

**MODES OF WH-QUESTIONS IN RURAL  
JORDANIAN ARABIC DIALECT: A SYNTACTIC  
STUDY BASED ON PHASE THEORY**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2024**

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**November 2024**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I express my gratitude, obedience, and gratitude to Allah, the Greatest, from whom I receive guidance, assistance, and success.

I would like to express my deepest thanks and respect to my thesis supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh for her exceptional efforts, invaluable help of constructive comments, and attention to detail.

My appreciation is also extended to the members of the examination committee for their time, effort, and insightful comments.

My heartfelt special gratitude to the fieldworkers who supported me in collecting research data, as well as to all the participants in the current study, whether in its qualitative or quantitative components without whom this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to extend my most profound thanks to my father, mother, wife "beloved children, and all my loved ones for their endless support, encouraging words and assistance.

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## LIST OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET FOR MSA

### SOUNDS

b	ب
t	ت
d	د
đ/đ	ض
k	ك
g	ج
q	ق
?	ء
h	ه
ḥ	ح
ꝑ/ꝑ	ع
m	م
n	ن
r	ر
f	ف
θ	ث
ð	ذ
s	س
z	ز
ʃ	ش
x	خ
ɣ	غ
j	ي
w	و

**LIST OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET FOR MSA**  
**VOWELS**

IPA Symbol	Arabic Vowel Sound	Arabic Letter(s)
/i/	High front unrounded vowel	ؒ
/u/	High back rounded vowel	ؓ
/ɛ/	Mid front unrounded vowel	ؒ
/a/	Low central unrounded vowel	ؒ
/ɛ:/	Long mid front unrounded vowel	ؒ

\*\*Short vowels in Arabic are typically not written in the script but are represented by diacritic marks known as harakat. Long vowels are symbolized by the same letters as short vowels, but with a shaddah (ؓ ؒ) added to the consonant after the long vowel.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Acc	Accusative case
AdjP	Adjectival Phrase
AdvP	Adverbial Phrase
CP	Complementizer Phrae
DP	Determiner Phrase
EM	External Merge
EST	Extended Standard Theory
FL	Faculty of Language
FocP	Focus Phrase
GB	Government and Binding Theory
GPSG	Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar
IM	Internal Merge
JA	Jordanian Arabic
LF	Logical Form
LFG	Lexical Functional Grammar
MP	Minimalist Program
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
N	Numeration
Nom	Nominative case
PF	Phonetic Form
RG	Relational Grammar
RJAD	Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect
RJAD	Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect
TopP	Topic Phrase

TP            Tense Phrase

VP            Verb Phrase

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## **MOD KAEDEAH PERTANYAAN-WH DALAM DIALEK ARAB JORDAN**

### **LUAR BANDAR: KAJIAN SINTAKSIS BERDASARKAN TEORI FASA**

#### **ABSTRAK**

Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk memberikan deskripsi terperinci mengenai pembentukan soalan WH dalam Dialek Arab Jordan Luar Bandar (RJA), dengan penekanan khusus kepada proses sintaksis yang mengatur struktur soalan tersebut. Secara khusus, kajian ini menumpukan kepada soalan-soalan berikut: Adakah bentuk soalan WH yang dianalisis dalam Dialek Arab Jordan Luar Bandar memenuhi prinsip-prinsip tatabahasa sejagat atau tidak, elemen-elemen sintaksis yang berkait dengan setiap bentuk soal jawab dalam dialek ini, bagaimana pelbagai mod soal jawab mempengaruhi persepsi ruang lingkup soalan WH, serta penerapan teori fasa untuk menganalisis kesan prinsip sejagat terhadap tingkah laku struktur soalan WH dalam dialek ini. Dengan memberi tumpuan kepada struktur dan mekanisme sintaksis yang terlibat, kajian ini menjelaskan pengagihan dan tafsiran kata WH dalam dialek ini. Seramai 404 peserta dari Al-Mazar, Irbid, Jordan telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini menggunakan kerangka teori berdasarkan Teori Fasa, yang menyatakan bahawa operasi sintaksis berlaku secara kitaran dan bahawa pelbagai konstituen membentuk fasa yang berbeza. Untuk mencapai objektif penyelidikan, kajian ini menggunakan soal selidik yang mengandungi 42 soalan WH, di mana para responden diarahkan untuk menjawab berdasarkan pengetahuan mereka. Data dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Dengan kata lain, data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis menggunakan kedua-dua pendekatan ini. Dari segi kaedah penyelidikan, statistik deskriptif dan perisian SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis tahap, min, sisihan piawai, dan peratusan penilaian tatabahasa bagi soalan WH. Menggunakan

prosedur kajian kualitatif, analisis tematik membolehkan penganalisisan data jawapan terbuka mengenai pengaruh faktor pendidikan dan demografi terhadap penilaian. Paradigma yang berbeza ini digabungkan secara berurutan dalam kajian ini, di mana hasil kuantitatif kajian pertama digunakan dalam analisis kualitatif kajian kedua untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih baik terhadap data yang dikumpulkan. Oleh itu, kebolehpercayaan dan kesahihan skala pengukuran dikawal melalui kaedah uji semula dan penilaian oleh pakar. Menurut penemuan kajian, pembentukan soalan WH dalam Dialek Arab Jordan Luar Bandar melibatkan interaksi kompleks antara faktor sintaksis dan semantik, dengan kata WH menunjukkan corak pengagihan dan tafsiran yang berbeza bergantung pada konteks sintaksis dan wacana. Berdasarkan penemuan ini, kajian menyimpulkan bahawa bentuk pembentukan soalan WH dalam dialek ini dipengaruhi oleh pelbagai faktor, termasuk kedudukan kata WH di awal frasa, penyusunan semula subjek dan kata kerja, serta penambahan partikel soalan berdasarkan Teori Fasa. Kajian masa depan disarankan untuk memperluas penemuan ini dengan meneliti hubungan antara soalan WH dan struktur sintaksis lain dalam dialek ini, serta kesan faktor sosiolinguistik terhadap pembentukan soalan WH.

