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The Impact of L1 Transfer on the Acquisition of Wh-Movement Constraints in English Syntactic Islands: Evidence from Behdini-Kurdish Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates how Behdini-Kurdish learners of English acquire wh-movement constraints, with a particular focus on syntactic islands—structures that restrict the displacement of interrogative elements. Given that Behdini-Kurdish is a wh-in-situ language, learners often misjudge English constructions that require movement, leading to systematic errors in interpreting and forming questions. Using a Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT) with 40 university-level learners, the research identifies clear patterns of L1 transfer, especially in complex structures such as coordinate and wh-islands. The findings reveal that learners frequently accept ungrammatical sentences due to the absence of comparable constraints in their native language. These results highlight the critical role of explicit instruction, contrastive analysis, and targeted pedagogical intervention in TEFL settings. By bridging linguistic theory with classroom practice, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of second language acquisition for Kurdish learners and underscores the importance of addressing typological mismatches when designing grammar curricula for EFL learners from structurally divergent language backgrounds.



About the Journal

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1. Introduction

The formation of interrogative sentences through wh-movement represents a persistent challenge in second language acquisition (SLA), especially when learners' first languages structurally diverge from English. In English, syntactic islands impose strict constraints on where wh-phrases can move, making certain extractions ungrammatical.

Behdini-Kurdish, spoken in northern Iraq, typifies a wh-in-situ language where interrogative words remain in their base position, without movement. For example, (1) "*Te çî kirîye?*" ("What have you done?") follows the declarative word order, contrasting with the movement required in English ("What have you done?").

This fundamental structural difference imposes cognitive and linguistic challenges for Behdini-Kurdish learners acquiring English question formation. Misinterpretation and overgeneralisation of L1 rules into L2 contexts are common.

The present study aims to investigate how Behdini-Kurdish learners of English handle wh-movement violations in syntactic islands, focusing on L1 transfer effects. It further seeks to offer practical recommendations for TEFL curriculum design, especially for Kurdish-speaking learners, thereby contributing both to SLA research and language pedagogy.

There is a wealth of research and studies on wh-movement in SLA, but the gaping problem is that there are almost no studies on second language learners whose background is Kurdish. Given the parametric differences between English and Behdini-Kurdish, research is urgently needed to identify the following:

- The extent to which Behdini-Kurdish learners rely on L1 structures when processing wh-movement in English.
- Whether these learners exhibit specific patterns of syntactic transfer distinct from learners of other wh-in-situ languages.

The impact of various teaching approaches. For example, explicit instruction vs. implicit exposure to overcome the effects of language transfer.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Wh-Movement and Syntactic Islands in English

The discussion of wh-movement and islands is based on a generative grammar model (Chomsky 1957, 1965, 1977). In this view, human language is influenced by a universal set of rules regarding grammar — Universal Grammar (UG) — that form the basis for all natural languages. Wh-movement (and its variants) is one such universal—except that the specific language-partition of wh-movement is different in every language.

While in linguistic terms this is known as wh-movement (the 'who or what or where' of the sentence), what it really means is that in contrast to a simple affirmative statement like '*Mary ran home*', English requires that you move the interrogative element (who, what, where) from its position where it naturally is in the base-generated sentence, to the beginning of the clause. A phenomenon known as 'Move α ' (Chomsky, 1981) accounts for this fronting operation, allowing syntagmatic constituents of sentences to front as long as they adhere to structural constraints. For example, the shift from '*You saw who?*' to '*Who did you see?*' shows a simple example of wh-movement.

However, not all syntactic domains permit such movement. As claimed by Cartner et al. (2025), certain structures, termed syntactic islands, prohibit the extraction of constituents, resulting in ungrammatical constructions. Ross (1967) first identified these island constraints, which continue to be central to our understanding of syntactic structure and movement limitations. The most common types of syntactic islands include:

1. Adjunct Islands

Movement from within an adverbial clause (e.g., clauses introduced by *while*, *after*, *because*) is blocked.

(2) ✗ *What did you fall asleep while reading ___?*

2. Wh-Islands

Extraction is restricted from embedded clauses that themselves contain a wh-word.

(3) ✗ *What did John wonder whether Mary bought ___?*

3. Subject Islands

Extraction from within a subject clause result in ungrammaticality.

