The Syntactic Structure of Question Formation of the Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract:
English Question Formation in the Saudi context has received very little attention. To the best of our knowledge, there are two studies conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA): one looked at the difficulties Saudi students faced when constructing English questions with specific regard to wh and yes/no questions, and the primary problems associated with their difficulties (Al-Hassaani, 2016). Another study analyzed the errors Saudi EFL learners made when forming wh questions and the reasons behind making them (Addaibani, 2017). Therefore, this current study is seen as the first study that aims to analyze Saudi students' errors in constructing tag questions (canonical tag questions), wh questions, and yes/no questions at King Khalid University (KKU). It found out the reasons behind making such errors and the difficulties that they faced when forming these English question types. For achieving this study's aims, a mixed-method research approach was employed, and data were collected from grammatical tests and interviews (open-ended interviews). Saudi students' errors were examined by using the grammatical test in which they were required to generate wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. Further, to examine Saudi students' difficulties and causes of making errors, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews. After reaching out to the findings of this study, it showed disagreement with similar previous studies. First, the most difficult English type in terms of formation was wh questions, including the highest number of errors in the "Wrong Wh Question Word" category. Then tag questions (canonical tag questions) came to be in the second rank of difficulty, and "Mis-formation Alternating Forms" was the highest category of errors. Lastly, yes/no questions were the easiest ones for Saudi EFL learners, and the common type was the "Wrong Auxiliary" category. This current study has also revealed that some of the students' errors were due to lack of practice and community as affected reasons, and intensive curriculum and unqualified teachers as less affected reasons.

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Applied Linguistics

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Thanks to Allah (God) Almighty
Who enabled me to do and complete this research

I dedicate this research graduation project to my:

Precious Parents,
Mulhiyah and Saleh,
My Loving Husband,
Abdulwahab,
My Sweet Little Angel,
Lana
Brothers and Sisters
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Abstract

English Question Formation in the Saudi context has received very little attention. To the best of our knowledge, there are two studies conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA): one looked at the difficulties Saudi students faced when constructing English questions with specific regard to wh and yes/no questions, and the primary problems associated with their difficulties (Al-Hassaani, 2016). Another study analyzed the errors Saudi EFL learners made when forming wh questions and the reasons behind making them (Addaibani, 2017).

Therefore, this current study is seen as the first study that aims to analyze Saudi students' errors in constructing tag questions (canonical tag questions), wh questions, and yes/no questions at King Khalid University (KKU). It found out the reasons behind making such errors and the difficulties that they faced when forming these English question types. For achieving this study's aims, a mixed-method research approach was employed, and data were collected from grammatical tests and interviews (open-ended interviews). Saudi students' errors were examined by using the grammatical test in which they were required to generate wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. Further, to examine Saudi students' difficulties and causes of making errors, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews. After reaching out to the findings of this study, it showed disagreement with similar previous studies. First, the most difficult English type in terms of formation was wh questions, including the highest number of errors in the "Wrong Wh Question Word" category. Then tag questions (canonical tag questions) came to be in the second rank of difficulty, and "Mis-formation Alternating Forms" was the highest category of errors. Lastly, yes/no questions were the easiest ones for Saudi EFL learners, and the common type was the "Wrong Auxiliary" category. This current study has also revealed that some of the students' errors were due to lack of practice and community as affected reasons, and intensive curriculum and unqualified teachers as less affected reasons.
Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this research graduation project, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master's Degree of Applied Linguistics, in the Faculty of Arts, King Khalid University, is wholly my original work and has not previously been submitted for any other degree. I declare that to the best of my knowledge, all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this research have been acknowledged.

Wejdan Saleh Merai Alqhtani

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Part I: Context
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Question Formation in the EFL Classroom

The importance of generating questions in the EFL classroom has been of great interest to applied linguistics researchers to enhance the process of teaching and learning (Erlinda & Dewi, 2014; Gabrielatos, 1997; Omari, 2018; Samrin, 2011; Nurjanah, Anggoro, & Dwiasutty 2018; Heendriyono, 2018; Iqramah, 2018; Nurafifah, 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Pathan, 2021; Zhang, 2010; Octafia & Adinda, 2021; Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017; Al-Hassaani, 2016). Erlinda and Dewi (2014) emphasized the significant value of asking questions in the classroom interaction between teachers and students. Questioning is the opportunity for teachers and students to use and practice the target language in the classroom (e.g., Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). Moreover, asking questions in the teaching process has many functions; it can always maintain students' interest and encourage them to understand the content much better (Ma, 2008); it helps teachers check students' understanding and encourage participation in the classroom (Ma, 2008). Besides, it is an excellent chance to train students' skills in that language, gain deep insight, improve communicative skills, and accept other opinions and beliefs (Addaibani, 2017). Finally, it can stimulate students' creativity to find innovative solutions and make better decisions and choices (Addaibani, 2017). However, questions are considered to be the cornerstone of the learning process as asking questions makes what the students learn more meaningful to them (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013). According to Pathan (2021), learners can use different ways to ask questions in the English language, for example, by using the English language's most influential and comprehensive question type, which is the wh-questions, or by using yes/no and tag questions (Pathan, 2021). In fact, a question is a sentence that begins with *wh words*, needs yes/no answers, or adds a short structure to a statement or a commend (Hornby, 1987).
In the EFL classroom, asking questions is an effective teaching-learning tool to diagnose specific difficulties (Brown & Edmonson, 1984, as cited in Hamiloglu & Temiz, 2012), but what is more effective is considering the difficulties students have in the formation of correct grammatical English questions. There is an extensive body of research that has looked at the difficulties students faced in constructing wh and yes/no questions in the EFL classroom. For instance, the syllabus was not in line with students' needs, or the emphasis on the English question formation was not enough (Al-Hassaani, 2016). The error analysis of the formation of English interrogative questions has received less attention from L2 researchers (e.g., Al-Hassaani, 2016; Addaibani, 2017) in the Saudi context. Therefore, this study investigated the kind of errors KKU Saudi female EFL learners made in forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions. It also examined the interrogative question type (wh, yes/no, and tag question) that received the highest percentage of the number of errors. Moreover, this study shed light on students' difficulties in constructing wh, yes/no, and tag questions.

1.2. Statement of the Research Problem

The previous studies (Al-Hassaani, 2016; Addaibani, 2017) have been conducted in the Saudi Arabia context, and both were dealt with English question formation difficulties, namely wh and yes/no questions. None of these studies has attempted to examine Saudi EFL learners' difficulties in constructing tag questions. Therefore, this current study is seen as the first one to investigate the types of errors Saudi EFL learners made in forming tag questions, according to the best of my knowledge. Further, it seeks to study the interrogative question type that received the highest percentage of the number of errors that have not been considered in the above studies. It also examines participants' points of view regarding the obstacles that hindered them from producing correct grammatical questions.

1.3. Aims and Significance of the Study
The present study has four aims. Firstly, it examines whether King Khalid University (KKU) Saudi female EFL learners can produce wh, yes/no, and tag questions correctly or not. Secondly, it aims at investigating the kind of errors KKU Saudi female EFL learners made when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions. Thirdly, it examines the interrogative question type that received the highest percentage of the number of errors. Lastly, the study was intended to shed light on the reasons for making errors in the formation of questions and explore how English question formation of wh, yes/no, and tag questions was difficult for Saudi female EFL learners. The reasons behind these aims were to know the issues and difficulties that Saudi EFL encounter, suggest some solutions that can improve students when forming English questions, and increase teachers' awareness when they teach English question rules or English grammar.

1.4. Organization of the Study

Chapter two critically reviews English question formation in the Saudi EFL context, with a review of the relevant literature on the sources of English question formation errors. Chapter three describes the data methodology and analysis methods. Chapters four discusses the findings in line with the research questions. Chapter five provides discussion, conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research in English question formation in the EFL classroom.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What kind of errors do KKU Saudi female EFL learners make when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions?

2. What type of English interrogative question receives the highest percentage of errors?

3. To what extent English question formation of wh, yes/no, and tag questions is difficult for Saudi female EFL learners?
Part II: Literature Review
Chapter Two: Reviewing the Related Studies

2.1. Concept of Grammar

Grammar has defined differently according to different experts. Grammar refers to the systematic description of language structure and the way words are combined to create comprehensible sentences (Harmer & Jermy, 2001, as cited in Heendriyono, 2018). Furthermore, grammar is the system of rules for the formation of correct utterances that is immensely important for people to understand each other's (Cunningsworth & Allan, 1984, as cited in Heendriyono, 2018). Besides, Nurjanah et al. (2018) believed that learning grammar is the way to understand someone's talks because the spoken language is well organized; if the grammar is less emphasized, learners cannot string up the words well, although they do remember many words, it is likely a body with no bones.

2.2. Scope of Grammar

Murcia and McIntosh (1991) described in a book titled "Teaching English as a second or foreign language" three frameworks of grammar, namely the first dimension is structure or form of a language, the second is the semantic or meaning, and the third dimension is the pragmatic conditions that are governing language use. They stated that these three inter-related dimensions are important because learners can know the form, meaning, and the use of producing the sentences or questions. Therefore, language learners need not only to know what forms are possible but also what particular forms express their particular meanings and when, where, and how to use a particular grammatical rule (Murcia & McIntosh, 1991).