**MODES OF WH-QUESTIONS IN RURAL JORDANIAN ARABIC DIALECT:  
A SYNTACTIC STUDY BASED ON PHASE THEORY**

**ABSTRACT**

The aim of the present research is to offer an extensive description of wh-question formation in Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect (RJAD), with a special emphasis on the syntactic processes governing the structure of the question. In particular, this research focuses on the following particular questions: Whether analyzed wh-question modalities of Rural Jordanian Arabic meet the universal grammar principles or not, the syntactic elements linked with every Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) interrogative form within the dialect, how different MSA interrogative modes influence the perception of wh-scope, as well as applying phase theory to analyze the effects of universal principles on the wh-structure behavior in this dialect. By focusing on the syntactic structures and mechanisms involved, the study sheds light on the distributions and interpretations of wh-words in this dialect. 404 participants from Al-Mazar, Irbid, Jordan took part in the study. The study makes use of a theoretical framework based on Phase Theory, which states that syntactic operations occur cyclically and that different constituents form different phases. To achieve the research goals, the study employed a questionnaire with 42 wh-questions, which were instructed to be answered by the respondents to the best of their knowledge. The data was analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. In other words, data were collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study. In terms of research methods, descriptive statistics and SPSS software were used to analyze degrees, means, standard deviations, and percentages of grammatical judgment of wh-questions. Using the procedures of qualitative study, thematic analysis

allowed to analyze open-response data on the influences of educational and demographic factors on judgments. These different paradigms were combined in this study in a sequential manner where the first study's quantitative results fed into the second study's qualitative analysis bringing out a better understanding of the data collected. Consequently, reliability and validity of the measurement scale were controlled through the retest method and the assessment of by experts. According to the study's findings, wh-question formation in Rural Jordanian Arabic involves a complex interplay of syntactic and semantic factors, with wh-words exhibiting distinct distribution and interpretation patterns depending on their syntactic and discourse contexts. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the modes of wh-question formation in Rural Jordanian Arabic are shaped by a variety of factors, whether the Wh-word emerges at the beginning of the phrase, the reordering of the subject and verb, and the addition of question-related particles relying on Phase Theory.-Future research should expand on these findings by looking into the relationship between wh-questions and other syntactic structures in the dialect, as well as the impact of sociolinguistic factors on wh-question formation.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on rural Jordanian Arabic and their modes of WH-questions according to Phase Theory. The background of the study includes a brief background of the Arabic language, Jordanian language, Rural Jordanian language, modes of wh-questions in rural cities in general and in Jordan in particular, and Phase Theory. Then the chapter gives a clear description of the Arabic language, Arabic dialects, wh-questions in Arabic dialect, Jordanian Arabic dialect, rural Jordanian Arabic dialect, modes of wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic dialect, syntax, Phase Theory, dialectology, property of spoken variety, the generative theory and spoken language, the variation approach and spoken language, syntactic micro variation, dialect syntax, special properties of dialect syntax, dialectical data in a generative grammar theory, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definition of terms, and summary.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

MSA is the standardized contemporary Arabic that is derived from classical Arabic and that is used in the Qur'an and the early literature of Islam. MSA is also referred to as Al-'Arabiyya or Al-Fusha and is used as a medium of communication between the Arab nations not only at the national level but also at the international level and is a link between most of the national dialects which are sometimes hardly understandable. It is difficult to ascertain the number of speakers of the MSA due to

the nature of its usage: it is not a first language, but rather acquired through school and media such as radio, TV, newspapers, and religious scriptures. MSA can be spoken with differing degrees of fluency depending on the level of education and the extent of interaction with others in this language. Whereas MSA is standard and employed in writing and official transactions, informal and interpersonal communication takes place in regional MSA dialects that are diverse, and situational. These dialects are categorized into five major groups: Arabian, Mesopotamian, Levantine, Egyptian and Maghrebi are the common terms that are used for the Arab peoples. (Biadsy et al., 2009, p. 55- 60).

Concerning the dialectical features of Jordanian Arabic, regional variation is observed, and three main, subdivisions of the dialect are distinguished: Bedouin, Urban, and Rural. Consequently, this introductory chapter seeks to find the reader familiar with the basic background of the syntactic analysis of wh-questions in Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect (RJAD). It helps in preparing the ground for constructing the linguistic analysis of the syntactic structures, processes, and semantic interpretations of wh-questions in RJAD and extension to the other domains of linguistics and theory. Particularly, the study deals with the formation and implementation of wh-question constructions by RJAD speakers, specifically such operations as fronting and in-situ, within the context of Phase Theory proposed by Chomsky (1999, 2001, 2005, 2006).