(4) ✗ *Who the book that ___ read was fascinating?*

4. Left Branch Islands

In English, movement from the leftmost element of a noun phrase—such as possessors or determiners—is not permitted.

(5) ✗ *Whose did you borrow book yesterday?*

5. Coordinate Structure Islands

Constituents cannot be extracted from only one part of a coordinated structure.

(6) ✗ *What did Mary visit Paris and ___ during her vacation?*

6. Complex Noun Phrase (CNP) Islands

These involve restrictions on movement from within clauses embedded inside noun phrases.

- **a. Sentential Complement to a Noun:**

(7) ✗ *Who did you hear the rumour that ___ is moving to New York?*

- **b. Relative Clauses:**

(8) ✗ *Who is the man that you said ___ won the lottery?*

7. Non-Bridge Verb Islands

Clauses embedded under non-bridge verbs (e.g., *regret*, *deny*, *whisper*) resist extraction.

(9) ✗ *What does she regret that ___ happened?*

These constraints are not just theoretical curiosities—they are essential to the grammaticality of English sentences. For second language learners, especially those whose L1s lack such restrictions (such as Behdini-Kurdish), these islands often go unnoticed without explicit instruction. Understanding where movement is blocked can significantly improve learners' syntactic awareness and grammatical accuracy, making these structures a crucial focus in TEFL pedagogy.

2.2 Wh-Movement and Syntactic Islands in Behdini-Kurdish

Behdini-Kurdish, a major dialect of Northern Kurdish spoken in the Duhok and Zakho regions of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, unlike English, exhibits *wh-in-situ* behavior, where interrogative phrases typically remain in their canonical positions. This structural difference presents unique challenges for Kurdish learners acquiring English. Unlike English, Behdini-Kurdish forms its questions through intonation and interrogative particles and does not use syntactic displacement. So, for example, the phrase "*Kê gol tomar kir?*" ("Who scored the goal?") keeps the original declarative word order of the sentence.

Toma (2020) finds that Behdini-Kurdish speakers are less syntactically sensitive to island constraints than English speakers. That is, structures that trigger island violations and are ungrammatical in English usually have in Behdini-Kurdish no problem. There are implications for L2 acquisition errors relating to transfer, because this syntactic permissiveness leads learners to apply L1 grammatical norms to the L2 more broadly than warranted.

Such unrestricted L1 wh-movement give rise to inadequate sensitivity to wh-movement regulations at the target language. Hence, students may not detect ungrammatical forms that flout island restrictions of English, such as trying to extract a wh-phrase from a complex NP or embedded clause. These errors exemplify a combination of both types of L1 interference and deficits in L2 syntactic competence (Perpiñán, 2020).

Behdini-Kurdish follows a *wh*-in-situ pattern in question formation. Unlike English, where interrogative phrases must be fronted, Behdini typically retains *wh*-elements in their original syntactic positions. The language relies heavily on intonation, discourse context, and interrogative particles, rather than syntactic displacement, to mark interrogative force (Thackston, 2006).

For example:

- (10) *Te kê dît?*
 (You who saw?)
 → “Who did you see?”

- (11) *Te çi kirîye?*
 (You what have done?)
 → “What have you done?”

These constructions show no movement of the *wh*-phrase to the front of the sentence. Instead, interrogative meaning is inferred through position and prosody. This syntactic pattern contrasts sharply with English, where such in-situ configurations are ungrammatical.

Behdini-Kurdish also appears to lack rigid island constraints comparable to those found in English. Structures involving embedded clauses (as in 12), relative clauses (as in 13), and coordination (as in 14) often permit constituent extraction without ungrammaticality. This syntactic flexibility may explain why Behdini-speaking learners of English struggle with constructions like *wh*-islands or coordinate structures, which are tightly constrained in English but not in their L1.

- (12) *Erê Con çi pirsiyar diket ka Marî kirîye?*
 Question particle John what wondering make whether Mary bought
 → “What did John wonder whether Mary had bought __?”

Sentence (12) is ungrammatical in English due to the *wh*-island constraint, but it is grammatical in Behdini-Kurdish.

- (13) *Ew çîroka hatîye nivîsîn bi dilê kî bû?*
 The story been written in heart who was
 → “Who did you like the story that __ wrote?”

Sentence (13) is ungrammatical in English due to extraction from within a relative clause, whereas it is grammatical in Behdini-Kurdish.

