An Investigation Of Secondary School Students' Errors In Formulating Wh- Questions

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ABSTRACT

An Investigation of Secondary School Students' Errors in Formulating Wh-Questions.

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This study aimed at describing, analysing, and explaining the secondary cycle students' errors in formulating Wh-questions. These errors were: word order (v1), verbal form (v2) Wh-question word (v3), auxiliary omission (v4) auxiliary replacement (v5), redundancy (v6) repetition of the underlined word(s) (v7), and irrelevant question (v8). The errors were identified, classified, and the occurrences of errors in each type were counted.

The sample of this study consisted of 150 students (75 of them were males and 75 were females) for the academic year 1985/1986. Those students were randomly selected from two secondary schools which were randomly chosen from all the secondary schools in Beit Ras Office of Education, (One for girls, and the other for boys).

Basically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

1- Are there any significant differences in the occurrences of the eight types of errors in formulating Wh-questions taken together due to the grade of the students? And which type(s)
accounts for the differences (if there were any) among the three grades?

2- Are there any significant differences in the occurrences of the eight types of errors in formulating Wh-questions taken together due to the sex of the students? And which type(s) account(s) for the differences (if there were any) between sex?

3- Are there any significant differences in the occurrences of the eight types of errors in formulating Wh-questions taken together due to the interaction between sex and grade? And which account(s) for the differences (if there were any) between interaction.

A 2 by 3 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and the discriminant analysis were used in analysing the data of this study to answer the aforementioned questions.

The findings of this study were as follows:

1- The MONOVA results indicated the following:

a. There were significant differences between males and females on the eight dependent variables taken together.

b. There were significant differences among grades on the eight dependent variables taken together.

c. There were significant differences between the interaction of sex and grade on all the dependent variables taken together.

2- The discriminant analysis as a method of determining which variable(s) account(s) for the biggest difference between the compared groups in MANOVA revealed the following results:
a: The sole discriminant function for comparing males with females showed that males committed more errors in redundancy than females. While, females committed more errors in repetition of the underlined word(s), irrelevant questions, and verbal form than males.

b: In comparing between grades, the first discriminant function showed that third graders committed less errors in auxiliary omission, and Wh-question words than first and second grades. The second discriminant function showed that second graders committed less errors in redundancy than third and first grades.

c: In the case of the interaction between sex by grade, the first discriminant function showed that first grade males committed more errors in verbal form and less errors in redundancy than the other five groups. Also, it indicated that first grade females committed less errors in verbal form and more errors in redundancy in comparison with the other five groups. The second discriminant function showed that third grade males committed more errors in irrelevant questions than first grade females and second grade males did.

Attempt was made to ascribe these errors to: developmental errors, ignorance of rule restriction, mother tongue interference, overgeneralization and performance.