An experimental approach was used: the grammar of different wh-questions was assessed by the RJAD speakers, and the research sought to identify the linguistic strategies for forming questions. Thus, the purpose of this research is to clarify the linguistic issues related to wh-question strategies in RJAD and to introduce Phase Theory as the theoretical approach to the issue. The study aims at analyzing the applicability of the specific wh-words, the position of the words and phrases in the

sentences used in RJAD and in general, the study offers a considerable amount of data about the linguistic characteristics of the strategies in question, their parity with different principles of language use.

This study aims at combining the traditional and modern approaches of dialectology, which is a field that focuses on the differences in language and its usage based on regions and social classes. They analyse the technological aspects and address geographical and social variations in its application to modes of wh-question and RJAD syntactic structure. Besides, this investigation deepens knowledge of the specific aspect of the dialect and at the same time contributes to the general discussion of the language variation, grammar, and language and culture.

### **1.2.1 Arabic Language**

Arabic is a large group of dialects, and only MSA is a standardized written language used for official purposes. As stated by (Zaidan & Callison, 2014, pp. 171–174) MSA is taught in school and used in writing and formal settings while different spoken forms are part of certain regional dialects concerning oral communication. Meanwhile, Gordon (2005) notes that Arabic is a Semitic language within the Afro-Asiatic (or Hamito-Semitic) language family which also comprises languages like Aramaic, Ethiopian, South Arabian, Syriac, and Hebrew. These languages have been used throughout history in the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and Africa.

Due to the specificity of MSA, it is crucial to analyse the features of the Arabic dialects. The purpose of the current research is to apply Phase Theory to the analysis of wh-questions in the interlocutors' first language, namely rural Jordanian Arabic. Defining the target population, the Northern Mazar District of Jordan, this research collected a sample of 404 participants. Most notably, MSA distinguishes itself from

other Arabic dialects because, while varying in lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic ways, they are not standard.

(Biadsy et al., 2009, p.55) suggest one classification regarding Arabic dialect could be the following one:

- i) Gulf Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman.
- ii) Iraqi Arabic, the official dialect of Iraq; some dialect classifications classify Iraqi Arabic as a sub-dialect of Gulf Arabic.
- iii) Levantine Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.
- iv) Egyptian Arabic dialects, involving dialects from Egypt and Sudan.
- v) Maghrebi Arabic dialects, namely dialects from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya.

The Maltese dialect is a Southern Central Semitic language spoken on the island of Malta. Maltese evolved from an Arabic dialect and is closely related to Algerian and Tunisian Western Arabic dialects. The only form of Arabic written in Latin is Maltese, which is heavily influenced by the Sicilian language (spoken in Sicily) it is not always considered an Arabic dialect because it is written in Latin script. This variety is frequently treated as belonging to its own class of dialects in Yemen. While dialects can be divided into three major sub-dialects based on social factors, the dialect spoken by city residents, the dialect spoken by peasants/farmers, and the third dialect spoken by Bedouins.

### 1.2.2 WH-questions in Arabic Dialects

The study of "Modes of Wh-Questions in Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect: This paper "The Syntax of Interrogative Constructions in a Specific Arabic Dialect: A Syntactic Study Based on Phase Theory" uses the term "Wh" to analyze the properties and how interrogative constructions are constructed in a certain Arabic variety. The usage of "Wh" is explained by the fact that it can help classify the questions according to their type, study the movement of the Wh-phrases within them, compare and contrast the Wh-questions with other structures, consider how focus and intonation play a role in the formation of Wh-questions, and place the study in the context of the research on syntax of questions across the languages. Analyzing Wh-questions in Rural Jordanian Arabic and its syntactic features in the framework of phase theory also brings the current research relevant to the characterization of the dialect and its prospects to the study of Arabic language with a broader perspective.

In this analysis, the "Wh" connected to linguistics can be described as interrogative words and phrases crucial for constructing questions and relative clauses including who, what, where, when, and why. Several key factors justify its usage. It defines a small list of words that question formation involves; it illustrates the importance of these words by showing they often form the core of simple question formation; It offers a convenient label for cross linguistic investigations of how various languages conduct the formation of questions; and it is grounded in such theories as the generative grammar that investigates the mechanisms that underlie sentence formation across languages. In sum, the term "Wh" is fundamental for expanding the understanding of the actual, syntactic and functional states of interrogative expressions in individual languages and the general framework of theoretical linguistics.

There are many dialects of Arabic, such as Jordanian, Syrian, Iraqi, Lebanese, the purpose of this study is to use Phase Theory to investigate the use of wh-questions among rural Jordanian speakers. A sample of 404 Jordanians from the Northern Mazar District was chosen to participate in this study. It is important to note that Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) differs from other Arabic dialects. It should be noted, however, that various spoken Arabic dialects differ significantly in lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects with respect to others. (Biadsy et al., 2009, p. 55) suggest that one classification regarding Arabic dialect could be the following: Gulf Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman, Iraqi Arabic is the official dialect of Iraq; some dialect classifications classify Iraqi Arabic as a sub-dialect of Gulf Arabic. Levantine Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, Egyptian Arabic dialects, involving dialects from Egypt and Sudan. Maghrebi Arabic dialects include those from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya. (Biadsy et al., 2009, pp. 55–56) always treated to be an Arabic dialect; it is written in Latin script. This variety, which is spoken in Yemen, has often been treated to belong to its own class of dialects.