- (14) *Erê Con pertokek û çi kirîye?*
 Question particle John book and what bought?
 → “What did John buy a book and __?”

Sentence (14) is ungrammatical in English because extraction is attempted from only one conjunct, while it is grammatical in Behdini-Kurdish.

The divergence between the two systems means that Behdini-Kurdish learners are less likely to notice island violations in English, particularly in the absence of direct instruction. The grammatical tolerance for in-situ *wh*-elements and embedded clause extraction in Behdini fosters negative transfer, leading learners to accept ungrammatical English questions as correct. This transfer pattern has been observed in other *wh*-in-situ languages such as Chinese and Japanese (White, 2013), and is especially relevant for learners whose native syntax does not restrict movement domains.

Thus, understanding the grammatical system of Behdini-Kurdish is essential when examining the source of errors in English *wh*-movement among Kurdish learners. This structural difference between English and Behdini-Kurdish may cause Behdini-Kurdish learners to accept English constructions like “Where you went?” as grammatical, failing to apply obligatory movement rules. Such transfer effects underline the critical need for explicit instruction addressing syntactic displacement and island constraints in English.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on *wh*-movement and SLA in learners of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, few studies have investigated how Kurdish learners, particularly speakers of Behdini-Kurdish,

acquire English syntactic constraints.

Given the typological distance between Behdini and English, and the socio-linguistic importance of English for Kurdish learners in Iraq, this study seeks to fill that gap by offering both theoretical insights and practical teaching recommendations.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Research Design and Objectives

This study adopts a mixed-methods design to explore how Behdini-Kurdish learners of English judge grammaticality in sentences involving *wh-movement within syntactic islands*. The central objective is to determine the extent to which L1 transfer influences learners' sensitivity to these constraints—particularly when the syntactic violations are ungrammatical in English but acceptable in Behdini-Kurdish. The findings aim to inform both linguistic theory and practical TEFL approaches tailored to Kurdish-speaking students.

3.2 Participants

The study involved 40 undergraduate students from the Department of Translation, College of Languages, University of Duhok. All participants reported Behdini-Kurdish as their native language and had been studying English for at least three years. Their proficiency ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate, based on academic coursework and internal assessments. The sample included 15 male and 25 female students.

3.3 Instrument: Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)

To elicit learners' intuitive judgments about grammaticality, a Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT) was used—an established method in SLA research (White, 2013; Hawkins, 2001). The GJT consisted of 26 English sentences, each falling into one of seven syntactic island types:

1. Adjunct Islands
2. Wh-Islands
3. Subject Islands
4. Left Branch Islands
5. Coordinate Structure Islands
6. Complex Noun Phrase (CNP) Islands
 - Sentential Complements
 - Relative Clauses
7. Non-Bridge Verb Islands

Each structure was represented by one grammatical and one ungrammatical example, ensuring a balanced distribution of item types. For instance:

(15) ✓ *Why did you leave early?*

(16) ✗ *Why did you leave after the meeting ended ___?* (Adjunct Island violation)

(Full sentence list in Appendix A.)

Participants were instructed to mark each sentence as either "correct" or "incorrect", relying on their internal grammatical intuitions rather than explicit rule recall.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected in a supervised classroom environment over two sessions to minimise fatigue. Before the task, learners were given a brief orientation explaining the study's purpose and ethical guarantees. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and had no impact on academic standing.

To ensure instrument clarity and reliability, a pilot test was conducted with a comparable group of learners. Minor adjustments were made to wording and item order based on pilot feedback.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis combined quantitative scoring with qualitative error patterning, consistent with SLA research best practices.

- Each judgment was coded: *1* for correct, *0* for incorrect.

- Accuracy percentages were calculated by island type.
- Patterns of frequent errors were analysed to identify L1 transfer effects, overgeneralisation, and processing difficulties.
- Results were benchmarked against native speaker performance standards reported in prior GJT studies (e.g., White, 2013).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines for research with human participants. Prior to data collection, participants were briefed on the study's aims, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. No identifying information was collected, and all data was anonymized. The study was reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Duhok, College of Languages.

