# Wh-Movement in Iraqi Dialect

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## Abstract

Changes in the word's position and the structure's construction are a system by which some words move from one position to another due to linguistic factors such as morphology and syntax. This movement is not limited to words alone; it is also possible in phrases. Constraints that regulate the movement process also govern these changes. The syntactic structure is a commonly influenced linguistic aspect in dialect languages. The sentence structure, including all types of sentences, varies according to dialect. The study of interrogatives, whether in Iraqi dialects or not, is significant. One of the two dominant dialects, Mosuli or Baghdadi, can serve as an excellent representative for the remaining subdialects. This paper will contribute to our understanding of the structure of interrogatives in the Iraqi dialect and the movement that occurs in various sentence positions.

## 1. Introduction

Language is a living entity that undergoes constant change, i.e., it continues to develop, transforms, modernizes, and eventually dies out. In every language, some words are lost. In contrast, others emerge through the use of various strategies or devices of word formation, such as derivation and movement, to express the current requirements of nations (Handhal 1998: 20). However, at its most basic definition, a dialect is a subcategorization of a language that is linguistically distinct in terms of grammar, lexis, speech, and phonology. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), dialect is "a manner of speaking, language, or speech peculiar to or characteristic of a particular person or class. Any dialect, even the common one, has the potential to stir up social bias, concealed prestige, and mockery. As a result, dialect is frequently utilized in literature to advance characterization and "indicate the wholesome nature of modern media." (Thomas, 1999, p. 201) Many terms used in the various Arabic dialects originate from standard (classical) Arabic. In 1956, Taimur (as cited in Bakir 1984) attempted to demonstrate his support for linking classical Arabic with the various dialects used in the Arab World by providing examples (178–235) to demonstrate that there are terms

used in contemporary spoken varieties of Arabic that have roots in the dialects spoken by ancient Arabs. Regarding pronunciation, however, these terms have developed.

The Iraqi dialect is one of the Semitic dialects that has undergone change and modernization. It was able to modify and form some of its interrogative tools and invent tools that could be new or alien to the language. Iraqis speak a variety of Standard Arabic, known as the Iraqi dialect. Depending on the region in which a dialect is spoken, there may be minor variations here and there. Mosuli and Baghdadi are the two most widely spoken dialects in Iraq. These dialects are highly intelligible, and speakers of different dialects can readily understand each other. A linguistic feature that all dialects share is their nearly identical syntactic structure.

Interrogative is a grammatical term for the elements that compose inquiries. The interrogative sentence's syntactic structure indicates that it is a query. The purpose of interrogative sentences is to answer **yes-or-no** questions or to pose informational inquiries using **wh-questions.** A few studies have examined the development of interrogatives in Baghdadi or Mosuli dialects and Iraqi dialects in general, but documentation of dialects still needs to be improved.

Bamgbose (1990: 183) defines interrogative construction as a device that employs interrogative markers to ask a question.

Different languages have different ways of forming queries. In addition, each language has its method for constructing interrogative inquiries, including distinct word order structures and the insertion of interrogative particles. The difference between a yes-no question and a declarative question consists of intonation, typically marked in questions.

Chomsky's (1957) Syntactic Structures initiated the establishment of studies and theories to determine the derivation principles of the wh- question. Chomsky was the first to propose two transformational principles, optional and obligatory, to derive the English interrogative. Bach proposed his theory regarding the movement of wh-words in 1971, stating that wh-words are always to the left and never to the right. Culicover (1976) attempts to strengthen the relationship between the presence of a wh-question in the initial position and sentence inversion based on his analysis of wh-questions. Chomsky began a new phase of comprehending the generation and movement of wh-questions in 1977 when he proposed the formal derivation of wh-questions. Chomsky clarified the w-h phrase's syntactic movement and the resulting structure. Additionally, he claims that the trace left behind after movement is co-indexed with the operator wh-word, which distorts it (Chomsky 1981).