In general, dialects could be divided based on social factors into three main sub-dialects: the dialect, which is spoken by city residents, the dialect, which is spoken by peasants/farmers and the third dialect, which is spoken by Bedouins. The Maltese dialect is a southern Christian-Semitic language spoken on the island of Malta. Maltese evolved from an Arabic dialect and is closely related to Algerian and Tunisian Western Arabic dialects (Pascale, 2011; Sciriha, 2002). The only form of Arabic written in Latin is Maltese, which is heavily influenced by the Sicilian language (spoken in Sicily). It is not always considered an Arabic dialect because it is written in Latin

script. This variety is frequently regarded as belonging to its own class of dialects in Yemen. While dialects can be divided into three major sub-dialects based on social factors: the dialect spoken by city residents, the dialect spoken by peasants/farmers, and the third dialect spoken by Bedouins. (Pascale, 2011; Sciriha, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to use Phase Theory to investigate the use of wh-questions among rural Jordanian speakers. A sample of 404 Jordanians from the Northern Mazar District was chosen to participate in this study. It is important to note that Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) differs from other Arabic dialects. It should be noted, however, that various spoken Arabic dialects differ significantly in lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects with respect to others. (Biadsy et al., 2009, p. 55) suggest that one classification regarding Arabic dialect could be the following: Gulf Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. Iraqi Arabic is the official dialect of Iraq; some dialect classifications classify Iraqi Arabic as a sub-dialect of Gulf Arabic. Levantine Arabic dialects, which include dialects from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Egyptian Arabic dialects, involving dialects from Egypt and Sudan. Maghrebi Arabic dialects include those from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya. (Biadsy et al., 2009, pp. 55–56) always treated to be an Arabic dialect; it is written in Latin script. This variety, which is spoken in Yemen, has often been treated to belong to its own class of dialects. In general, dialects could be divided based on social factors into three main sub-dialects: the dialect, which is spoken by city residents; the dialect, which is spoken by peasants/farmers and the third dialect, which is spoken by Bedouins.

According to (Aoun et al., 2010), the wh-words such as *miin/man* ‘who’ and *?ayya NP* ‘which NP’ when they occur in non-subject positions can be used with the

gap and the resumptive strategies in an interchangeable way. The gap strategy is the only strategy that can be used with wh-words 'su 'what,' kam NP 'how many NP,' and ? adee<sup>8</sup> s 'how much, whether they are in nominal or adverbial case. The resumptive strategy appears to be the only suitable one for forming questions in the subject case in Standard Arabic as well as in Lebanese Arabic. Furthermore, there are many shared characteristics between the two resumptive strategies used to form interrogatives in Arabic dialects. On the one hand, the most observable and essential characteristics are: first, the two strategies show the unbounded dependency that exists between the wh-word and the resumptive pronoun. Secondly, the wh-island constraint is accepted in both strategies. These two strategies are different, though, in that the relativizer yalli/Y illi/yllaði (that) is only used in Class II interrogatives and the wh-word 'su/,eh (what) can only be used in Class II interrogatives according to this case. Moreover, studies, for example, Saddy (1991) for Bahasa Indonesia; Aoun and Li (1993) and Tsai (1994a, 1994b) for Chinese; Watanabe (1992) for Japanese. Watanabe (2003) for Japanese, Cole and Hermon (1994) for Ancash Quechua, Ouhalla (1996) for Iraqi, Reinhart (1998) for English, Megerdoomian, and Ganjavi (2000) for Persian and East Armenian, Simpson (2000), for various languages, Sabel (2001, 2002), and Paul (2003) for Malagasy, and Soltan (2011, 2012) for Egyptian Arabic, that have been carried out to investigate the two types of resumptive Wh-questions Cross-linguistically, point out a solid proof for the differentiation that exists between the two structures.

Egyptian Arabic uses Class II interrogatives as a typical strategy in constructing Wh-questions. While Egyptian Arabic does not appear to employ the resumptive strategy to form Wh-questions, Finally, regarding the Wh-in-situ strategy, which is also used to form Wh-questions in Arabic, this strategy differs from one

Arabic dialect to another in terms of its availability. It is the default strategy in Egyptian Arabic, while it is not employed in MSA. MSA demonstrates variations in the placement of Wh-words in addition to syntactic differences. In Egyptian Arabic, for example, all Wh-words used to form Wh-questions can be placed in-situ, whereas in Lebanese Arabic, not all Wh-words can be placed in situ.

### **1.2.3 Jordanian Arabic Dialects**

All living languages exhibit a certain degree of variation at either phonological, grammatical, or lexical levels. These variations and differences are mostly known in non-standardized spoken languages or dialects. (Qafisheh 1975, pp. 36–39) indicates that colloquial dialects within the Arab world differ not only from country to country and town to town, but there are also some differences from one village to another. And even for the speakers of a single dialect, there are some differences among them due to their age, gender, educational and cultural background. Moreover, the colloquial variety of Jordanian Arabic (JA) has been employed in people's everyday communications away from the formal class sessions or discussions, which are mostly marked using MSA.

