

*In the Name of the Almighty God*

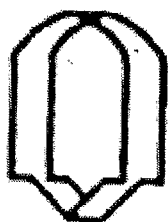
*The Beneficent,*

*The Merciful*

*Uziel S, J.*

*27,*

*1.07 ✓*



**Yazd University**

**Faculty of English and Literature**

---

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the  
Degree of MA. In English Language Teaching

**Acquisition of English Wh-questions as a Foreign Language**

**by Persian Speakers**

**Supervisor:**

DR. Ali Akbar Jabbari

**Advisor:**

DR. Anita Lashkaryan

**By:**

Parvin Safari

**Yazd, Iran**

(Winter (2008/1386))

تصویب شد  
توسط هیئت مدیره  
۱۳۸۶/۹/۲۴


۱۳۸۶ / ۹ / ۲۴

۱۰۵ ۷۷۷

*To My Loving Family*


*And*


*My Parents*

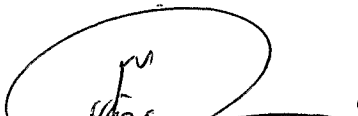
شناسه: ب/ک/۳	صور تجلسه دفاعیه پایان نامه دانشجوی دوره کارشناسی ارشد	 مدیریت تحصیلات تکمیلی
--------------	--	--

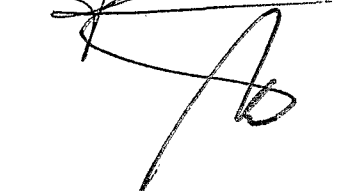
جلسه دفاعیه پایان نامه تحصیلی آقای/ خانم: پروین صفری دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد رشته/گرایش: آموزش زبان انگلیسی تحت عنوان: "فراگیری جملات پرسشی انگلیسی Wh انگلیسی به وسیله فارسی زبانان فراگیر زبان انگلیسی به عنوان یک زبان خارجی"

و تعداد واحد: ۴ در تاریخ ۲۹ / ۱۱ / ۱۳۸۶ با حضور اعضای هیأت داوران (به شرح ذیل) تشکیل گردید. پس از ارزیابی توسط هیأت داوران، پایان نامه با نمره: به عدد ۱۸۲۵ به حروف هجده رست و پنج هجتم و درجه عالی مورد تصویب قرار گرفت.

<u>عنوان</u>	<u>نام و نام خانوادگی</u>	<u>امضاء</u>
استاد / استادان راهنما:	دکتر علی اکبر جباری	

<u>عنوان</u>	<u>نام و نام خانوادگی</u>	<u>امضاء</u>
استاد / استادان مشاور:	دکتر آبینا لشکریان	

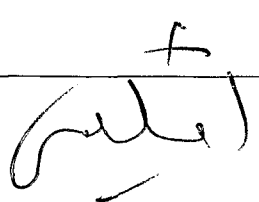
<u>عنوان</u>	<u>نام و نام خانوادگی</u>	<u>امضاء</u>
متخصص و صاحب نظر داخلی:	دکتر محمد جواد رضایی	

<u>عنوان</u>	<u>نام و نام خانوادگی</u>	<u>امضاء</u>
متخصص و صاحب نظر خارجی:	دکتر رضا غفار ثمر	

نماینده تحصیلات تکمیلی دانشگاه (ناظر)  
نام و نام خانوادگی: دکتر بهاره سازمند  
امضاء:

۱۳۸۷ / ۱۹ / ۲۴





## چکیده:

مطالعات فراوانی که بر روی یک موضوع مهم زبان‌شناسی که همان جملات پرسشی Wh انگلیسی انجام شده، نشان می‌دهد که می‌توان تفاوت‌هایی ما بین زبان‌هایی با خصوصیت عدم انتقال کلمه ی Wh (زبان‌های چینی و ژاپنی) از یک سو، و زبان‌هایی مانند انگلیسی با خصوصیت انتقال کلمه ی Wh از سوی دیگر قائل شد. رادفورد (۲۰۰۵)، نحوه ی تشکیل جملات پرسشی Wh را از طریق دو عمل بنام جابجایی فعل کمکی و انتقال کلمه Wh مورد بحث قرار داد. به عقیده ی او هر یک از این اعمال به ترتیب شامل یک عمل مرکب (اعمال فرعی کپی و حذف) است. ذکر این مطلب حائز اهمیت است که در انگلیسی این دو عمل قبل از سطح بازنمون نحو صورت می‌گیرد. در مورد فارسی، برخی زبان‌شناسان (کریمی، ۱۹۸۹؛ لازارد، ۱۹۹۲؛ رقیب دوست، ۱۹۹۴؛ باطنی، ۱۹۹۵؛ ماهوتیان، ۱۹۹۷) آن را به عنوان زبانی با خصوصیت عدم انتقال کلمه ی Wh طبقه بندی می‌کنند. بر این اساس، انتقال کلمات Wh قبل از مرحله ی باز نمون صورت نمی‌گیرد به طوری که این کلمات در جای خود باقی می‌مانند. در این بررسی، می‌توان به بحث در مورد این موضوع پرداخت که انتقال کلمات Wh فارسی به صورت غیر آشکار در سطح منطقی نحو صورت می‌گیرد، البته این انتقال تحت تاثیر مشخصه قوی تاکید (focus) از فرافکن تاکید (FocP) است.

با توجه به تفاوت‌های ساختاری بین جملات پرسشی Wh انگلیسی و فارسی، این مطالعه دو فرضیه ی متفاوت از هم را در ارتباط با فراگیری زبان دوم مورد تاکید قرار می‌دهد. طرفداران نظریه ی نقصان مقوله‌های کارکردی (ارائه شده توسط هاکینز و چان، ۱۹۹۷) بر این باورند که فراگیری مشخصه‌های کارکردی زبان دوم که در فهرست مشخصه‌های زبان اول بکار گرفته نشده اند باعث مشکل دائمی در فراگیران بزرگسال می‌شود در حالی که مطابق نظریه عدم بکارگیری سطحی تکواژ تصریفی، عدم وجود ساختارهای صرفی دلیل بر نقص حوزه ی فرافکن‌های کارکردی و یا نقص قوی بودن مشخصه نیست (لاردیر، ۲۰۰۰a,b؛ پرووست و وایت، ۲۰۰۰a,b).

به منظور آزمایش این دو فرضیه، محقق ۸۰ نفر را از مجموعه ی ۱۵۰ نفر در چهار سطح زبانی متفاوت انتخاب کرد. تمامی این چهار گروه در دو آزمون به نام‌های ترجمه شفاهی و قضاوت در مورد ساختارهای گرامری

شرکت جستند. در این دو آزمون هم جملات پرسشی Wh و هم جملات پرسشی Yes/No وجود داشت. جملات پرسشی Yes/No موجود در این دو آزمون با هدف مشخص کردن این موضوع بکار گرفته شد که آیا افراد مورد نظر ساختارهای مربوط به فراقکن متمم ساز را فراگرفته اند و یاخیر. تجزیه و تحلیل آماری نتایج را آشکار کرد که به نفع نظریه عدم بکارگیری سطحی تکواژ تصریفی بودند زیرا افراد جملات صحیح پرسشی Yes/No را خیلی بیشتر نسبت به جملات پرسشی Wh تولید کردند. این گواه بر آن است که افراد فراقکن متمم ساز را فراگرفته اند اما قادر نیستند که این فراگیری را به جملات پرسشی Wh مربوط سازند.

## Table of Content

Acknowledgement.....	XII
Abstract .....	XIII
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1. The Statement of the Problem and the Purpose of the Study .....	3
1.2. The Significance of the Study .....	5
1.3. The Organization of the Study .....	6
1.4. The Definition of the Items .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>2. The Review of Related Literature</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.2. The Syntax of English Wh-questions .....	13
2.2.1. Head Movement .....	13
2.2.2. Wh-movement .....	19
2.2.3. Wh-subject Questions .....	24
2.2.4. The Role of CP in Question Formation and the Parametric Differences between Languages.....	28
2.2.5. Cross-linguistic Variation in Wh-movement.....	32
2.3. The Syntax of Persian Wh-questions.....	37
2.4. Structure of Questions in Persian .....	40
2.4.1. Persian Yes/No Questions .....	40