2.3. Question Functions and Types of Teachers and Learners' Questions

Teachers' questions have different functions. There are specific functions of the teacher questions which can be gathered into three broad areas: diagnostic, instructional, and motivational (Kauchak & Eggen, 1989, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). Initially, as a diagnostic tool, teachers can glimpse into the minds of students to find out what they know
and how they think about a certain topic. They stated that classroom questions allow teachers to assess students' thinking and identify gaps and misconceptions. The second function is instructional, which focuses on encouraging students to learn new materials and integrating them with the old knowledge (Kauchak & Eggen, 1989, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). In this function, feedback is essential for development progress. The last function is motivational, where the teachers support their students to participate or challenge their thinking by posing some problems (Kauchak & Eggen, 1989, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014).

There are different types of teachers' questions. Teachers tend to use rhetorical questions, procedural questions, convergent questions, display questions, divergent questions, and referential questions (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). First, the rhetorical question helps teachers to explain the provided material or a particular problem; in this type, students do not need to supply an answer (Richards and Lockhart, 1994, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). Procedural questions may serve several functions; teachers use this type of question to ensure the flow of the teaching process and to make sure whether the students understand the topic or not, to invite students' questions, and to be used in teaching routines, such as how was your day? (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). Convergent questions are asked by EFL teachers in a situation where there is only one correct answer (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, as cited in Erlinda & Dewi, 2014). Display question is when the teacher asks questions whose answers are known to the teacher her/himself, but the teacher wants students to answer them (Omari, 2018). For instance, what was the topic of the last session? According to Omari (2018) the divergent question is a way that learners can express their views and opinions, e.g., What do you think about language shift in the Saudi Arabia context? Lastly, referential questions are those which require students to provide information that is unfamiliar that neither the teacher nor other students
may have in the EFL classroom (Omari, 2018). Examples of referential questions involve: *which city in your country do you admire most and why?*

In contrast, learners may prefer a different type of question more than others. According to Al-Mekhlafi (2013), Omani EFL students would produce wh questions more than yes/no questions. He found that students made (90.65%) wh questions, whereas they only made (9.35%) yes/no questions. In another study by Nurjanah et al. (2017), students could produce wh questions more than yes/no questions because they faced more difficulties in forming yes/no-question types. Yes/no questions are suitable for less proficient language learners and may be easier for learners to answer since there is no need to create much language output (Gower, Philips, & Walters, 1995, as cited in Yang, 2010). However, Yang (2010) believed that the research evidence in this area is so limited; therefore, further research devoted to these question types seems to be essential.

2.4. Question Formation of English as a Foreign Language

English question formation has been studied in many different contexts (Samrin, 2011; Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017; Nurjanah et al., 2017; Heendriyono, 2018; Iqramah, 2018; Nurafifah, 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Pathan, 2021). First of all, Masruddin and Karmila (2018) discovered that Indonesian students had great difficulty constructing wh questions that were used in ESL/EFL or even in social interaction. The researchers found that Indonesian English language learners made errors such as omission, simple addition, archi-form, alternating form, mis-ordering, and mis-selection. Where the omission is the dominant category error in their study, accounting for 46.7% of the total errors in forming wh questions.

In the same context (Indonesia), a study by Irfaniah (2014) showed different results. She found out that students had a low level of accuracy in constructing wh questions. In her study, students made 268 errors, 29.5% were archi-form of question word, 22.4% of which were the omissions of helping verb, 19.4% were archi-form of helping verb, 20.5% were archi-
form of the verb, and 8.2% were mis-ordering of helping verb. Therefore, the archi-form of question word was the highest category of students' errors that were mainly caused by both interlingual and intralingual transfer. The researcher concluded that students had a low ability to make wh-questions. In contrast, other researchers such as Nurjanah et al. (2018) found that Indonesian learners faced more difficulty constructing yes/no questions than in the wh question category. The researcher found that yes/no-question errors were 65.07%, whereas wh question errors were 34.93% of the total errors. The most difficult question for constructing yes/no questions was to use the verb to be *is, am, and are* in the present progressive tense. Al-Mekhlafi (2013) believed that question formation is one of the most common error zones of Arab learners, though it is introduced at a very early stage of English language learning/teaching at the Arab schools. He investigated the difficulties Omani English Foreign Language (EFL) learners faced in terms of forming English questions, namely wh and yes/no questions. He analyzed a sample of written work that was collected from 46 female learners. The researcher found that auxiliary omission, auxiliary replacement, auxiliary subject agreement, verbal form concord, and auxiliary subject inversion are the main kind of errors they committed. In his study, the grammatical category that received the highest number of errors was an auxiliary omission, accounting for 46.24%. Furthermore, a recent study conducted in Bangladesh by Pathan (2021) showed that most errors were marked in the auxiliary verb category. Moreover, Addaibani (2017) asked if Saudi EFL students in Najran University could produce correct questions in English; he found that 70% of them experienced great difficulty forming English questions correctly. The data analysis of his study showed agreement with Al-Mekhlafi's (2013) study, in which the auxiliary omission was the common type of error in the formation of wh questions. Although the omission was the dominant category in wh and yes/no questions, this was not the case with another kind of interrogative question, namely tag question.
However, in using tag questions, the students encountered different difficulties constructing them. Samrin (2011) found that making tag questions with simple present tense auxiliaries (am, is, are) and modal auxiliaries were the easiest, while the simple past tense auxiliaries (was, were) were the most difficult. However, Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) stated that there are four types of descriptive taxonomies concerned with the errors, namely linguistic category, surface structure taxonomy, comparative analysis, and communicative effect. Heendriyono (2018) and Nurafifah (2018) utilized surface structure taxonomy to analyze students' tag question errors. They came up with different results from the above studies, finding that mis-formation was the highest error category, accounting for 93.00% of the overall students' errors.

2.5. Sources of English Question Formation Errors

The sources of students' errors in question formation have been examined in many different studies (Zhang, 2010; Samrin, 2011; Al-Hassaani, 2016; Iqramah, 2018; Octalia & Adinda, 2021). Zhang (2010) believes that errors are an integral part of the learning process, and they are inevitable; therefore, Chinese students committed errors forming tag questions due to negative transfer of the mother tongue, overgeneralization of the formation rule, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. Al-Hassaani (2016), among many others, claimed that one explanation for forming English questions with inaccurate word order by Arab learners is that learners carry over the habits of their mother tongue into the second or foreign language (mother tongue interference). Further, he believed students lack the competence of grammar required for question formation. Al-Hassaani (2016) stated that large classes, lack of exposure, inadequate syllabus, improper teaching materials, tasks, and methodology might affect the students' production of questions. Unlike that, Iqramah (2018) found that negative transfer was not the primary source of wh question errors. Iqramah (2018) found that the participants made 127 intralingual errors,
developmental errors 43, and interference errors were two errors. The sources of errors differ from one context to another. Octafia and Adinda (2021) explained that the most significant cause of Indonesian students’ error in tag questions was false concepts hypothesized.

According to Samrin (2011) students’ tag questions error sources should be classified into two terms internal factors, motivation, adequate time, and attitudes, and external factors; teacher, parents, peers, and the environment.

2.6. Question Formation in Arabic and English

Language is considered a unique feature of human beings (Momani & Altaher, 2015). Therefore, languages differ from one another. For example, Arabic and English languages have different linguistic features at all levels: syntactic, morphological, phonological, semantic, and pragmatics’ levels; due to the origin differences that is Arabic belongs to Semitic languages, whereas English is considered an Indio European language (Sabbah, 2015). One of the syntactic differences between these two languages is the structure of question formation of some question types of English, namely, wh, yes/no, and tag questions.

Wh questions aim to seek a particular piece of information and start with an interrogative pronoun such as who, when, why, whom, and whose (Al-Hassaani, 2016). The most commonly used pronouns in Arabic are these interrogative pronouns (Syed, 1998, as cited in Al-Hassaani, 2016). The speaker uses wh questions to know the identity of something, such as the subject, the location, the object, and the time (Al-Hassaani, 2016). For instance, who is talking? Wh questions in English form with the help of an auxiliary verb (be, do, have, or a modal verb) that needs to go in accordance with the subject and the tense of a sentence (Addaibani, 2017). This kind of question follows a strict order: wh + an auxiliary verb + subject + main verb. For instance, the verb to be: What did he eat yesterday? Do: How do they travel? Have: How long have you been here? Modal: Who can play? In Arabic, luckily, this question type (wh questions) is identical to the English formation (Addaibani,
2017). For example, Anhat alam amalha, means finished the mother her work; the question in Arabic will be: Mun anhat amalha? Who completed her homework?