3.7 Reliability and Validity of the GJT Instrument

To guarantee that the instrument is valid, the items that were put in the GJT were designed based on established linguistic theories and the syntactic constraints linked to islands as explained and described in previous studies (Ross, 1967; Chomsky, 1986). As for reliability, a pre-pilot test was conducted where all the items were analyzed at the individual level to ensure internal consistency, and it was discovered that no item was problematic or could impose any kind of misinterpretation. By using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze participants' performance, we try to have a multidimensional understanding of how learners of Behdini-Kurdish acquire wh-movement constraints in English.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Empirical Findings

The study employed the Grammaticality Judgment Task in order to test Behdini-Kurdish learners' ability to identify grammatical violations in English sentences containing ungrammatical wh-movements within syntactic islands. Participants were asked to evaluate a set of sentences, some grammatically correct and others containing violations, containing seven different types of syntactic islands.

The findings were later categorized and analyzed so that to be able to determine learners' grammatical strengths and weaknesses. Total number of correct and incorrect judgments by island type, along with the percentage accuracy for each are all shown in Table (1):

Table 1. Grammaticality Judgment Accuracy by Syntactic Island Type

Syntactic Island Type	Correct Judgments	Incorrect Judgments	Accuracy (%)
Subject Islands	65	35	65.0
Complex Noun Phrase Islands	55	45	55.0
Non-bridge Verb Islands	50	50	50.0
Left Branch Islands	30	70	30.0
Adjunct Islands	28	72	28.0
Wh-Islands	24	76	24.0
Coordinate Structure Islands	20	80	20.0

4.2 Interpretation of Results

The results show a significant variation in learners' performance depending on the type of syntactic island. The most prominent patterns that emerged can be summarized as follows:

Higher Accuracy:

- **Subject Islands (65%):** Learners demonstrated the highest accuracy in recognizing violations involving subject islands. This suggests a relatively better internalization of subject-related

constraints, possibly due to their more transparent surface structure and frequent occurrence in English input.

- **Complex Noun Phrase (CNP) Islands (55%):** Learners performed moderately well here, especially in distinguishing grammatical structures from violations involving sentential complements and relative clauses. This may indicate a partial acquisition of the hierarchical complexity involved in CNPs.
- **Non-bridge Verb Islands (50%):** Learners showed a fair ability to identify that extraction from clauses introduced by non-bridge verbs (e.g., *regret*) is ungrammatical. However, the even distribution of correct and incorrect judgments implies that this constraint is not yet fully consolidated.

Lower Accuracy:

- **Coordinate Structure Islands (20%):** Performance was lowest for coordination structures. Only 1 in 5 learners correctly judged these violations. This suggests a strong L1 transfer effect, as Behdini-Kurdish may permit more flexible coordination and constituent reordering.
- **Wh-Islands (24%):** Similar to coordinate islands, learners struggled to detect embedded wh-clauses as ungrammatical movement environments. This aligns with prior studies showing wh-in-situ speakers face difficulty with embedded dependencies (White, 2013).
- **Adjunct and Left Branch Islands (28% and 30%, respectively):** These are among the opaquer island types due to their subtle syntactic boundaries. Errors in these areas reflect difficulty in recognizing constraints that have no counterpart in the learners' native grammar.

4.3 Error Patterns and L1 Interference

Qualitative analysis of the incorrect judgments reveals two major error patterns:

1. Overgeneralization of L1 Syntax

Participants often treated ungrammatical English constructions as acceptable, especially in structures where Behdini-Kurdish would allow wh-in-situ usage. For example:

- "*What did John wonder whether Mary bought?*" was frequently marked as correct, reflecting a failure to detect embedded clause constraints.