Chomsky's minimalist movement has been applied to the analysis of standard Arabic syntax. Fakih (2007) provided a unified analysis of the wh-short and wh-long movements extracted from subject and object positions in the PF and LF components. He confirmed that in standard Arabic, the extraction of the wh-phrase is permitted in the derivation of the standard VSO order but not the SVO order. The wh-phrase must be transferred overtly to [Spec, C] for feature checking in basic sentences; it cannot remain in place in overt syntax. Likewise, Aloteiby's study on analyzing wh-questions in Standard Arabic clarifies Fakih's (2007) assertion. His findings indicate that the wh-movement only applies to the unmarked VSO word order and not the SVO word order.

Regarding the wh-movement, there are three categories of languages:

1. Languages with wh-movement

2. Languages with wh-in-situ

3. Languages with optional wh-regarding wh-movement

Chomsky states, "The SVO order is formed through base generation, not movement." "Evidence suggests that the A movement influences the SVO order." He observed that wh-questions in Standard Arabic adhere to two primary structures: SVO and VSO movement, where the wh-phrase appears in situ or displaced. Greenberg (1966) demonstrates a relationship between the wh-movement and word order. According to Greenberg, VSO languages always contain wh-movement, while SOV languages do not.

## 2. History of Iraqi Dialect

Iraqi Arabic, also known as "Mesopotamian Arabic," is a dialect of Arabic and a member of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Iraqi Arabic has three distinct subdialects: Baghdadi, Southern, and Maslawi (Abu-Haidar, 1989; Kesslers).

As anticipated, Iraqi Arabic still contains remnants of Babylonian Aramaic, as Aramaic was the dominant language in Iraq for a considerable period. During this period, the vernacular changed, among other things (Kessler, 2003). Moreover, owing to Iraq's inherent multiculturalism, Aramaic, Akkadian, Kurdish, and Turkish are heavily incorporated into the vocabulary of Iraqi Arabic.

According to Al-Shabi (1965), early in the second half of the seventh century (656 AH), the Mongol occupation affected Iraqi Arabic. During this period, the vernacular evolved, among other things. In his study, Al-Shabi observes that the modern Iraqi dialect is similar to that of the ancient Mogul period. Mutar (2009), who asserts that Iraqis only speak "Iraqi Arabic," supports his research. It is incorrect to attribute the dialects' origins to the original Arabic dialects of Iraq, such as the dialect of Bin Tamim and the Gulf. The author demonstrates that the Iraqi dialect has been regarded as a pure Iraqi dialect throughout Iraqi linguistics and that marriage, cultural connections, and trade have all contributed to expanding its influence in the Gulf countries.

## 3. Wh-question in Iraqi Dialect

In the last two decades, linguistic research has been focused on the syntactic study of problems in contemporary Arabic dialects. To offer a coherent study of the issue, both Western and Arabic Linguists explored the grammar of the Wh-question in Arabic dialects. They published numerous accounts on the subject matter in separate approaches. Because of recent studies in Iraqi dialects on wh-questions.

## 4. Word Orders in the Iraqi Dialect

A note about word order is important. The basic word order in modern Arabic is VSO, but SVO is also noted in classical Arabic grammar. It has been said that spoken Arabic has both VSO

and SVO (Brustad, 2000; Owens et al., 2009; Salem, 2010). The change from VSO to SVO in spoken Arabic is a popular topic of study, but the presumptive pronouns in this piece have nothing to do with word order.

It is worth noting that the Iraqi Arabic dialect is a natural product of the changes that took place throughout history in the Arabic language in Mesopotamia, or what is now called Iraq. Due to the numerous civilizations that its country experienced over time and the updates that occurred during the evolution of vocabulary in modern life, many factors contributed to its formation and development. In this paper, I will explain the word order and the interrogative particles in the Iraqi dialect and what happens to the sentences after using these particles.