Al-Harahsheh (2014, p. 874) admits that there are three colloquial dialects that are employed by the speakers of (JA) namely: urban dialect, which is the most prestigious variety in Jordanian society, it is used in the centers of the main cities among those who have Lebanese, Urban Palestine, or Syrian origin. Interestingly, this dialect has been employed by Jordanian young females, whatever their regions are, because they rank this dialect as the most prestigious and, at the same time, the most appropriate for their society, so they use it to show off. Secondly, the rural dialect is

used by the speakers of rural and farming areas, such as the north and western parts of Irbid. It differs from urban dialects in pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure.

Finally, the Bedouin dialect is used by the speakers who live in the southern and eastern parts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Furthermore, there is widespread agreement in the literature that the rural variety is spoken by people in villages and towns near Jordan's major urban centers on the West Bank. For example, Jerusalem and Nablus. Lately, these rural regions constituted the basic and essential locations where this variety of Arabic was spoken. Currently, however, this rural variety is also employed in the cities of Jordan on the East bank. For example, Irbid City especially by older, illiterate rural women and by old men. The large immigration from the rural areas of Palestine because of wars in 1948 and 1967 to the main cities of Jordan on the East Bank could be considered the most essential reason that caused a change in the linguistic map of the country. According to Suleiman (1993) the rural variety of the Arabic language is no longer limited solely to speakers residing in the West Bank region. The current study examined only the dialect that is spoken by peasants and farmers in some parts since the North Jordan region was chosen for its proximity to the place of residence as well as the fact that this is the first time this subject has been written in this area. which is called Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect (RJAD). The decision to concentrate on this dialect stems from its prevalence in the area and its importance to the local community.

The current research aims to investigate the dialect spoken by peasants and farmers in rural Jordan, specifically in the North Jordan region. This region was chosen because of its proximity to my fictional home, as well as the fact that it had not previously been extensively documented. The study aims to fill a gap in the scientific knowledge of the Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect (RJAD), shedding light on its

distinctive features, and adding to the current knowledge of this linguistic variation. Therefore, the next section was be devoted to providing a brief review of the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect.

#### 1.2.4 Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect

Arab sociolinguists divided Jordanian Arabic into three major spoken dialects (Abd-Eljawad, 1987; Alkhateeb, 1988; Al-Sughayer, 1990; Sakarnah, 2005). These dialects were classified based on social and economic diversities as well as geographical boundaries. Jordanian Arabic dialects are the rural dialect, which is spoken in the villages and outskirts of the main cities in Jordan; the Bedouin dialect, which is spread in the southern and eastern regions of Jordan; and the urban dialect, which is the dialect spoken in the main cities such as Irbid and Amman (Abd-Eljawad, 1987). There are fundamental differences between MSA and the three Jordanian Arabic dialects that are employed in Jordan at the phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels (Fadi, Julia, & Nizar 2009). Al-Deaibes (2015, p. 751) points out that there are two main word orders in RJAD, namely: VSO and SVO. The former is typically used in the past tense. While the latter is normally used in the present tense, However, the two orders could be used interchangeably without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, it is the speaker's choice to use either SVO or VSO word order. The following two examples explain the two-word order employed in RJAD.

(1) Akal l-walad l-tofahā VSO  
ate the-boy the-apple.  
The boy ate the apple.

(2) l-walad akal l-tofahā SVO  
the-boy ate the-apple.

The boy ate the apple.

Al-Deaibes (2015, p.751)

After having a brief overview of RJAD, there is a need to provide general information relating to the modes of wh-questions employed by the speakers of RJAD. Therefore, the next subsection was to explain the main mode of wh-questions in rural varieties.

### **1.3 The Statement of the Problem**

Analyzing Wh-question in natural language grammar poses several syntactic concerns mainly in Arab dialects. In this regard, the generative syntax as developed by Chomsky and other syntacticians has offered the explanation of the movements and structures of Wh-questions. Nonetheless, despite the rich data available, some specific areas have not received much attention when it comes to the analysis of Wh-questions in Standard Arabic and different Arabic varieties. The reason for selecting this topic stems from the pragmatic aim of trying to solve the syntactic problems that are present in the formation of Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic.

Previous works have primarily explored the most frequently used dialects, and Standard Arabic in particular, whereas less attention has been paid to the lesser-used regional dialects like the one used by the rural population of Jordan, for example. Through applying Phase Theory, hence, this study seeks to identify specific syntactic features that relate to Wh-questions in this precise variety of the Arabic language to add to the general knowledge base about Arabic syntax. Both Btoosh (2010) and Alshammari (2022) pointed out that Chomsky's study on wh-movement has influenced the subsequent studies analyzing wh-questions in Standard Arabic and dialects. On the other hand, Alsager (2017) and Btoosh (2010) mentioned that other

works, including Alotaibi (2013) and Fakih (2012), discussed wh-question syntax in Modern Standard Arabic and different sorts of Arabic dialects such as the Syrian and the Egyptian ones by considering differences in wh-movement and clause structure.