The second type of English interrogative question is a yes/no question, called closed questions or ‘polar’ since the answer is given in both forms – positive or negative (Al-Hassaani, 2016). He illustrated, in his study, the English structure of yes/no question, which is necessary to apply the inversion rule and move the auxiliary verb from its original place and put it before the subject. Then a question mark should be added at the end of the sentence; for example, is Ali a smart student? (Al-Hassaani, 2016). While in Arabic language, yes/no questions are formed with a harf istifham meaning an interrogative particle that can be “a” or “hal, where they are connected to a sentence called declarative sentence (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013). For instance, darasa alaloom. studied he Science means he studied Science; it will be as a yes/no question as hal darasa alaloom? means did he study Science?

The last question type is tag question. Tag questions in the English language are many and varied, including canonical and non-canonical tag questions (Avery, 2015). First, canonical tag questions are formed with two important components: an anchor and a tag (Tottie & Hoffman, 2019). The anchor is probably a declarative as that's a new car, while the tag is a short pronoun such as one, there, an auxiliary, modal, or verb to be (Avery, 2015). In contrast, the non-canonical form has two different categories: situational tags and invariant tags; situational is a way of adding the tag to anywhere other than at the end of a sentence, such as it's a wonderful ring, isn't it, that you're wearing (Avery, 2015). The other usage is when the anchor and the tag do not fit, as what you really want is a black jacket, don't you? (Avery, 2015). The invariant tag is the use of okay, right, yeah, and innit, such as we're awesome, innit? However, tag questions in the Arabic language have identical positions as the English language does; it occurs at the end of the sentence (Albanon, 2017). They are called "al'as'ila al-thayliya" which literally means "tail-questions." For example, Aljaw jamil, alaysa
kathalik? Nice weather, isn't it? According to (Holmes, Janet, 1990, as cited in Albanon, 2017) there are two forms of tag questions in Arabic: the canonical tags and the invariant tags. In fact, the canonical tag questions only happen in Standard Arabic, that is "alysa kathalik" which literary means in English, isn't it so? (Albanon, 2017).

2.7. Concept of Error and Mistake

The terms error and mistake are commonly used interchangeably (Hendriyono, 2018). Therefore, a clear distinction between these terms is essential in Applied Linguistics. Norrish (1983, p. 7) defined the concept of error as "a systemic deviation when a learner has learned something and consistently gets it wrong." In this definition, "systematic deviation" means that the unwanted structure repeatedly occurs (Hayati, 2019). In Norrish's opinion (1983), a mistake is when a learner gets a form right but sometimes wrong. It is accepted as an inconsistent deviation due to the lack of attention and carelessness (Richard, 1984, as cited in Hayati, 2019).

2.8. Concept of Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) studies and analyzes the errors made by either second or foreign language learners (Jobeen, Kazemian, and Shahbaz, 2015). Moreover, it is believed it is a technique that aims to describe and elaborate on the systematic nature of errors made by language learners (Hendriyono, 2018). The primary purposes of carrying out EA are to identify the strategies that language learner follows in learning a particular language, the causes of learner errors, and get complete information regarding the common difficulties in language learning (Richard, 1984, as cited in Hayati, 2019).

2.9. Classification of Error

In analyzing the students' errors in constructing wh and yes/no questions, the researcher used a more detailed and specific errors classification proposed by (Pathan, 2021; Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). They classified Saudi students' errors into nine error types: auxiliary
omission is the absence of an auxiliary verb such as how the students come? The wrong question word is the use of incorrect wh-words as which do the students come? Multiple errors, aux. Subject inversion where the subject preceded the auxiliary verb as why you did not come? The wrong auxiliary is inappropriate auxiliary verbs such as where are you yesterday? The irrelevant question, the subject omission, is the absence of the subject, such as how long did stayed in Jeddah? The last two types are subject-verb disagreements, such as where were you yesterday? Moreover, aux-redundant in who did played football?

However, the last interrogative question type (tag questions) examined in this study was analyzed by surface strategy taxonomy. Dulay et al. (1982) stated that there are four types of descriptive taxonomies concerned with errors: linguistic category taxonomy, communicative effect taxonomy, comparative taxonomy, and surface strategy taxonomy. Surface strategy taxonomy shows how the surface structures of items are changed like students may omit or add necessary items, mis-form, or mis-order items. Further, this taxonomy shows the cognitive process that underlies learners’ errors in the new language being learned (Dulay et al., 1982). Surface strategy taxonomy has four errors: omission, addition, mis-formation and mis-ordering (Dulay et al., 1982). Omission error refers to the absence of an item that must appear in a well-structured utterance (Hendriyono, 2018). For example, she did a great job, didn’t? Mis-formation error refers to the incorrect use of structure (Hendriyono, 2018). It has three kinds of errors: first, a regularization error is when a regular marker is used instead of an irregular one (Hendriyono, 2018). For example, she comed to my house yesterday, didn’t her? The second kind is archi-form error is the selection of one member of a class in order to represent other different class members as his car are sold, aren’t this? Last kind of mis-formation error is alternating forms in which the learners know more about various structures, which may confuse them as which structure they should use (Hendriyono, 2018). For example, he goes to the hospital, didn’t he? The third error category is the addition error
which refers to an item that must not be presented in a well-formed utterance (Hendriyono, 2018). It has three error types: double markings as *she doesn’t eat an apple, are doesn’t she?* Simple addition: *it is my car, isn't not it?* Regularization: *the mouses eat a red fish, don’t they?* The last error category is mis-ordering that refers to the incorrect word order of an item/s (Hendriyono, 2018).

2.10. Steps of Error Analysis

According to Ellis (2008), there are five procedures for analyzing learners’ errors. First, collecting a sample of language learners, where the researcher collected the data via distributing a grammatical test, involving 30 sentences, requires forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions. Further, an open-question interview was also a research instrument to determine the difficulties students faced in constructing the three aforementioned interrogative questions. Secondly, identification of errors in which the researcher identified learners' errors, whether the error was in a grammatical tense, auxiliaries, or main verbs. Next, description of errors where the errors were being analyzed, dividing each error into the appropriate classification of errors as omission, addition, mis-formation, or mis-ordering. In the fourth step, the explanation of errors, where the researcher tried to know the causes of errors, were they because of L1 transfer, language teachers, teaching methodology, or the curriculum. Lastly, evaluation of errors to check how serious these errors were (Ellis, 2008).
Part III: Methodology
3.1. Participants

The subjects of this study were selected randomly. They were 30 ungraduated Saudi female students in the last year (level seven and eight) of the Bachelor Program of the English Department, Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Students were all native speakers of Arabic, and their ages ranged from 20 - 28 years old. Students were intermediate English language users according to their performance in the Preparation for International Test course, a course they learn at the last level of the bachelor program that trains them based on their language level to pass the international exams successfully. The researcher arrived at the participants' level of language proficiency by providing them with the question types that they used to practice in the grammar courses and in the Preparation for International Test course. Based on that, the researcher designed a grammatical test where they needed to generate different questions; therefore, the researcher can analyze the participants' errors in constructing the interrogative questions (wh, yes/no, tag questions). Further, the researcher designed an open-ended interview to gain some information about the participants' background and the difficulties they faced in forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions.

3.2. Data Collection Method

Grammatical test, a very structured grammatical test used to get rich information about the type of errors students made in the construction of interrogative questions (wh, yes/no, tag questions). Further, based on the grammatical test, the researcher knew which interrogative question received the highest number of students' errors. The researcher designed an instrument containing two parts; the first part consisted of 20 sentences with some underlined words in each sentence so that the underlined words were answers for them. The participants were asked to make wh, yes/no questions for each sentence based on the underlined word. For
example, *Abha is 636 km from Makkah; therefore*, the participants used the wh-word *(what)* to ask about the distance between *Abha and Makkah*. The second part of the grammatical test consisted of 10 incomplete sentences in which students needed to fill the blanks with a tag question as *Sara is a doctor, …?* The participants filled it as *she's a doctor, isn't she?*

Interview, the researcher did an interview which consisted of open-ended questions to know the error sources of wh, yes/no, and tag questions. However, the whole activity of doing both the grammatical test and the interview by the researcher and participants took 50 minutes.