2. Underdifferentiation of Complex Structures

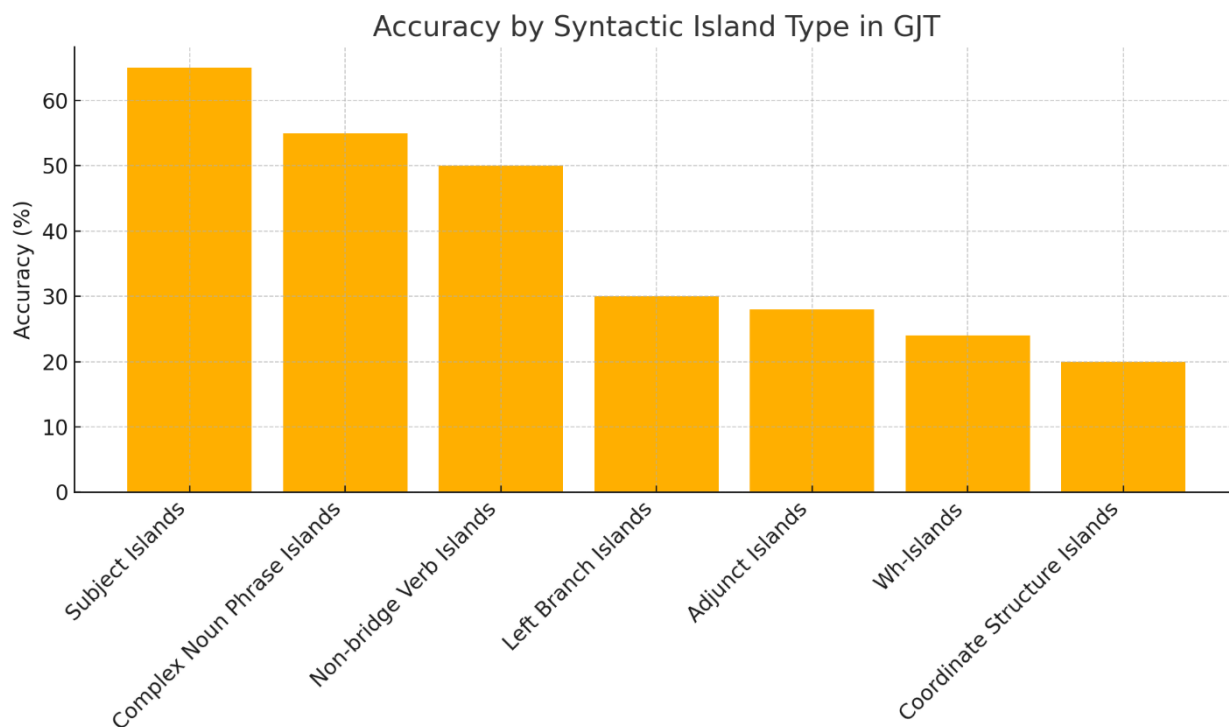
Errors in left-branch and adjunct islands suggest that learners are not parsing these structures at a sufficiently deep syntactic level. Rather than applying abstract constraints, they may be relying on surface-level heuristics like semantic plausibility.

4.4 Cross-Group Comparison and Theoretical Implications

These findings align with broader SLA literature on L1 transfer (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996) and typological effects in acquiring syntax (Tsimplici & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007). In comparison with native English speakers—who typically show over 90% accuracy on such tasks (White, 2013)—the Behdini-Kurdish learners' accuracy rates are considerably lower, especially in syntactically opaque structures.

This confirms that structural dissimilarity between L1 and L2 significantly impacts the acquisition of complex syntactic rules like wh-movement constraints. Without comparable movement restrictions in their L1, learners must rely heavily on explicit instruction and input enhancement to acquire English-specific rules.

The following bar graph shows the accuracy rates of learners of Behdini-Kurdish across different types of syntactic islands, as reported in the GJT test results.

Figure (1). Rates of accuracy for each syntactic island type

5. Factors Influencing Acquisition

It is clear that there are several factors that account for the acquisition of wh-movement when it comes to syntactic islands. These factors will be explained in details below:

5.1 First Language Transfer

L1 transfer was found to be the most significant factor influencing second language acquisition among the participants in this study. The participants' first language, Behdini-Kurdish, is a wh-in-situ language, meaning that it does not follow the movement that occurs in the target language of acquisition. These structural differences between the two languages make participants prone to projecting their native language grammar patterns onto English, which often leads to them accepting grammatically incorrect structures as grammatical, such as violations in coordinate islands or embedded wh-questions.

Remarkably, this transfer is not limited to vocabulary; it extends deep into the mental structure of sentences, affecting how the learner organizes sentences internally and judges their correctness. As Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) point out, learners often begin learning a second language with extensive transfer of grammatical patterns from their native language, and these patterns may continue to influence the learner unless the learner receives direct training or targeted intervention, even at advanced stages of learning.

5.2 Cognitive Load and Processing Complexity

Wh-movement within island structures places a considerable cognitive burden on learners, particularly those who are not familiar with syntactic displacement. The more abstract or deeply embedded the constraint—such as those found in adjunct or coordinate islands—the higher the mental processing demand becomes. These complex structures challenge learners' ability to parse and evaluate sentence grammaticality in real time.

