>the environment</u>**
21- Child labour means **<u>work for children that harms or exploits them</u>**.
22- Violence is found **<u>in schools,institutions, on the streets and in the workplace</u>**
23- Arabs **<u>conquered many rich provinces</u>**.

BEST WISHES