### 3.3. Procedures

#### 3.3.1. Recruiting Participants

The researcher started to collect the data after obtaining the ethics approval from KKU (see Appendix B). The researcher selected the course titled Preparation for International Test because the students are prepared to practice all the grammar rules as the rules for constructing different interrogative questions. The researcher explained the consent form to the participants before asking for their agreement (see Appendix C). Both the grammatical test and interview were also clarified. As a result, thirty students consented and participated in the current study.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1. Analyzing Grammatical Test

The researcher used a more elaborated and particular error classification of wh and yes/no questions proposed by (Pathan, 2021; Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). For tag questions, the researcher utilized the surface strategy taxonomy designed by Dulay et al. (1982) to analyze students' errors and find the dominant category of the tag questions. (See table 1).
Table 1. Classification Error Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Auxiliary</strong></th>
<th><strong>Omission</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the absence of an auxiliary verb</td>
<td>Ex. <em>What you do?</em> (×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. <em>What do you do?</em> (√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Redundant</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the use of an aux verb more than one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. <em>Is the event in KSA is different?</em> (×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. <em>Is the event in KSA different?</em> (√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subject Inversion</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The subject preceded the auxiliary verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. <em>Why you did not come?</em> (×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. <em>Why did not you come?</em> (√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Incorrect Verb Tense</strong></th>
<th>Is the misuse of tenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are you do?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subject verb Disagreement</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the disagreement between the subject and the verb of a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who go with Ali?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who goes with Ali?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subject Omission</strong></th>
<th>Is the omission of the subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long did stay in KSA?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did you stay in KSA?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. **Omission error**: refers to the absence of item that must appear in a well-structured utterance

*Ex. she did great job, didn't?*

B. **Mis-formation error**: refers to the incorrect use of structure.

1. Regularization error is when a regular marker is used instead of an irregular one.

*Ex. she comed to my house yesterday, didn’t her?*

2. Archi-form error is the selection of one member of a class in order to represent other

*Ex. He is car are sold, aren’t this*

3. Alternating forms in which the learners know more about various structures and this may confuse them to which form they should use.

*Ex. He goes to the hospital, didn’t he*

C. **Addition error** that refers to an item that must not be presented in a well-formed utterance.
### 3.4.2. Analyzing Open Ended Interviews

The interviews of students were analyzed qualitatively using narrative and descriptive methods. First, the researcher translated the participants' responses into English and then read the transcripts. Second, the researcher labeled the relevant pieces such as students' error sources were due to curriculum, teacher, and environment. This coding helped the researcher to gather repeated and surprising responses to each other by using different colors. Thirdly, the researcher decided on the most important codes and classified them. Lastly, the researcher connected these codes to the previous studies.

### 3.5. Mixed-Methods Research

A mixed-methods research methodology was used in this present study along with previous studies of English question formation in a different context (Irfanian, 2014; Hendriyono, 2018; Iqramah, 2018; Nurafifah, 2018; Nurjanah et al., 2017). Hendriyono (2018) did a qualitative study to examine students' errors when forming tag questions. Further, Iqramah (2018) used qualitative method in analyzing students' performance of wh questions, because he believed qualitative method can provide the necessary data of the common errors and

### Wrong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary</th>
<th>Question Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the use of incorrect wh word or an auxiliary verb.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you do?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you do?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are Ahmad Busy?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Ahmad busy?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Wh word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Ahmad busy?</td>
<td>(×)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Ahmad busy?</td>
<td>(√)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Double markings as *she doesn’t eat an apple, are doesn’t she?*

2. Simple addition: *it is my car, isn’t not it?*

3. Regularization: *the mouses eat a red fish, don’t they?*

### D. Mis-ordering that refers to the incorrect word order of an item/items

*Ex. She can’t play, she can?*
sources of errors. Even question formation was analyzed qualitatively, there were researchers who studied the question formation difficulties quantitatively such as (Al-Hassaani, 2016; Addaibani, 2017). Dörnyei (2007) believed a mixed-methods approach provides benefits such as having a deep understanding of what has been investigated. Mixed methods research has different aims: obtaining a clear and complete view of a particular concept that is under investigation, reaching the target audience (Dörnyei, 2007), confirming the findings of a particular method against another (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), and neutralizing the limitations of a specific method and complementing each other (Byrne & Humble, 2007).

Therefore, using a mixed-method approach in this study helps to analyze students' errors of wh, yes/no, and tag questions quantitatively by analyzing students' grammatical tests. It also aims to find out the sources of errors behind making such interrogative questions and the difficulties students face when forming them qualitatively by analyzing students' responses in the open-ended interview.

3.6. A Methodology for Analyzing Students’ Errors in Wh, Yes/No, and Tag questions Construction

Many Applied Linguistics (AL) researchers have employed various methods to analyze students' errors when constructing wh, yes/no, and tag questions in the EFL context.

Beginning with, Masruddin and Karmila (2018) carried out descriptive research to describe the errors of constructing wh questions by Indonesian students in a written test prepared by the researchers. Further, Nurafifah (2018) did quantitative research with descriptive design to assess secondary school Indonesian students' ability to construct tag questions by analyzing their written work. In contrast, Nurjanah et al. (2017) used descriptive analysis technique percentages to identify the students' most and least frequent errors in constructing both wh yes/no questions. In addition, questionnaires and interviews were used to investigate the difficulties and errors in forming tag questions with various tenses (Samrin, 2011). However,
Al-Mekhlafi (2013) asked Omani students to write ten English questions on a specific topic to find out the reasons that caused difficulties in forming correct English questions. Moreover, determining the errors that EFL Najrani students made in forming English questions was a significant concern (e.g., Addaibani, 2017). His study was a descriptive one utilizing quantitative data to reflect the findings. Al-Hassaani (2016) was one of the researchers who explored the degree of the Saudi EFL students' difficulty and the factors influencing question formation. Even though he did a case study where he effectively analyzed the questionnaire and the interviews quantitatively, he did not apply the case study successfully because the participants were over 75.

3.7. Excluding a Participant from Data Analysis

The researcher excluded one participant after analyzing that the student was from Media and Communication major, attending the Preparation for International Test course to be trained for the IELTS exam. Otherwise, all the 30 participants effectively did the research instruments.
Part IV: Findings
Chapter Four: Findings

4.1. Quantitative Analysis Results

This section is about reporting and discussing the results of the participants’ grammatical test in terms of examining whether Saudi EFL students were capable of producing correct questions in English, finding the kind of errors Saudi female EFL learners made when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions, and type of English interrogative question that received the highest percentage of errors. In addition, the researcher used Paired T-Test to see if there was a significant difference among the three interrogative questions, namely wh, yes/no, and tag questions. The results of this analysis are reported and discussed as follows.

4.1.1. Grammatical Test

The participants in the given grammatical test generated both grammatical and ungrammatical questions accounting for 900 questions; 30 students formed 300 wh questions, 300 yes/no questions, and 300 (canonical) tag questions. The overall number of grammatical questions (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions) was higher than the ungrammatical ones, accounting for 623 (69.22%) out of 900, while the ungrammatical questions (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions) were 277 (30.78%) out of the total of questions that is 900. This indicates that Saudi EFL learners could produce English grammatical questions. This is a good indicator because they could perform well structured and well-organized wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. They used the English question formation rules when they performed 623 (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions) out of the overall question number (900). Also, they formed incorrect (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions) where they produced a large number of errors in forming wh questions which are (110 incorrect wh questions), compared to (84 incorrect canonical tag questions), and (83 incorrect yes/no questions). They misused the English question formation rules, such as the incorrect usage of
wh-words as the use of *who* instead of *whom* or the use of incorrect verb auxiliary and vice versa (See chart 1 and table 2).

Chart 1

![Question Formation of Saudi Female EFL Learners](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classified as</th>
<th>Wh, Yes-No, and Canonical Tag Questions</th>
<th>Total of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ungrammatical</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of grammatical and ungrammatical questions made by Saudi female EFL learners were 900 interrogative English questions (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions) of which 217 (24%) were correct yes/no questions. In contrast, the participants made 188 (21%) correct wh questions. Regarding the tag questions, students made correct canonical tag questions accounting for 216 (24.00%). This reveals that; firstly, the first question type that Saudi EFL learners can produce is yes/no questions because this question type (yes/no) received the highest correct number of questions accounting for 217 out of 300
yes/no questions. Secondly, Saudi EFL learners were able to form 216 well-structured canonical tag questions out of 300 canonical tag questions. Lastly, wh question is the type that received most students' errors, because they produced only 188 correct wh questions out of 300 wh questions (See chart 2).

Chart 2

The researcher of this current study believed that tag questions are the difficult type for Saudi EFL learners, because they are rarely used among them, while wh and yes/no are the easier ones, but this current study showed the opposite in which yes/no and tag questions were the easiest and wh was the most difficult. That is because for many reasons: first, the grammatical test involved only one common type of tag question, which was canonical tag questions, that have two parts: first, the anchor which can be positive or negative, and the tag that is also can be either positive or negative (Tottie & Hoffman, 2019). So, this type is easy and has only one rule if the anchor is positive, the tag should be negative, and this was clarified in the example given in the grammatical test prior to the canonical tag question section, and this example was easy to be followed by the participants in forming the other tag questions in that grammatical written test. The other English question types, wh and yes/no questions, were also clarified by an example above each section in the grammatical test, but both have different forms in construction. For instance, the wh question example only
involves the wh-word when, but when they form the other wh questions, they need to use other wh-words such as what, when, who, and whose. Regarding yes/no questions, they need to use a proper auxiliary for each question, and this confused them somehow, and in some cases, they only need to do the inversion process to form a yes/no question.