1). Minu or yahu   = Who

They are interrogative tools used in the Iraqi dialect that ask about the same subject exclusively, and in the English language, it corresponds to the who. for example:

منو دك الباب؟

| Minu | dag | al_ | bab? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wh-words | V | DEF | N. |
| Who | knocked | on the door? | |

or

ياهو دكـ الباب؟

| _Yahu | dag | al | _bab? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wh-words | V | DEF | N. |

-Who knocked on the door?

We note that the word order for questions in the Iraqi Arabic dialect is:

Wh- + V. + complement?

But there is an exception in the Iraqi dialect in the use of this interrogative tool in terms of the word order, as shown in the following example:

اللي دكـ الباب منو؟

| - illi | dag | al- | bab | minu? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| REL | V | DEF | N. | wh-words |

or

اللي دكـ الباب ياهو؟

| -illi | dag | al | -bab | yahu? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| REL | V | DEF | N. | Wh-words |

Moreover, here we notice that the question word came at the end of the interrogative sentence.

So, in the Iraqi dialect, according to the previous examples, there is another word order:

REL. + V. + Obj. + Wh?

2). leish / lliwesh = why

These two convergent words in the phonetic pronunciation are used to ask about the reason and are analogous to the question word (why) in English, for example.

ليش ( لويش) ما رحت ويانا للحفلة؟-

| (lu:wesh) | Ma- | riHt | we- | yana | li- | al - | Hafla? |
|-----------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|--------|
| Wh-words | Negative particle | v | Prep | Pronou | Prep | DEF | N. |

- Why didn't you go to the party with us?

According to the example, the word order that relates to the question mark with this word in the Iraqi Arabic dialect is as follows:

Wh_+ V+ Complement?

While the word order for the interrogative sentence in English is:

Wh_+ Aux. +Sub. +V. + Complement?

But there is another formula in the Iraqi dialect in which the word order can change, for example:

ما رحت ويانا للحفلة ليش(لويش)؟-

| Ma: | riHt | we- | yana | li | al | hafla | laish (lu:wesh) |
|-----|------|-----|------|----|----|-------|-----------------|
| Negative particle | v | Prep | Pronoun | prep | DEF | Noun | Wh-words |

Where the grammatical structure changed in word order to

-V. + Complement + Wh_?

3) Ishggad / shigad = How many

Two words for the same interrogative tool that asks about the number of things and is characterized as specializing or asking about countable nouns and their equivalent in English. The question tool is how many

It comes in several styles regarding the word order, as shown in the following examples:

شكد(أشكد) رايد طوب ملونة؟-

| Ishgad | rayed | tuwab | mulawanah ? |
|--------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Wh-words | V | Plural Noun | ADJ |

-How many    colored balls do you want?

رايد شكد(أشكد) طوب ملونة؟-

| Rayed | ishggad | tuwab | mulawanah? |
|---|---|---|---|
| V | Wh-words | plural Noun | ADJ |

طوب ملونة شكد(أشكد) رايد؟

| Tuwab | mulawana | ishggad | rayed? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plural Noun | ADJ | Wh-words | V |
| Tuwab | mulawanah | rayed | ishggad? |
| Plural Noun | ADJ | V | Wh-words |

All of them give the same meaning:

-How many colored balls do you want?

We note that there are four formulas concerning the question in the Iraqi dialect, and many types of word order are accepted:

Wh. +V. +Obj.?

V. + wh.- +Obj.?

Obj. + Wh- +V.?

Obj. + V. + Wh-?

Whereas the word order for the interrogative how many are fixed in terms of composition:

Wh-+ countable noun + Aux. + subj. + V.?

This gives the Iraqi dialect the feature of exceptions in the structure of sentences in general and interrogative sentences in particular.

4)  Yamta / imtta/ shiwakit =  when

Different words in the Iraqi dialect are used to ask about time, whether it is a time or a circumstance, and these words are analogous to the interrogative time tool in the English language, "when". For example:    يمتى طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر؟-

| Yamta | Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | mu-atamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wh-words | V | P.P | N. | DEF | N. |

أيمتى طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر؟

| Imtta | Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wh-words | v | Prep | N. | DEF | N. |

شوكت طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر؟

| Shiwakit | Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wh-words | V | Prep | N. | DEF | N. |

The meaning of each of these examples in the English language is as follows:

When did you leave the conference hall?