Researchers who have worked on this subject include Alotaibi (2013), Al-Shorafat (2013), Al-Sager (2017), and Fakih (2017). Specifically, the research under discussion by Alotaibi (2013), Al-Shorafat (2013), Al-Sager (2017), and Fakih (2017) is devoted to the aspects of Arabic syntax and derivation and how wh-questions are formed with reference to Modern Standard Arabic, as well as the related dialects. In the presented paper, Alotaibi investigates the process of wh-question formation within the context of the minimalist program predicting that non-subject wh-elements move to the position of focus and that wh-subjects are base-generated in the topic position. In this analysis, Al-Shorafat deals with wh- questions in Ha'il Arabic with special attention to the Phase theory by Chomsky focusing on the derivation of Wh- subjects. Likewise, Al-Sager is also concerned with the formation process of wh-question syntax and is relevant to the current study. Fakih discusses the morpho-syntax of question particles in Standard Arabic and analyses question formation across languages combined with the explanation of the syntactic functions of question particles and wh-words. Together, these studies expand the knowledge on wh-question syntax and the morpho-syntactic features in Arabic to which well-known theories have been applied to.

The purpose of the study is to further the research on Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic that was conducted by Hamdan and Hamdan (2020). Specifically, this research fills a vacuum in the literature on Phase Theory and Wh-question structuring. In other words, Hence, the proposed research intends to go beyond Hamdan and Hamdan (2020) analysis of Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic in

terms of some critical aspects that were not investigated sufficiently or were beyond the scope of the prior study.

This study focuses on the various types of Wh-questions used in the RJA and research about the syntactic structures that are linked to each mode to offer a better perspective on how Wh-questions are formulated and used in RJA. Furthermore, the role of Wh-scope as an effective means of differentiating between interrogative and declarative constructions will also be investigated and analyzed as this aspect has not been covered extensively in other studies. One of the major implications of this work is an attempt to apply Phase Theory to evaluate the adherence of the syntactic constituency of rural Jordanian Arabic to the tendencies of UG. Through adopting this theoretical framework, the current research aims at addressing an obvious gap in literature and providing new knowledge on the decision-making aspect related to the construction of Wh-questions. Therefore, the present research not only corroborates and generalises the findings obtained by Hamdan and Hamdan (2020) but also brings into light new theoretical conceptions that enrich the comprehension of Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic.

The goal of the research is to ascertain whether rural Jordanian speakers' use of Wh-questions is consistent with Chomsky's Phase Theory. It serves two main purposes: The knowledge and proficiency of speakers' syntactic comprehension are shown by these language structures. The application and testing of Phase Theory to Wh-questions from speakers of rural Jordan also advances theoretical linguistic taxonomy (as contrasted by Hamdan & Hamdan, 2020).

It should be noted that several studies on the Wh-movement have been carried out in various Arabic dialects, such as Hodeidi Arabic (Fakih, 2015), Iraqi Arabic

(Wahba, 2010), and Najrani Arabic (Fakih, 2014). Placing the Wh-question at the start of the clause or leaving it alone (in-situ) are two common construction styles. To examine the many types of inquiries and related syntactic compositions, this research introduces readers to the Wh-question structures found in Rural Jordanian Arabic Dialect (RJAD). In other words, the study focuses on various wh-question forms, and the syntactic structures, like the position of wh- word, verb and auxiliary particle movement etc., while comparing the forms for questions requesting specific information and the forms that sought longer and elaborated responses.

Researchers like Bradner (2012), Cheshire (2017), and Choueiri (2019) have noted that it has been challenging to investigate syntactic diversity in Arabic dialects, especially the rural dialect of Jordan. Labov's concept of linguistic variables has largely framed the study of dialectology or sociolinguistic variances such as phonetics, morphology, and lexicon. Additionally, at one stage in the development of his theory of generative grammar, Chomsky (1965) said that because dialectic variations were thought to be syntactically similar, the issue of syntactic variation shouldn't be important for explanatory frameworks. Furthermore, more information is needed for syntactic variation study than for phonetic variation research since phonetic variability is frequent whereas syntactic variation is rare. More specifically, the research proposal for the study on wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic aims to provide evidence against Chomsky's (1965) opinion that dialects are similar, syntactically speaking, and that syntactic differences are less essential in terms of explanation. Admittedly, phonetic variability is more widespread than syntactic variability; however, this work is intended to focus on the specific syntactic constructions used in wh-question formation in the JRA of rural Jordan to advance the knowledge of syntactic variation within Arabic dialects. Overall, the research is valuable since it focuses on the modes

of wh-questions and analyses their syntactic consequences, thus filling a gap in the current knowledge and offering empirical data that can detect different syntactic characteristics of the discussed dialect.

The problem of gathering enough information on syntactic elements like the Wh-question was linked to conventional sociolinguistic methods of data collection, like interviews. Thus, a lack of pertinent, useful, and computerized research methodologies for syntax variations has restricted the study of syntactic variation. Applying state-of-the-art computational techniques for the qualitatively based investigation of syntactic variation is crucial to overcoming such difficulties. The output of the data is more reliable using this procedure. Consequently, the explanations tackle the problem of insufficient research on syntactic variation. (Gervain, 2003; HASTY, 2014).

Thus, instead of addressing only the spoken language, both variationists and generativists must extend spoken language's syntax analyses. (Cheshire, 2017). Wh-questions in the context of generative theories have been the subject of recent research on Palestinian Arabic (Abu-Jarad, 2008), Makkan Arabic (Bardeas, 2005), Emirati Arabic (Leung & Al-Eisaei, 2011), and Cairene Arabic (Al-Touny, 2011). This research focuses on variation within individual dialects of Arabic as well as between dialects, such as rural Jordanian Arabic. Although computer systems have not yet ventured into this field, theoretical linguistics has already examined non-locally dependent Mandarin Wh-questions, according to Kong and Hsu (2023). In contrast, Mandarin keeps Wh words in the same location, exactly as wh-movement languages do not. Because of its unique language feature, it provides an excellent setting for researching cognitive processing processes and readers' handling of overt interdependence.