4.1.1.1. Wh Question Formation Analysis Results

Wh question type contained the majority of participants' errors than the other two types (yes/no and canonical tag questions). They made 110 (12.22%) incorrect wh questions, including different types of errors. In contrast, they constructed 188 (21%) correct wh questions. This is a clear indicator that students encountered difficulty when forming wh questions. (See chart 3)

Chart 3

The errors that students made when constructing wh questions were classified into eleven different types: wrong (wh) question word, incorrect verb tense, wrong auxiliary, auxiliary omission, auxiliary subject inversion, subject omission, verb omission, incorrect main verb, auxiliary redundant, wrong subject, and (wh) word omission (See table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No of Errors</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Question</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>37.67%</td>
<td>Lana's book is on the table. Who's book is on the table?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect Verb Tense</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.67%</td>
<td>Ahmad is playing Tennis. What is Ahmad play?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Auxiliary</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>They went to a huge party. Where are they go?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Omission</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>Mohammed ate a lot of chocolate, because he liked it. Why Mohammed eat a lot of chocolate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Subject Inversion</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.33%</td>
<td>They can meet on Wednesday. When can they meet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Omission</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>He shall call the police. Whom shall call?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Redundant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.67%</td>
<td>They can meet on Wednesday. When does can they meet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Omission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>They can meet on Wednesday. When can?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect Main Verb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>He shall call the police. Whom shall he do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh Word Omission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>He shall call the police. Did he call the police?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Subject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>They went to a huge party. Where did you go?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The examination of data of this current study, which was collected from 300 written wh questions by Saudi students, gave information about the number of errors, the error category that received the highest number of errors, and which error category received the least. Table (3) above orders errors from most to least common. From the data presented above (Table 3), the primary error category of wh questions was the "Wrong Question Word"; students had difficulty selecting the appropriate wh-words. It is clear that Saudi students did not know when to use wh-words based on the context of the sentences; therefore, the "Wrong Question Word" category is the highest, i.e., 37.67%. The "Incorrect verb Tense" category comes next, i.e., 11.67%, where students used verbs with incorrect time tense, such as the use of do instead of doing in the present progressive tense. "Wrong Auxiliary" and "Auxiliary Omission" received the same error percentage accounting for 8.33%. "Auxiliary Subject Inversion" is the fifth error category in wh question formation accounting for 4.33%. It means that Saudi students formed the wh question with an unorganized structure, such as the precedence of the subject before the model auxiliary. The other categories may account for relatively fewer percentages (See chart 4).
In analyzing the errors of interrogative questions, the researcher did not include the other possible grammatical answers in the counting of the number of errors which accounted for (110 incorrect wh questions). Although they are accepted as correct grammatical questions, the researcher labeled them in the error classification. For instance, in this sentence, students might create wh question based on the underlined word/s:

They visited **British museum**.

The question that is correct and specified by the researcher is, "which museum did they visit?" However, some participants formed other correct questions; therefore, the researcher counted them with correct answers. For instance,

Where did they go?

What did they visit?

These two questions are well-structured, so they are correct, but still, the researcher labeled them with the "Wrong Wh Question Word" because they did not use the appropriate wh question word for such a situation that is "Which." Which museum did they visit? It is only three sentences that a student used the particular wh question "Which" in the whole grammatical test. This clearly indicates that students had difficulty choosing the appropriate wh questions (See table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Appropriate Wh Question</th>
<th>Wrote as</th>
<th>Classified as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lana's book is on the table.</td>
<td>Whose book is on the table?</td>
<td>Where is Lana's book</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrong Wh Question Word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is Sara's birthday.</td>
<td>Whose birthday is today?</td>
<td>What is going there?</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is day today?</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrong Wh Question Word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They visited British museum.</td>
<td>Which museum did they visit?</td>
<td>Where did they go?</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrong Wh Question Word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In fact, the research considered using different wh questions to see which wh-words were used more than others. The researcher came up with different sentences that required the use of (what, where, whose, which, when, whom, why, who, how). However, Table (5) below shows the frequency of the more repeatable wh-word question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wh Question Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table (5) reported how Saudi EFL learners made a lot of errors in selecting the appropriate wh-word. Participants highly used *what* and *where* in constructing the different
types of questions. In the grammatical test, 73 (24.33%) questions were made using what, even though the sentence required a different wh-word. Among 73 uses of what, the 30 participants used what successfully in constructing 30 questions for the sentence Ahmad is playing tennis. While 43 out of 73 were the incorrect usage of what in constructing wh questions. Next, the wh-word where was used 55 (18.33) times in the grammatical test, from which 27 were used in the sentences that required where word whether correctly or incorrectly such as, they went to a huge party. Some participants used where at the beginning of the sentence, but the form of the question is ungrammatical such as, where do they went? In this question, the participant correctly used where for the sentence they went to a huge part, but the rest of the question is wrong, including "Wrong Auxiliary" and "Incorrect Verb Tense". 28 out of 55 were used to construct questions that required other wh-words. The other wh-word that was overused was who. Who as wh-word should be used to ask about the subject of the sentence, but Saudi EFL learners also used who for asking about the object of the sentence.

For instance, the police officer is coming, in this case who might be used such as who is coming?

But in this sentence, he shall call the police, students might use whom shall he call? However, 53 questions were made up with who, 24 participants used who correctly in constructing the wh question for the sentence he shall call the police. Others accounting for 29 used who improperly. In contrast, when and why were used wisely, only one participant used when in an incorrect way for the sentence they went to a huge party, she used when as follows, when they go to huge party? How as wh-word only used 25 (8.33%) times, participants had some difficulty using it. While, whose, whom, and which were rarely used by Saudi EFL learners because they do not know how and when to use them. The wh-word whose was used 11 (3.67%) times correctly, while other participants used what and who
instead of *whose*. Unfortunately, *whom* were used five times, and only two of them were used correctly. Further, only one student used *which* in a correct way as *which museum did they visit?* while she also used *which* two more times improperly.

### 4.1.1.2. Yes/ No Question Formation Analysis Results

This type of question was the one that Saudi English Foreign Language (EFL) learners produced successfully; the participants could form 217 (24%) correct grammatical yes/no questions than the other types, namely yes/no and canonical tag questions. Moreover, (217) correct yes/ no questions are larger than the correct canonical tag questions that are (216) and correct wh questions which are (188). This indicates that the degree of difficulty for forming this question type (yes/no) is lesser than canonical tag questions and wh questions. Of course, this does not mean the participants made errors in forming yes/no questions, but there were only 83 (9.22%) different types of errors (See chart 5).

**Chart 5**

![Yes/ No Questions Chart](image)

Students' errors were classified into nine different types, beginning with the category received highest percentage" Wrong Auxiliary" of errors to the least category "Auxiliary Redundant" (See table 6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Category</th>
<th>No of Errors</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Auxiliary</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>The movie <em>started</em> this morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will the movie start this morning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Tense</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>You haven't seen him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have you see him?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-word Addition</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>Ahmad <em>is</em> busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Where is Ahmad now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Omission</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
<td>South Africa <em>has</em> many natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has South Africa many natural resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Verb Disagreement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>South Africa <em>has</em> many natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does South Africa has many natural resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Omission</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>The movie <em>started</em> this morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The morning movie start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Subject Inversion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>He <em>will go</em> to Abha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is he will go to Abha?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Omission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>He will go to Abha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will has to Abha?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Redundant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>He will go to Abha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is he will go to Abha?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second section of the grammatical test was forming ten yes/no questions, including the use of auxiliary verbs as (is, was, were, does, did, have, can, will). The major error category was the "Wrong Auxiliary," in which students used the wrong auxiliary instead of the correct one. For instance, you haven't seen him; one participant formed the question, such as did you see him? This error category received a high percentage of participants' errors, accounting for 36 (12%). The error category that ranks second on the above table is "Incorrect Verb Tense." It is about (6.67%), where the participants misused the grammar tenses when forming yes/no questions such as Ali knows his teacher, they formed the question as does Ali knows his teacher? "Wh Word Addition" category has the same percentage as the "Incorrect Verb Tense" category (6.67%); students used to use wh-word in the previous section of the grammatical test, therefore; they kept using them in forming yes/no questions. For instance, where is Ahmad busy? The fourth error category that belongs to the omission group is "Verb Omission." "Verb Omission" is the absence of the verb such as does he to the farm? Has South Africa many natural resources? The fifth error category is "Subject-Verb Disagreement," when the verb selection is not compatible with the subject. For instance, does South Africa has many natural resources? For making a question for this sentence, South Africa has many natural resources. Only 9 out of 30 participants made the correct question, such as does South Africa have many natural resources? The "Auxiliary Omission" is the sixth category in which there was no auxiliary used in the question, such as the morning movie start; in this case, the participant did not use the auxiliary verb "did" to be as did the movie start this morning? In this study, this category "Auxiliary Omission" ranked sixth, while in all the previous studies globally or locally, it was the first error category of both wh and yes/no questions (Rowland, 2006; Irfaniaah, 2014; Nurjanah et al., 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Pathan, 2021, Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). It is worth mentioning that this study came up with exciting and surprising results. However, the "Auxiliary Subject
Inversion" category had only three errors, accounting for (1.00%), indicating that students had little difficulty in ranging the auxiliary and the subject in the question formation. For instance, *is he will go to Abha?* In this example, a student came up with a subject before the auxiliary verb and used two different auxiliaries, which are *is* and *will*, leading to the last yes/no error category known as "Auxiliary Redundant" with the percentage of (0.33%).