This aligns with processing-based models of SLA (e.g., VanPatten, 2004), which posit that learners

must allocate limited cognitive resources when interpreting or producing L2 syntax. The observed drop in accuracy for left-branch and wh-islands may reflect these processing bottlenecks, where learners fail to parse deeply nested grammatical relationships due to attentional constraints.

5.3 Quality and Quantity of Linguistic Input

Another critical influence is the nature of linguistic input available to the learners. As Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis suggests, learners require exposure to *comprehensible input* at a slightly higher level than their current competence ($i+1$) to internalize new syntactic rules.

In the context of the participants, limited exposure to authentic or complex sentence structures may have hindered their acquisition of wh-movement restrictions. If classroom instruction or textbooks underrepresent these constraints—or if learners rarely encounter ungrammatical island violations—the syntactic sensitivity required may never develop fully.

5.4 Instructional Approach and Classroom Context

Instructional methods play a vital role in shaping how and whether learners acquire abstract constraints like syntactic islands. The findings here suggest that implicit exposure alone is insufficient for learners with L1s that lack movement-based syntax. Instead, explicit instruction, contrastive grammar explanations, and targeted metalinguistic activities are likely essential. This is particularly relevant in the Kurdish EFL context, where learners often prefer the use of their mother tongue to support grammar instruction and improve comprehension—a preference that can be pedagogically leveraged to introduce complex syntactic rules (Muhammad & Najim, 2025).

For instance, introducing structured comparisons between acceptable and unacceptable English questions—while simultaneously highlighting how such forms differ from Behdini-Kurdish equivalents—can accelerate awareness and rule internalization. Additionally, error correction, guided practice, and interactive syntactic drills could bridge the cognitive gap.

However, this does not entail that EFL learners never struggle with comprehension—especially in cases where limited cultural background knowledge, inadequate reading strategies, or low motivation impede learning. Yasin and Abdullah (2025) highlight how these factors significantly affect Kurdish university students' reading comprehension in EFL contexts, reinforcing the idea that syntactic competence must be taught alongside broader literacy and engagement strategies.

5.5 Learner-Specific Variables

Individual differences, such as age of acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, and learning strategies, may also influence how learners respond to wh-movement constraints. Although this study did not isolate such factors, previous SLA research (Johnson & Newport, 1991) consistently shows that learners who begin L2 learning after a certain age may struggle to fully acquire subtle syntactic principles, such as island constraints. Furthermore, learners with stronger analytical or reflective strategies may outperform peers in tasks requiring fine-grained syntactic judgments.

Below is a table summarizing common learner error types and their underlying causes, particularly due to L1 interference.

Table 2. Common Error Types and L1 Influence Patterns

Error Type	Description	Likely Cause
Overgeneralization of L1 Syntax	Accepting English Island violations as grammatical due to L1 flexibility	L1 transfer from wh-in-situ structure
Underdifferentiation of	Failure to distinguish nested	Cognitive overload;

Complex Structures	structures in English syntax	insufficient parsing depth
Coordinate Structure Misjudgment	Difficulty detecting violations in coordination due to permissive L1 rules	Structural mismatch between L1 and L2 coordination
Embedded Clause Misinterpretation	Judging embedded wh-questions as grammatical (e.g., wh-islands)	Lack of L1 equivalent for wh-islands
Adjunct Clause Misanalysis	Misjudging movement from 'while/after' clauses as acceptable	No comparable adjunct movement constraints in L1
Subject Island Confusion (minor)	Occasional confusion in subject clause extraction	Overgeneralization of success in simpler structures
Equal Treatment of Bridge/Non-Bridge Verbs	Misinterpreting non-bridge verbs as permitting wh-extraction	Lack of awareness of verb-specific constraints

Table (2) offers valuable insight for Section (6) by illustrating exactly where and why Behdini-Kurdish learners diverge from native-like English syntactic competence.

6. Pedagogical Implications

6.1 Implications for Language Instructors

The findings of this study reveal clear areas where targeted instruction can improve the acquisition of wh-movement constraints in English among Behdini-Kurdish learners. In particular, the strong influence of L1 syntactic patterns necessitates an approach that moves beyond general input exposure to include explicit, contrastive grammar teaching.