As it was previously mentioned that the interrogative tools in the ancient or contemporary Iraqi dialect give more than one picture in the arrangement of words

طلعت يمتى من قاعة المؤتمر ؟

| Tilaet | yamta | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | wh-words | Prep | N. | DEF | N. |

طلعت أيمتى من قاعة المؤتمر؟

| Tilaet | imtta | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Wh-words | P.P | N. | DEF | N. |

طلعت شوكت من قاعة المؤتمر؟-

| Tilaet | shiwakit | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Wh-words | Prep | N. | DEF | N. |

And it may be in another word order:

طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر يمتى؟

| Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar | yamta? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | P.P | Noun | DEF | Noun | wh-words |

طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر ايمتى؟

| Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar | imtta? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Prep | N. | DEF | N. | Wh-words |

طلعت من قاعة المؤتمر شوكت؟

| Tilaet | min | Qa'at | al | muatamar | shiwakit? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Prep | N. | DEF | N. | Wh-words |

This means that there are three rules for the structure of the sentence regarding the word order, as shown below:

Wh- +V. + complement?

V. + Wh- + complement?

V. + complement + Wh-?

Unlike the English language.

5) Baish/ ibaish/ shigad/ bishigad    = how much

Iraqi interrogative particles (Bish, Abish, Ashked, Bashked,) are similar to the interrogative particle how much in the English language. These terms are used to ask in the Iraqi dialect about price and quantity. As shown in the following examples:

كم تحتاج وقود لسيارتك؟

| Kam | tiHtaj | wiqu:d | li | ssaiyarata- | k? |
|-----|--------|--------|-----|-------------|-----|
| Wh-words | V | N. | Prep | N | Pronoun |

How much fuel do you need for your car?

Also, ask about the Price as the following example

بيش هذه المزهرية؟

| Baish | hathi | al- | mazhariyah? |
|-------|-------|-----|-------------|
| Wh-words | DEM | DEF | N. |

How much is this vase?

According to word order as a contrastive study, In the Iraqi dialect, we used Multi word orders like the following example

Wh+ v+ o+ compliment?

And    second example

Wh+ Np?

That means the word order is different according to another function. The first example asks about the price, and the second asks about the quantity.

While the word order for (how much) when asked about quantity is

How much +noun +aux + s+ v+ complement?

While the word order is different when ask about price.

How much+ aux +Np

One of the essential features of the Iraqi dialect is that it has many forms of word order. As the previous example, we can say also

أشكد تحتاج لسيارتك ؟

| Shigad | tihtaj | li_ | ssaiyarata | k? |
|--------|--------|-----|------------|-----|
| Wh-words | V | DEF | N. | Pronoun |

And also in example  هاي المزهرية بيش ؟

| Ha:y | al | - | mazhariyah | baish? |
|------|-----|---|------------|--------|
| DEM | DEF | | N. | Wh-question |

## 5. Conclusion

1). Due to the extensive history of Mesopotamia and the numerous changes brought about by invasions and colonization, the Iraqi dialect is one of the oldest and most complex dialects.

2). The Iraqi dialect comprises several local dialects, the most important of which are Mosuliya, Southern, and the Middle Euphrates region.

3). The interrogative articles are partially verbally different in the Iraqi dialect from the native Standard Arabic, and some may differ completely.

4). In classical Arabic, interrogative articles are at the forefront of speech. In contrast, in the Iraqi Arabic dialect, they take several positions in speech as a grammatical phenomenon that differs from the classical Arabic language.

5). Therefore, the order of speech is of several types and cases concerning the structure of the grammatical interrogative sentence.

6). The dialect is more diverse than the classical language because of the freedom of speech for the sake of understanding among the members of the same society.

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