4.1.1.3. Tag Question Formation Analysis Results

The last section of the grammatical test was constructing tag questions. In that part, the participants made 216 (24.00%) correct tag questions and 84 (9.33%) incorrect ones (See chart 6).

Chart 6

![Chart 6](image)

The errors that students made were classified based on surface structure taxonomy including for error types, omission, addition, mis-formation and mis-ordering (See table 7).
It is clearly that students made a high number of "Mis-formation" errors in forming tag questions, accounting for 44 (14.67%). All the "Mis-formation" errors that they made were related to "Alternating-Forms," in which the learners know more about various structures, and this may confuse them as to which structure they should use. The misuse of auxiliaries, such as *is, has, was, were, and had*. The second problematic area when Saudi learners constructed tag questions was the addition of "Double Markings"; in this situation, students used negatives in both the anchor and the tag. For instance, *she is not a doctor, is not she?* The number of errors in this category was 18 (6.00%). The "Omission Error" category has the third rank in the list above, where learners forgot to use the subject when forming the tag question. It accounts for (4.33%) of the error percentage. "Mis-ordering" was a real problem for some participants because they did not range the question in a comprehensible way. For instance, *she had a toothache, she hadn’t?* Lastly is a type related to the "Addition
Error" category, which is a "Simple Addition" that was about (2.33%). Participants added more than one auxiliary or one subject.

After analyzing each interrogative type, the level of difficulty obviously varies. It is clear that Saudi EFL learners faced great difficulty when constructing wh question because they only constructed 188 correct wh questions out of 300 wh questions; then, tag question was in the midst of difficulty, which was 216 correct canonical tag questions out of 300 canonical tag questions. While yes/no question was the easiest for Saudi EFL learners since they successfully formed correct 217 yes/no questions out of 300 yes/no questions (See chart 7).

Chart 7

4.1.1.4. Wh, Yes/No and Canonical Tag Question Formation Analysis Results

The participants' scores of constructing correct wh, yes/no and tag questions were examined statistically as follows:
As stated earlier, this current study was carried out to see the significant category that received the highest number of errors between the students’ overall questions in the three English question types (wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions), their scores on forming both correct and incorrect wh, yes/no, and tag questions, and to determine which question type is the most difficult. Table (8) above shows that students’ achievements in yes/no questions were the highest (M= 7.23, SD= 2.20), and canonical tag questions comes next in the middle (M= 7.20, SD=3.33), while wh questions scores were the lowest of the two English types (M= 6.27, SD=2.67). This indicates that wh questions seemed to be the most difficult English type for Saudi students compared to other English types in terms of question formation.

### 4.1.1.5. Analysis Results: Comparison of Wh, Yes/No, and Canonical Tag Questions

The interrogative question types (Wh, Yes/No, and Canonical Tag Questions) were compared statistically by the use of Paired T-Test. The researcher examined these three questions to see if there were significant differences in the results (See table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wh Question</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No Question</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag Question</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. The Statistical Analysis of The Participants' Scores
Table 9. Comparing Wh, Yes/No, and Canonical Tag Questions by Paired T-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes-NO Question</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canonical Tag Questions</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes-no Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh Question</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table (9) above shows the most difficult question type for Saudi students. A paired t-test was conducted to compare the means of the three English questions and see if they differed significantly from one another. As can be shown in Table (9) above, a paired samples t-test revealed that students' wh questions scores differed significantly from yes/no and tag question scores at a level of p < 0.05. This indicates that wh question formation seemed to be the most difficult type for students compared to other English questions in this current study.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis Results

The second research instrument of this study was doing interviews (open-ended questions) to know more about which error type received a high percentage of errors and the resources of such errors, and the level of difficulty students faced when constructing wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. Students' question formations were statistically found to be more difficult when constructing wh questions, while this difficulty decreased once they formed tag questions. In contrast, students constructed yes/no questions easily. However, the researcher
conducted the interviews to explore more about students' difficulties, and these interviews were analyzed qualitatively, and the results are reported and discussed in the following sections.

The interview was divided into three parts as follows:

4.2.1. Students' Experience Constructing English Interrogative Questions

It is much helpful to conduct the interviews to consider students' difficulties, opinions, and sources of their errors. The participants found the grammatical test clear, easy, and useful. All the 30 students started the interview by thanking the researcher because they enjoyed doing the grammatical test, describing that it worked as a refreshment exam. It was very comprehensible since the researcher provided an example before each section. The participants found the grammatical test equitable and varied due to the use of sentences requiring different wh-words and different auxiliaries. For example, Reem found the exam easy, and she got 27 out of 30 marks; the obtained marks of her test were (7 wh questions, 10 yes/no questions, and 10 canonical tag questions).

Reem "the exam was very easy and clear because I regularly revise the English grammar."

From the above example, Reem did not find the grammatical test difficult but rather easy. Even though the exam was a surprise, she got an excellent mark. This means that she constructed correct wh questions unless for two questions, 10 correct yes/no questions, and 10 canonical tag questions.

In another example, Sara illustrated that the exam is easy because there were examples provided before each section of the grammatical test.

Sara "it was easy because there were examples that helped form what was required."
From the example above, Sara believed the exam was not bad, and she got 21 out of 30; this indicates that she formed the questions in a good way.

Amjad "the exam was a piece of cake; it did not require a higher level of thinking."

From the above example, Amjad felt the exam was easy because she did not use her higher thinking skills, and she got 29 out of 30. This means that the exam was very easy.

Rana "the grammatical test was versed in the different wh-words, auxiliaries in yes/no questions, and affirmative and negative in tag questions."

From the above example, Rana enjoyed the exam because it varied in using different English questions.

These responses from the participants indicate that the grammatical test was easy because students revise English grammar rules regularly, and they used the examples provided before each section to elicit the question type rule. Furthermore, they did not find it difficult because there was no need to use deep thinking and enjoyed it because it involved different English question types.

4.2.2. The Straightforward and the Most Difficult Questions

The level of difficulty varies from an individual to another. However, through the open-ended interviews, the researcher noticed that students generally have problems with grammar rules and constructing English questions.

Bushra "I am weak with grammar rules and English vocabulary."

From the above example, Bushra found some difficulties because she had a low level of English grammar and vocabulary. She got a low mark (11 out of 30), and this clearly indicates that constructing English question types needs a good knowledge of both grammar rules and
vocabulary. This means that students may find difficulties when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions because they have low proficiency in the English language.

*Shoug* "I am not interested in learning grammar, and I think it is not important because native speakers do not use the grammar and formal language once they use their language."

From the example provided above, Shoug might face difficulties because she ignored learning grammar rules thinking that they are not important and can be learned as the way native speakers acquire the English language.

However, all the 30 participants classified the difficulty level of the three English interrogative questions from the most complex to the less difficult to the most straightforward question type. First, the most straightforward question type was yes/no questions quantitively, and it is also the easiest question type based on the qualitative data analysis. A high number of the participants said that yes/no questions were the easiest because they did not consist of wh-words; the only thing that they did was the inversion process to construct yes/no questions. For example, Amjad did not find any difficulty forming yes/no questions, and she got 29 out of 30; her obtained marks in each section were (9 wh questions, 10 yes/no questions, and 10 tag questions).

*Amjad* "I found yes/no questions easy because they are the repeatable ones in the EFL classroom."

From the above example, Amjad constructed yes/no questions easily and successfully because this question type is commonly used in the English classroom.

Another example, Jumanh stated that the easiest questions for her were yes/no questions because the secondary school English teacher taught her how to construct English questions successfully.
Jumanh "I did not take time constructing yes/no questions because the English language teacher at secondary school taught me the important basics of forming English questions."

From the above example, Jumanh did not find yes/no questions difficult, and she got 29 out of 30; this indicates that yes/no questions were the easiest for most participants. She obtained (9 marks in wh questions, 10 yes/no questions, and 10 tag questions).

Moreover, Taif is one of the participants who got 29 out of 30 in the grammatical test, and she said yes/no questions were made at ease because this kind of question is mostly used in everyday situations.

Taif "I made yes/no questions quickly and easily because those are used in my routine."

From the above example, she did not find yes/no questions difficult, and her obtained marks were (9 wh, 10 yes/no, and 10 tag questions).

From the above examples, yes/no questions were the easiest type of questions for Saudi students. This means that the qualitative analysis of interviews supports the quantitative data in which Saudi students did not face difficulties in forming yes/no questions, and they are considered as the easiest ones in terms of question formation.

The second section is the most difficult question for Saudi students. As stated earlier in the quantitative analysis, the wh questions were the most difficult ones, with a high percentage of errors in the category of wrong wh question words. By analyzing the responses of the participants in the interviews, students agreed that wh questions were the questions needed more time and attention. For example, Roze found difficulties constructing wh questions, and she got 26 out of 30 because she lost four marks in the formation of wh questions, while she obtained 10 marks in both yes/no questions and tag questions.