Educators should:

- Introduce syntactic islands and movement constraints explicitly, early in the curriculum.
- Use contrastive analysis techniques to help learners distinguish English constraints from Behdini norms.
- Provide sentence parsing practice that encourages awareness of clause boundaries, movement restrictions, and embedded structure processing.

6.2 Curriculum Design Recommendations

Curriculum developers can enhance learning outcomes by integrating the following:

- Task-based grammar instruction that focuses specifically on syntactic islands (e.g., role-playing corrections of ungrammatical questions).
- Metalinguistic reflection activities, such as grammatical reasoning tasks, to help learners articulate why certain constructions are ungrammatical.
- Use of visual syntactic trees or movement diagrams to aid learners in internalizing abstract structures.

Furthermore, authentic input materials—films, academic texts, and native-level dialogues—should be chosen or adapted to highlight complex question structures and both correct and incorrect forms.

6.3 Technology-Assisted Tools

Language learning software and AI-driven grammar checkers can also support learners by offering real-time feedback on question formation. Adaptive apps that include syntax-specific learning paths (e.g., Duolingo's "hard grammar" modules or apps like Grammarly) may help reinforce formal rules that are otherwise difficult to acquire through immersion alone.

6.4 Instructor Training and Policy Implications

Teacher training programs in Kurdish-speaking regions should include modules on cross-linguistic interference, particularly syntactic transfer. Raising instructors' awareness of issues like island

violations can help tailor instruction and diagnostic testing more effectively. Policymakers may also consider supporting corpus development of typical learner errors to inform data-driven teaching strategies.

7. Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

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7.3 Conclusions

This study has investigated how Behdini-Kurdish learners of English navigate the complex syntactic terrain of *wh*-movement restrictions in the presence of *syntactic island constraints*, and it reaches the following conclusions:

1. Through the administration of a Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT), it became clear that these learners exhibit significant difficulty in recognizing violations involving deeply embedded or structurally complex syntactic environments—particularly coordinate structures, *wh*-islands, and adjunct clauses.
2. The analysis confirms that L1 transfer effects are a major source of difficulty, especially given that Behdini-Kurdish is a *wh-in-situ* language with relatively permissive movement rules.
3. Learners often overgeneralize the grammatical freedom of their native syntax, treating ungrammatical English constructions as acceptable. These transfer-based misjudgments were most apparent in structures with no L1 equivalent, such as coordinate structure islands and embedded *wh*-questions.
4. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings reinforce key claims in SLA literature:
 - That L2 learners draw heavily on L1 syntax in early and intermediate stages (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996),

- That abstract syntactic constraints like island effects require explicit instruction, particularly when absent from the L1 (White, 2013),
 - And that cognitive load and processing limitations play a role in the acquisition of complex hierarchical structures (VanPatten, 2004).
5. Pedagogically, this study provides strong evidence for the need to integrate contrastive syntactic instruction, error-focused learning, and input enhancement strategies when teaching complex English syntax to Behdini-Kurdish learners. Instructors and curriculum designers should be encouraged to include tasks that not only highlight grammatical rules but also make learners aware of why certain sentence structures are unacceptable—especially those involving island constraints.

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Appendix A – Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)

Instructions:

Please read each sentence carefully. Decide whether the sentence is grammatically correct in English. If the sentence feels unnatural or unacceptable, mark it as "incorrect."

Adjunct Islands

1. Why did you leave early?
2. *Why did you leave after the meeting ended ___?*

Wh-Islands

3. What did John say he wanted for his birthday?
4. *What did John wonder whether Mary will cook ___?*

Subject Islands

5. The book that John read was fascinating.
6. *Who the book that ___ read was fascinating?*

Left Branch Islands

7. Whose book did you borrow yesterday?
8. *Whose did you borrow book yesterday?*

Coordinate Structure Islands

9. Mary visited Paris and Rome during her vacation.
10. *Who did Mary visit Paris and ___ during her vacation?*

Complex Noun Phrase Islands

- (Sentential Complement to a Noun) 11. I heard the rumor that John is moving to New York.
12. *Who did you hear the rumor that ___ is moving to New York?*

- (Relative Clause) 13. The man who won the lottery is very generous.
14. *Who is the man that you said ___ won the lottery very generous?*

Non-bridge Verb Islands

15. She knows the fact that the Earth orbits the Sun.
16. *What does she know the fact that ___ orbits the Sun?*

Additional Mixed Items

17. What did you eat for breakfast?
18. *Who did the teacher say that ___ would win the competition?*
19. Where do you want to go on vacation next year?