According to Aoun et al. (2010), one characteristic of human language that sets it apart is the way in which sentence structure parts shift, such as wh-words in inquiries. Syntactic analysis aims to determine long-distance connections between displaced components, such as wh-words, and their corresponding locations within the sentence, which may be held by a pronominal resumptive element or a gap. Recent studies have focused on the differences between the resumptive and gap strategies.

Choueiri (2019) claims that several studies have examined different Arabic dialects, offering a chance to look at syntactic diversity in certain dialects, including rural Jordanian Arabic. Consequently, this study advances our understanding of the syntactic variety seen in Wh-questions in Arabic dialects, particularly in the northern, rural Jordanian Arabic dialect. According to Brander (2012), microvariation research adds to the idea of language variation by attempting to account for inter- and intra-speaker variation in a systematic way. An in-depth knowledge of microvariation may shed light on the processes behind language development, as data variability is a necessary condition for language change. Prosodic considerations lead wh-words in Jordanian Arabic to shift to the left or right edge of the phonological phrase. Prosodic prominence should be assigned to the most significant information in an inquiry, with the wh-word situated on each side of the phonological phrase.

This study aims to investigate the formation of Wh-questions and associated structures in the Arabic dialect. Literature already has research on this subject. In their research, Al-Momani and Al-Saidat (2010) examined the Wh-movement in Jordanian Arabic. It became evident that mobility was optional with the emergence of a particular intonational morpheme. The present research is to analyse the grammatical consequences of combining TP with a null head 'C' in RJAD and determine whether

Wh- inquiries in Arabic follow Chomsky's Phase Theory. To close a research vacuum in linguistics.

The current study looks at lexical diversity in the Rural Jordanian Arabic dialect (RJAD), particularly with relation to the Wh-questions. Research to date have focused on morphologic and phonetic distinctions; however, syntactic variations—especially in interrogative constructions—have received less attention.

In other words, Extensive prior studies conducted on various Arabic dialects, especially about wh-questions, have confined their analysis mostly to morphological and phonetic differences rather than to syntactic differences. Research in morphology concern patterns with which question particles and wh-words are created and used in different varieties and the specific syntactic issues and variety of types of interrogative constructions. For example, research have been investigations concerning the syntactic properties of interrogatives in Standard Arabic and different Jordanian dialects, focusing on the comparison of the forms where they are alike or where they are different depending on the usage.

Phonetics has also been discussed as well as focuses on the distinction made concerning the variation of the sound systems of the different dialects and how these are varied and used in the formation as well as interpretation of questions posed. Nevertheless, the prospective syntactic fluctuations in the formation of interrogative constructions have attracted less focus, especially the rural Jordanian Arabic, which is the case study of the present research to examine the lexical differentiation in wh-questions and syntactic consequences. It is important to pay particular attention to the syntactical features of the text as the later will help to distinguish certain structural

characteristics which are instrumental in understanding the dialect difference in Arabic. (Al-Momani & Al-Saidat (2010); Alshammari (2022)

Bradner, Cheshire, and Choueiri state that it is challenging to analyse a measure of syntactic variability in Arabic dialects due to data limits and phonetic difficulties. Even though current research focuses on wh-questions in many Arabic dialects, such as Makkan, Emirati, Cairene Arabic, and Palestinian Arabic, little thought is still given to comprehending the variances in a specific vernacular, as is the case with RJAD. Using Phase Theory.

The phenomenon of syntactic-prosody interaction in wh-word movement was examined in rural Arabic spoken in Jordan. Phonological prosodic elements within the phonological phrase determine the prominence of information in inquiries. This implies that when it comes to wh-questions in this dialect, Phase Theory is used to determine the relationship between prosody and grammar. Furthermore, the present study employs computer programmes that overcome the limitations imposed by traditional sociolinguistic data collection approaches. Wh-question is one of the new tools that makes it easier to explore certain syntactic facts, allowing for the provision of solid methodological premises.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the modes of wh-questions employed by the speakers of rural Jordanian Arabic and their implications according to Phase Theory.

- i) To investigate if the WH-question modalities used by Arabic speakers in rural Jordan adhere to the principles of universal grammar.

- ii) To list the syntactic elements associated with each interrogative form within the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect while maintaining reference to universal grammar structures.
- iii) To examine how different interrogative modes used in rural Jordanian Arabic affect the perception of WH-scope, considering the impact of universal grammar on scope interpretation.
- iv) To use Phase Theory to examine the effects of universal grammar principles on the behaviour of WH-structures in the Arabic dialect spoken in rural Jordan.