Roze "wh questions were difficult compared to the other question types."
Aishah " Wh questions seemed difficult, especially wh-word, I wonder if I use them correctly, and I forgot if the word "how" is regarded as a wh question word."

From the above examples, Aishah found difficulties selecting the appropriate wh question word, and she asked the researcher if the wh-word how is a wh question word or not. This indicates Saudi students faced difficulty using proper wh question words.

This supports the quantitative data analysis in a way that the "Wrong Question Word" category is the first category involving the most errors. Further, wh questions need discussion, explanation, clarification, and information. For example, Asma found wh questions complicated in terms of formation.

Asma " we (Saudi students) do not like to ask wh questions because this type of question needs a good knowledge of vocabulary and information; therefore, we like and use yes/no questions more."

From the above example, Asma believed that Saudi students do not usually use wh questions because this kind of question requires proficiency in the target language. She obtained 5 marks out of 10 wh questions. This clearly indicates that Saudi students found yes/no questions easy and wh questions the most complicated ones because they do not use them in everyday situations.

Finally, the question type between the difficulty level was constructing tag questions. Saudi students found tag questions neither difficult nor easy. This is because the grammatical test involved the commonly used tag question type known as canonical tag questions (Tottie & Hoffmann, 2009). Although it was anticipated that tag questions were the most difficult ones, but that was not true because Saudi students formed tag questions with little difficulty compared to wh questions. That is because the canonical tag question is based on one rule; if the sentence is positive, the anchor should be negative, and the example in the grammatical
test helped the Saudi students construct canonical tag questions with a less difficult level. For example,

*Aishah* "I considered wh difficult for me, while yes/no are the easiest ones, and tag questions are in between."

From the example above, Aishah produced only one error in forming canonical tag questions and yes/no questions (9 out of 10). In comparison, she made 3 errors in forming wh questions. This indicates that tag questions were not difficult; they came next to the yes/no questions. This supports the quantitative analysis of the grammatical test that wh questions are difficult; then tag questions come after, whereas yes/no questions were the easiest type for Saudi students. Lastly, tag questions are considered by only four Saudi students as confusing questions.

*Jawaher* "I did not find it difficult, but rather confusing as to when to make affirmative or negative."

*Wejdan* "It was somehow confusing, it was not difficult, but it took time to be understood."

*Maram* "I felt it is an easy question type if I knew the structure of constructing tag questions."

*Ruba* "tag questions were not difficult, but we do not use them a lot."

From the four examples above, tag questions were also regarded as confusing, but this does not mean that they made a lot of errors in constructing them; they formed them correctly compared to wh questions.

### 4.2.3. Reasons and Sources of Participants' Errors

According to interview data, it was observed that there are many reasons and sources behind students' errors from their point of them. Therefore, they are written below from the most
effective one to the least effective cause. For example, Hanan produced a high number of errors because of the lack of practice in the EFL classroom.

Hanan "No opportunities were given to my classmates or me for practicing the grammar input that we had in the EFL classroom."

From the above example, Hanan stated that the chances to practice what they learned were less; therefore, students make a lot of errors when performing the language. Hanan had the lowest mark in the grammatical test accounting for 3 out of 30. This indicates that lack of practice is the primary cause of most Saudi errors when forming English question types.

Najwa "We (Saudi students) want workshops, virtual meetings, and cooperative teachers that help us to practice the English language; therefore, we can minimize the errors."

From the example above, Najwa's errors are caused by the lack of practice because there were no workshops provided to practice the language.

Noura "students do not practice with each other in the classroom; even though the teacher forces them to use only the English language."

From the above example, Noura said students do not practice the language in the classroom; therefore, when they use the language in a required situation, they use it in an improper way with a high number of errors.

The community has a role in English question formation difficulties. The community is the second dominant reason for Saudi errors. A high percentage of students' errors was because the community plays as an obstacle hindering Saudi students from using the language. For example, Razan produced a lot of errors because she could not use the language in her context.
Razan "I cannot ask in the classroom because I may make errors, and students will laugh at me."

From the above example, Razan's question formation difficulties were because she did not want to form the questions incorrectly in front of her classmates.

Sara "I feel shy because students laugh at me when I ask incorrect questions."

Taif "I avoid asking questions to not be embarrassed; therefore, I form a sentence with a question intonation, for example, the exam is on Monday."

In the two examples above, Saudi students avoid asking questions fearing that the participants will laugh at them. This indicates that the community plays a role in students' difficulties when forming English questions.

Also, Saudi students have difficulty finding some foreign speakers in the community to use the language with. For example, Jood said, "no foreign sparkers in our community (south of the Kingdom), I hardly find native speakers to use the language with."

The other less effective causes or reasons for Saudi students' errors are due to the curriculum or unqualified teachers. For example, Nawal made a lot of errors in the grammatical test because the grammar book was intensive, including many grammar rules that need to be studied in a year. Without doing more exercises or activities.

Nawal "I believe the curriculum that we had for grammar course was intensive in an improper way; it contained a lot of English grammar rules in which the teacher focused more on explanation than on giving activities and exercises."

Noha "the curriculum was vast and not clear enough, and it was being taught for a short period of time."
According to the examples above, the curriculum could be the third reason for Saudi students producing a high number of errors when forming English question types.

The fourth reason is teachers. Teachers are usually supportive, but the participants also mentioned them as discouraged in some cases. This indicates that Saudi difficulties are because of unqualified teachers.

*Sara* "how difficult that the grammar course teacher made many errors in the English structure while speaking, so I could not feel that I could learn from her."

*Reem* "The grammar course teacher usually skipped some grammar rules, and I think the tag question rule was one of them because it is my first time knowing that tag question is an English question type."

*Wadad*, "The grammar course teacher did not provide me feedback once I misused an English rule."

*Njood*, "The lack of receiving proper feedback after asking the teachers, was the great issue; teachers accept incorrect questions; all they need is understanding the student when s/he asks."

Based on these qualitative observations, it can be deduced that several possible reasons contributed to the students' errors when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions. First of all, students make a lot of errors because of less practice or fewer opportunities to use the language. Secondly, students face many difficulties because the community does not encourage them. Moreover, students' errors may result from an intensive and unclear curriculum for grammar courses. Finally, unqualified teachers are seen as an obstacle to Saudi students' errors.
Part V: Discussion and Conclusion
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion of Research Question One

5.1.1. What kind of errors do KKU Saudi female EFL learners make when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions?

Saudi EFL learners made eleven different error types when constructing wh questions, while the number is in decline in the yes/no question type, which involves nine different error types. In terms of forming canonical tag questions, the error types are fewer, including five different types. Beginning with wh question types since it had a large number of different error types. The first error type was "Wrong Wh Question Word," which had the highest number of Saudi students' errors (113 errors out of 300 wh questions). Compared to the previous studies, this finding does not support other studies' findings where the "Wrong Wh Question Word" category received one of the least categories of EFL learners' errors (Iqramah, 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Rowland, 2006; Nurjanah et al., 2018; Pathan, 2021, Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). Then, "Incorrect Verb Tense" had the second rank in which students made 35 errors. While "Wrong Auxiliary" and "Auxiliary Omission" have the same number of errors were 25, and this finding does not support the previous studies where they stated that "Omission" was the primary error category of both wh and yes/no questions (Rowland, 2006; Nurjanah et al., 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Pathan, 2021, Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). Next, the wh error type that accounted for 13 errors was "Auxiliary Subject Inversion'. After that, "Subject Omission" had the sixth rank of wh error types since it involved 8 errors made by Saudi students. Then, the number of Saudi students' errors declined in other error types, "Auxiliary Redundant" was 5 errors, "Verb Omission" was 4, "Incorrect Main Verb" and "Wh Word Omission" had the same error numbers were 2, last type of wh question type was "Wrong Subject" accounted for only one error. In contrast,
the yes/no question has nine different error types, starting with the "Wrong Auxiliary" type that involved a high number of errors (36 out of 300 yes/no questions). This shows disagreement with (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013), who did not even consider "Wrong Auxiliary" as an error category in his overall study. Also, it does not support the finding of a study by (Addaibani, 2017), where "Wrong Auxiliary" ranked as the fifth error category. Therefore, this study shows different and interesting results. Other yes/no error types were "Incorrect Verb Tense" and "Wh Word Addition" categories included 20 errors. The "Verb Omission," which had only 4 errors in wh questions, had 16 in the formation of yes/no questions. In fact, "Subject-Verb Disagreement" had 9 errors, and this supports (Almekhlafi, 2013), in which "Aux. Subject Agreement" had the third rank accounting for 10 errors. The other types of yes/no questions were 7 errors included in the "Auxiliary Omissions," and this indicates that Saudi students do not omit auxiliaries but rather choose the wrong auxiliaries when forming yes/no questions. As stated earlier, this shows disagreement with other studies where "Auxiliary Omission" is the dominant error category. (Rowland, 2006; Nurjanah et al., 2018; Masruddin & Karmila, 2018; Pathan, 2021, Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017). Lastly, "Auxiliary Subject Inversion," Subject Omission," and "Auxiliary Redundant" made up in order of (3,2,1) errors.