2.4.2. Persian Wh-questions .....	45
2.4.3. Persian Wh-fronting.....	48
2.4.4. Persian Wh-movement and Focus .....	51
2.4.5. Foc P Feature Checking in Persian .....	57
2.5. Grammars beyond Initial State .....	63
2.5.1. Failed Functional Features Hypothesis .....	64
2.5.2. Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis .....	66
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>69</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	70
3.2. Subjects .....	70
3.3. Materials and Procedures .....	71
3.3.1. Oral Translation Task .....	71
3.3.2. Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	73
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>4. Data Analysis and Results .....</b>	<b>75</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	76
4.1.1. Oral Translation Task .....	77
4.1.1.1. Yes/No Questions of the Oral Translation Task .....	77
4.1.1.1.1. Grammatical Yes/No Questions .....	77
4.1.1.1.2. Non-grammatical Yes/No Questions .....	79
4.1.1.2. Wh-questions in Oral Task .....	85



4.1.1.2.1. Analysis of Correct Wh-questions Data .....	86
4.1.1.2.2. Analysis of Non-grammatical Wh-questions Data.....	88
4.1.2. Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	96
4.1.2.1. Analysis of Yes/No Questions Data .....	96
4.1.2.2. Analysis of Wh-questions Data .....	102
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>5. Discussions and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>110</b>
5.1. Grammatical Constructions .....	110
5.2. Non-grammatical Constructions .....	114
5.2.1. Underspecified CP Errors .....	114
5.2.2. Specified CP Errors .....	116
5.3. Conclusion .....	120
5.3.1. Summary.....	120
5.3.2. Implications and Concluding Remarks .....	124
5.3.2.1. Theoretical Significance .....	124
5.3.2.2. Pedagogical Significance.....	125
<b>References .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Appendix 1 .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Appendix 2 .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Appendix 3 .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Appendix 4 .....</b>	<b>159</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. The Mean Percentages of Yes/No Questions in Oral Translation Task for the Four Groups .....	78
Table 2. The Mean Percentages of the Four Groups' performance on the production of Correct Wh-questions .....	86

## List of Figures

Figure 1. The Mean Percentage of Yes/No Questions .....	78
Figure 2. The Mean Percentage of Underspecified CP Errors of Yes/No Questions .....	83
Figure 3. The Mean Percentage of Specified CP Errors of Yes/No Questions .....	84
Figure 4. The Mean Percentages of Underspecified and Specified CP Errors of Yes/No Questions .....	85
Figure 5. The mean percentages of the Participants' performance on the Correct Wh-questions .....	87
Figure 6. The Mean Percentages of the Correct Yes/No and Wh-Questions .....	88
Figure 7. The Mean Percentage of Underspecified CP Errors of Wh-Questions .....	91
Figure 8. The Mean Percentage of Specified CP Errors of Wh-Questions .....	92
Figure 9. The Mean Percentage of Specified and Underspecified Errors of Wh-Questions.....	93
Figure 10. The Mean Percentages of the Four Levels of Language Proficiency on the Judgment of Grammatical Yes/No Questions .....	97

Figure 11. The Mean Percentage of the Participants' Performance on Ungrammatical Yes/No Questions .....	98
Figure 12. The Mean Percentages of Grammatical and Ungrammatical Questions in Grammaticality Judgment Task.....	99
Figure 13. The Mean Percentage of Underspecified CP errors of Yes/No Questions in Grammaticality Judgment .....	100
Figure 14. The Mean Percentage of Specified CP Errors of Yes/No Questions in Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	101
Figure 15. The Mean Percentages of Specified and Underspecified CP errors of Yes/No Questions .....	102
Figure 16. The Mean Percentage of Grammatical Wh-questions in Grammaticality Judgment .....	103
Figure 17. The Mean Percentage of Ungrammatical Wh-Questions in Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	104
Figure 18. The Mean Percentage of Grammatical and Ungrammatical Wh-Questions in Grammaticality Judgment .....	105
Figure 19. The Mean Percentage of Underspecified Errors of Wh-Questions in Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	106
Figure 20. The Mean Percentage of Specified CP Errors of Wh-Questions in Grammaticality Judgment Task .....	107
Figure 21. The Mean Percentages of Specified and Underspecified Errors of Wh-Questions .....	108