## 1.5 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i) What are the modes of wh-questions that are employed in forming the wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic?
- ii) How is the nature of the syntactic construction correlated with each mode of interrogative in the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect?
- iii) What is the role of the wh-scope in each of the interrogative modes and how are the wh-questions identified as interrogative as opposed declarative?
- iv) What part does Phase Theory play in the decision-making process of whether the structure of the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect is consistent with universal grammar principles?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

Cheshire (2017) states that there are many ways in which the understanding of spoken language might have a great benefit. Firstly, it would be helpful if some theoretical rigor could be brought to the concepts of emphasis and stance, which are so important to speakers and are often applied to the descriptions of language use. The study's relevance derives from its focus on a single aspect: the use of Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic. The primary goal of this research is to contribute to the computational component of grammar, an undertaking in which generative techniques have enhanced Arabic syntax with useful generalizations. These generalizations extend beyond their local context, laying down the foundation for further research into many aspects of general theory.

In essence, study is significant because of its diverse contributions. It emphasizes the need for theoretical clarity in comprehending spoken language, focusing on notions such as emphasis and posture. It creates a systematic framework for understanding syntactic variation by bridging the gap between generativists and variationists. Further, by fusing intrinsic structures with social and interactional principles, it delves into the domain of universals. The study of Wh-questions in rural Jordanian Arabic adds to the computational basis of grammar, with implications for larger domains of generative theory. The study's relevance is echoed via theoretical innovations, practical consequences, and possible contributions to multidisciplinary collaboration, as indicated by its agreement with early research on Arabic dialects.

Second, Henry (2002, p. 277) points out that generativists might help variationists determine on a more systematic basis which syntactic structures should be considered variants of a single form. This was helpful to assess the universal

dimension of any internal constraints on variation. Thirdly, it may be possible to identify some language universals governing the form of spoken language, though for this to be possible, it was necessary, in his view, to broaden our perspective and look for social or incidental principles in addition to the principles governing innate structures. In this endeavor, we were required to work with researchers from other fields of linguistics. For example, the prevalence of language has been very successfully applied to the findings of social dialectology (see, for example, Kortman 2002, 2004).

This research supports the notion of establishing universal linguistic rules that govern spoken language structure. It explores the use of Wh-questions in the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect to identify potential language units. The study investigates how speakers use Wh-questions for emphasis and posture, emphasizing the interaction between language forms and social dynamics. Engagement with social dialectology approaches demonstrates interdisciplinary teamwork. The ramifications of the work extend to practical realms such as language teaching and natural language processing.

Overall, it seeks to advance global linguistic understanding while providing practical applications. The significance of this study comes to light because it investigates a single aspect: Questions were used in one of the Arabic dialects—the rural Jordanian dialect—and this study was intended to make a significant contribution to the computational component of grammar; as a result, generative approaches have improved Arabic syntax. These generalizations could be used to examine different theories related to generative theory. This fact was ascertained by Benmamoun (2013, p. 147), who states that: Generative approaches to the syntax of Arabic have provided important generalizations to probe various aspects of the theoretical apparatus of the generative paradigm.

The study of SA (Spaceport America) and various other Arabic dialects have made important contributions to the ongoing research on the computational component of grammar, its properties, and how it interacts with other aspects of grammar. The dialects that have particularly been the focus of attention reflect the four main linguistic groupings (Maghrebi, Levantine, Egyptian, and Gulf). In other words, it is critical to note this study is significant due to its numerous contributions to practice, knowledge, and theory. It also requires theoretical rigour in understanding spoken language, focusing specifically on concepts such as emphasis and stance, which are important for speakers and frequently used in language descriptions.

The purpose of this study is to refine theories regarding language use, as this research intends to explain the theoretical definitions of WH-questions, reconcile the difference between generative and variational approaches, and develop a more encompassing theory of the syntactic construction of Rural Jordanian Arabic. Thus, through examining WH-questions, the present work helps to uncover the universal properties of spoken language that are underpinned by both social/interactional factors and motoric constraints. This approach promotes cooperation between various linguistic disciplines and offers significant information about the general characteristics of language. Also, the results of the study are relevant in the computational aspect of grammar and provide generalization across different domains of generative theory, as well as resonating with the current research on the computational nature of Arabic dialects. Finally, the study contributes to theory developments, practice implementations, and interdisciplinary research findings.

## 1.7 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this study is the Jordanian Arabic dialect itself; the investigation excludes other forms of Jordanian Arabic dialects like Urban Jordanian Arabic and Bedouin Jordanian Arabic. This brings up the problem with specificity, whereby the results cannot be applied to all Jordanian Arabic dialects while other varieties remain untouched when it comes to WH-question modalities and universal grammar principles. More specifically, subsequent studies should focus on these dialects to provide a broader perspective on WH-questions in Jordanian Arabic.

Also, the study is limited to WH-questions only, leaving out yes-no questions which form a central part of the questions in both oral as well as written language use and analysis. Similarly, although the focus being placed on the WH-question structures promotes a detailed exploration of these aspects, it reduces the overall knowledge on interrogative forms in the rural Jordanian Arabic dialect. Notably, yes-no questions that are commonly used in everyday communication are not included in this study and this can leave some gaps in the generalization of the findings.

Finally, it is imperative to note that only Phase Theory forms the theoretical basis of the current research study. Although this framework is crucial for analyzing the connection between WH-questions and universal grammar, it might not consider other theories of syntactic patterns that could offer different or supplementary perspectives. The study also has a major methodological limitation since the data is analyzed based on Phase Theory, it may not be possible to generalize the findings of the study to other languages or other dialects within the same language that has not been investigated within the context of Phase Theory. Additional studies could widen