While canonical tag questions only had five main error types, including "Mis-formation" (44 errors out of 300 tag questions); therefore, this present finding supports the findings of two studies conducted (Heendriyono, 2018; Nurafifah, 2018). When they analyzed students' tag question errors based on the surface structure taxonomy, finding that "Mis-formation" was the highest error category. While it shows disagreement with the findings of a recent study by (Octafia1 & Adinda, 2021) in which the false concepts hypothesized were the main error type. The other error types of tag questions were 18 errors labeled under the
"Addition Double- Markings" error type, 13 tag question errors included in the "Omission" errors type. Lastly, "Mis-ordering" had 12 errors, and "Simple Addition" errors were about 7.

5.2. Discussion of Research Question Two

5.2.1. What type of English interrogative question receives the highest percentage of errors?

Saudi EFL learners made various errors in forming English wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. In terms of constructing wh questions, they made 113 errors out of 300 wh questions in selecting appropriate wh-words, which these errors are labeled under the "Wrong Question Word" category. This category received the largest number of errors when forming wh questions. In contrast, the error category that has a great number of errors in yes/no questions was "Wrong Auxiliary," accounting for 36 errors, where students misused auxiliaries. However, in canonical tag questions (Mis-formation Alternating Forms) running the first category which is accounted for 44 errors. This indicates that the English question type that receives the highest percentage of errors was wh questions with the largest error category "Wrong Question Word", because Saudi students made a lot of errors in this type accounting for 113 out of 300 wh questions. This does not support the previous studies findings, for instance, Masruddin and Karmila (2018) analyzed Indonesian students' errors and they found that the error category of wh question with largest number of errors was the "Omission" category. Further, (Almekhlafi, 2013; Addaibani, 2017; Pathan, 2021) found that the error category that had the largest number of errors was auxiliary omission when forming wh questions. In contrast, Irfaniah (2014) examined Indonesian students and came up with different results, in which archi-form of question word was the highest category of students’ errors. Therefore, this is worth mentioning that this current study revealed that wh questions with the "Wrong Wh Question Word" category received the highest percentage of Saudi
errors compared to yes/no and canonical tag questions. This means that Saudi students did better constructing English yes/no questions than forming wh-questions. This finding supports Al-Hassaani's study (2016), where Saudi students faced more difficulties constructing wh-questions than that yes-no questions. Also, the finding of this current study shows disagreement with the findings of (Nurjanah et al., 2017), where Indonesian students faced more difficulties forming yes/no questions compared to wh question type.

5.3. Discussion of Research Question Three

5.3.1. To what extent English question formation of wh, yes/no, and tag questions is difficult for Saudi female EFL learners?

The difficulty level was determined by analyzing the data quantitatively, and it reveals that Saudi students did better when constructing yes/no questions than tag and wh questions. This finding was also supported by analyzing interviews qualitatively in which wh questions were the most difficult for Saudi students, tag questions were confusing, and yes/no questions were the easiest to construct. Why Saudi students found wh questions more complicated than other types are because the main dominant reason that is lack of practice. Saudi students found the errors that they made when forming wh, yes/no, and tag questions were due to lack of practice. This finding does not support the findings that the negative transfer or L1 interference is the main reason for Saudi students' errors (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013; Al-Hassaani, 2016) or is the one among the reasons that are partially attributed to Saudi error (Addaibani, 2017). Another important finding is that students faced difficulties when performing English questions due to the community because they felt embarrassed when forming English questions. This present finding supports the finding of Samrin's study (2011), where parents, peers, and family contributed to the errors students made when forming English questions.
Other less affected reasons are intensive curriculum and unqualified teachers that this current study reveals.

5.4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, Saudi students are able to produce correct grammatical wh, yes/no, and canonical tag questions. This study concludes that Saudi students face difficulty when forming wh questions with a high percentage of errors in the "Wrong Question Word" category. Further, Saudi students can produce canonical tag questions with little difficulty, while yes/no questions are successfully constructed by Saudi EFL learners. It is worth mentioning that this study ends with exciting and surprising results; the error category with the highest percentage of wh errors is "Wrong Question Word" when forming wh questions, and "Wrong Auxiliary" is the primary error category in yes/no questions, and "Mis-formation Alternating Forms" is the primary error category when constructing canonical tag questions. Lastly, students' errors are because of many reasons, but the dominant ones are lack of practice and the community that the learners are surrounded with.

5.5. Limitations

There are four limitations of this study. First, the participants' homogeneity, where all the participants are from the same university and same department, not involving male students might have affected the results of this current study. Second, this study examines the Saudi EFL learners' ability to produce written wh, yes/no, and tag questions; this means that no concern was given to the Saudi students' oral formation of these English question types. Third, this current study is limited to only three English questions, where many English questions need further examination, such as echo English questions. Finally, this study
examined only one type of tag questions known as the canonical tag question. Therefore, non-canonical and invariant tags need to be examined.

5.6. Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended to conduct this study by observation to see if Saudi students can produce wh, yes/no, and tag questions orally. It is also recommended to involve other English question types, such as echo questions. Empirical research with a control group and heterogeneous population of EFL participants would be recommended to analyze students' errors before and after the treatment process and to see how Saudi EFL learners can improve their ability to form correct wh, yes/no, and tag questions.
References


Sabbah, S. (2015). Negative transfer: Arabic language interference to learning English. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Translation, (4).*


Appendices

Appendix A

Grammatical Test

Write a question to ask about the underlined word of the sentence.

A. Write the following questions correctly using Wh questions.

for example:   Answer. The show starts at 6 PM

Question. ...When does the show start .................?

1. He shall call the police.

Q. .................................................................?  

2. They can meet on Wednesday.

Q. .................................................................?

3. The police officer is coming.

Q. .................................................................?

4. The film was interesting.

Q. .................................................................?

5. Ahmad is playing tennis.

Q. .................................................................?

6. They went to a huge party.

Q. .................................................................?

7. Mohammed ate a lot of chocolate, because he liked it.
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

8. They visited British museum.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

9. It is Sara's birthday.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

10. Lana's book is on the table.

Q…………………………………………………………………………………………………………....?

B. Write the following 10 questions correctly using Yes/No questions.

   For example. Answer. She will buy a new car.

   Question. ……Will she buy a new car……?

1. Ahmad is busy.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

2. Sara was in the hospital.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

3. They were not happy.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

4. South Africa has many natural resources.

Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..?

5. The movie started this morning.

Q. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………....?
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  
6. He goes to the farm.  
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  
7. You haven't seen him.  
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  
8. They can tell the supervisor.  
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  
9. He will go to Abha.  
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  
10. Ali knows his teacher.  
Q. …………………………………………………………………………………………………?  

Complete the following sentences below with the right tag questions! 

Example: Question. She is a doctor, ……?  
Answer. She is a doctor, isn’t she?  

1. She had a toothache, ……………………………………………………………………………?  
2. Nora is not a dentist, ……………………………………………………………………………?  
3. You are the new student, ……………………………………………………………………………?  
4. She was not angry last night, ……………………………………………………………………………?  
5. They were the third-year students of high school, ………………………………………………………?  

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6. Sara has a lot of work, ………………………………………………………………………………?

7. Ali doesn't want to stay there, ………………………………………………………………………?

8. She didn’t suspect him as a thief, ………………………………………………………………………?

9. You will not be in the school tomorrow, ………………………………………………………………………?

10. Lana can't play, ……………………………………………………………………………………………?

Interview

Exploring students' difficulties (open ended questions).

1) How was your experience constructing English interrogative questions in this study?

2) What were the straightforward questions for you? Why?

3) What were the most difficult questions for you? Why?

4) Did you have any difficulties when constructing wh questions? What were they?

5) Did you have any difficulties when constructing yes/no questions? What were they?

6) Did you have any difficulties when constructing tag questions? What were they?

😊 Thank you for your participation.
Appendix B

Ethics Approval

THE SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE OF QUESTION FORMATION OF SAUDI EFL LEARNERS

This paper is aimed at understanding the syntactic structures of questions formed by Saudi EFL learners. The study investigates the frequency of question formation mistakes made by these learners. The research was conducted among 442 Saudi university students between 2014 and 2018. The study aimed to uncover why these mistakes were made and how they could be improved. The data were analyzed using statistical methods, and the results showed that the most common mistakes were related to the use of inverted word order and the absence of subject-verb agreement. These findings highlight the need for more focused teaching strategies to improve question formation skills among Saudi EFL learners.

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Appendix C

Consent Form for Participants

Consent Form for Participants

6 April 2022

(grammatical test and Interview)

Research Title: The Syntactic Structure of Question Formation of the Saudi EFL Learners.

NOTE: I agree to take part in the research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me. I understand that participating and agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to participate in the grammatical test asking me about wh, yes/no, and tag questions.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required

☐ Yes  ☐ No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Student's Name..................................................

Signature............................................................

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