## ***Acknowledgement***

*I should first like to express very many thanks to Dr. A. A. Jabbari, my supervisor who provided me with a great deal of immeasurable support, insightful guidelines, bountiful assistance, and sharp comments throughout the writing process of this research*

*I wish to particularly thank Dr. A. Lashkarian, my advisor, for her contribution, meticulous reading, and useful criticism for change.*

*I would like to extend my appreciation to the prominent professors in linguistics A. Radford, S. Karimi, and A. Kahnemuyipour to whom I am happily indebted because of e-mailing me their thoughtful papers on wh-questions and brainy comments. Undoubtedly, this proposal would not have emerged into existence without their diligent contribution.*

*I would like to express my further thanks to Dr. A. M. Fazilatfar and Dr. S. M. Anoosheh, two of my lecturers during M.A.*

*I also want to thank all the students and teachers from Yazd Navid Institute, Banifatemeh junior high school and Fazilet junior high school who participated in my project.*

*And last but not least, my special appreciation goes to my family especially my husband whose extensive support, assistance and encouragement pushed me to go further.*

## Abstract

The bulk of studies on a crucial linguistic issue, that is to say, *wh*-questions indicates that there are typological factors which are reported to distinguish between *wh*-in-situ languages (Chinese & Japanese) on the one hand, and languages with overt *wh*-displacement such as English on the other. Radford (2005) argues that English *wh*-questions are constructed through two operations namely auxiliary inversion and *wh*-movement respectively. He maintains that each of these operations involves a composite operation (copy and deletion sub-operations). It is noteworthy that in English these two movement types for *wh*-questions take place overtly before spell-out. In the case of Persian, some linguists (Karimi, 1989; Lazard, 1992; Raghidoost, 1994; Bateni, 1995; Mahootian, 1997) classify it as a *wh*-in-situ language. Accordingly, no *wh*-movement is triggered in advance of spell-out, so that the *wh*-words remain in situ. In this study, it is also argued that the movement of *wh*-words in Persian which is done covertly at LF is motivated by the strong focus feature of FocP.

Considering the typological variations between English and Persian *wh*-questions, this study has a focus on two different hypotheses concerning the issue of second language acquisition. The proponents of Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (proposed by Hawkins & Chan, 1997) believe that the acquisition of L2 functional features not instantiated in the learners' L1 feature inventory will result in persistent difficulty in adult learners. Whereas, according to the Missing Surface Inflection, the lack of morphological forms in interlanguage grammars does not

reflect impairment in the domain of functional projections or feature strength (Lardiere, 1998 a, b, 2000; Prevost&White, 2000, a, b). To test these two hypotheses, the researcher selected 80 subjects, from the pool of 150, of four different levels of language proficiency. Two tasks namely oral translation and grammaticality judgment tasks were actually carried out with all four groups of subjects. The tasks involved both yes/no as well as wh-questions. The yes/no questions embedded in the two tasks were targeted at determining whether or not the respective subjects had acquired the other CP related constructions. Analysis of data manifested the results which were in favor of Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis, since the subjects outperformed on the correct production of yes/no questions in comparison to wh-questions. This evidence shows that they have acquired CP, but they might not relate it to the wh-questions.

# **CHAPTER**

## **ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**



## 1. Introduction

With respect to the theory of Universal Grammar (UG), a set of abstract universal principles characterizes the grammars of all possible natural languages. The principles of UG are fully available when children acquire their first language; grammatical principles of UG are modified as infants are exposed to L1 input, and thus all native speakers of a language acquire the same native competence of the language. A number of studies have argued that UG is still available in adult second language acquisition, even after the critical period (Epstein, Flynn, & Martohardjon, 1996; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996; White, 1985b, 1989, 2003).

These studies demonstrate that L1 and L2 acquisition are more similar than dissimilar. Adult L2 learners utilize language input in order to construct a grammar to understand and produce the target language, as in L1 acquisition.

L2 acquisition, like L1 acquisition, has a poverty of the stimulus problem; L2 input is not sufficient enough to cover unconscious knowledge of L2 grammar (White, 1985a, 1989; Schwartz & Sprouse, 2000).

Learners are faced with a similar task to that of L1 acquirers, namely the need to arrive at a system accounting for L2 input. In addition, L2 learners are also faced, at least potentially, with a logical problem of language acquisition in that there are abstract, complex and subtle properties of grammar that are underdetermined by the L2 input (Schwartz & Sprouse, 2000a, 2000 b; White, 1985a, 1989).

UG defines what a grammar is, defining what mental representations can and cannot be like. Natural language grammars fall within a range sanctioned by UG. L1

acquirers are limited by the hypothesis space provided by UG, which reduces the number of logical possibilities that have to be entertained in order to arrive at a grammar for the language being acquired (White, 1982). The interlanguage grammars are also located within the range sanctioned by UG. Then, they exhibit characteristics typical of natural languages (White, 2002).

The L2 acquisition of wh-questions has widely been investigated by researchers. All languages have strategies which enable speakers to ask constituents (wh- words), but these strategies differ cross-linguistically. The different strategies employed by natural languages in the formation of wh-questions can be accounted for by the difference in the nature of wh-words in those languages.

In this study, we examine Persian speaking learners' syntactic knowledge of English wh-questions from the perspectives of the two recent linguistic theories.

### **1.1. The statement of the problem and the purpose of the study**

It is suggested that syntactic development in second language acquisition is best viewed as the consequence of learners' building subconscious mental grammars. The learners of second languages can develop this knowledge in the ways which are systematic and often independent of the L1s they speak or the conditions under which they acquire L2s (Schachter, 1990).

There has been an area of focus in SLA research on the investigation of the developmental stages through which the L2 learners proceed to obtain mental representations in L2. Due to the slow syntactic development of English wh-

questions by Persian speakers, this proposal attempts to shed light on the stages through which Persian speakers develop their ultimate attainment.

Thus, with regard to the L2 learners' syntactic development and ultimate attainment, two SLA theories can be taken into consideration: Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH) proposed by Hawkins and Chan (1997), and Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis of Lardiere (1995a, 1995 b, 2000). These two theories differ in their assumptions about the developmental problem and underlying syntactic representations. Concerning these two theories, we are to determine whether or not they can account for foreign language learning.

In fact, this proposal has attempted to find answers to the following questions:

1. Can Persian speakers produce English wh-questions involving functional categories not instantiated in L1?
2. Is there any relationship between the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFH) and the syntactic development of English wh-questions produced by Persian speakers?
3. Can Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis give an account of the acquisition of English wh-questions by Persian learners?

Thus, the following three null hypotheses will be addressed and tested:

1. Persian speakers cannot produce English wh-questions involving functional categories not instantiated in L1.
2. There is no relationship between the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFH) and the syntactic development of English wh-questions produced by Persian speakers.

3. Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis cannot give an account of the acquisition of English wh-questions by Persian learners.

## **1.2. The Significance of the Study**

It is often assumed that learning second languages in classroom differs from learning second languages as a result of being exposed to them in naturalistic environment. Some claim that classroom learning is "better" (Hammerly, 1991), whereas others believe that naturalistic learning is "better" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). One of the crucial distinctions between these two environments is the kind of samples of second language data presented to the learner, or that is to say, the input. While it may be the case that the input is different in the two settings, it is not the case that the learner development is different, too (Hawkins, 2002). Hawkins (2002) also puts that classroom learning is often placed on the conscious learning of grammatical properties of the L2 via instruction, exercises, translation, and so on. Although the classroom input presented to L2 learners can be totally different from naturalistic input, and it varies from one classroom to the other, the general trend found in studies investigating the effects of the input differences is that they have very little impact on the course of learner development.

Persian EFL learners are learning English in an environment in which natural acquisition is actually impossible for them, since they do not have many chances for interactions with native speakers. Thus, they mainly rely on the language classroom for exposure to the target language. The syntactic development of English wh-