20. ✘ *Where did you buy the dress that __ wore to the party?*
 21. ✔ *The movie that we watched last night was thrilling.*
 22. ✘ *What was the movie that __ watched last night thrilling about?*
 23. ✔ *Who wrote the novel that won the award?*
 24. ✘ *What is the novel about __ that won the award?*
 25. ✔ *How many people attended the conference?*
- ✘ *How many people did you say __ attended the conference?*

كارتيكرنا فهگواستن ژ زمانى ئىكى لسەر راكرتا لفينا په يقين پرسياران د كزيرتین رسته سازين زمانى ئىنگليزى: به لگه ژ فيرخوازين كوردین به هدينى

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پوخته

ئهف فهكولينه ليكولينى دكهت لسەر چاوانيا بدهسته ئينانا فيرخوازين ئىنگليزى بين كو زمانى وان يى ئىكى كورديا به هدينى به بونوورداركرنين لفينا په يقين پرسياران، دگل جه ختكرنى بشيوهكى تايهت لسەر كزيرتین رسته سازى – ئه و ژى بيكهاته نه دبه ريگر د لفينا په يقين پرسياركرنى دا. ژبهركو زمانى كورديا به هدينى زمانه كه كو ريكي نادهته لفينا په يقين پرسياران، ئه فجا فيرخوازين زوربه ي جاران توشى شاشييان دبن د هه لسه نگاندا بيكهاته بين ئىنگليزى بين كو پيدفى ب لفينا هين، و ئهف چه نده ژى دبته ئه گه رى شاشييان په يره وكرى د فيربوونا پرسياران و دارشتنا وان دا. بريكا بكارئينانا ئهركى هه لسه نگاندا ريزمانى (GJT) دگل ٤٠ فيرخوازين كو قوتابيين زانكويين بوون، ئهف فهكولينه شيا چه ندين نمونه بين روون و ئاشكرا بدهته دياركرن ژبو فهگواستن ژ زمانى ئىكى، نه خاسمه د بيكهاته بين ئالوز دا وهكى كزيرتین په يقين پرسياران و جوړين ديتر بين كزيرتان. ئه نجام ددهنه دياركرن كو فيرخوازين زوربه ي جاران رستين نه ريزمانى د زمانى ئىنگليزى دا په سهند دكهت وهك رسته بين ريزمانى ژبه ر نه بوونا سنوورداركرنين وهكهف د زمانى وان يى دايك دا. ئهف ئه نجامين هه ن تيشكى دئخنه سهر رولى گرنگى فيركرنا ئاشكرا، شروقه كرنا هه قبه ركرنى، و ده ستيوه ردانا پيداكوژى بشيوهكى ئاراسته كرى د ژينگه هين فيركرنا زمانى ئىنگليزى وهك زمانه كى بيانى. ههروهسان، بريكا گریدانا تيورا زمانى دگل پراكتيكرنا دناف پولى دا، ئهف فهكولينه رولى خو دگيرت د تيگه هشتنه كا هويرتر بو بدهسته ئينانا زمانى دووى لدهف فيرخوازين كورد و ديسان دووپاتكرنى دكهت لسەر گرنگيا چاره سه ركرا جياوازين نمونه بي بين ئاشكرا لدهمى ديزاينكرنا په يره وين ريزمانا زمانى بو فيرخوازين زمانى ئىنگليزى وهك زمانه كى بيانى كو ژ باگراو ندين زمانى بين جياواز بن ژئالين بيكهاته يى فه.

وشه سه ركه يه كان: بدهسته ئينانا زمانى دووى، سنوورداركرنا لفينا په يقين پرسياران، فهگواستن ژ زمانى ئىكى، كزيرتین رسته سازى، پيداكوژيا فيركرنا زمانى ئىنگليزى وهك زمانه كى بيانى

تأثير نقل اللغة الأولى على اكتساب قيود حركة مفردات الاستفهام في الجزر النحوية الإنجليزية: أدلة من المتعلمين الكرد البهدينين

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المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية اكتساب متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الذين لغتهم الأولى هي الكردية البهدينية لقيود حركة مفردات الاستفهام، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الجزر النحوية – وهي هياكل تحد من إزاحة عناصر الاستفهام. ونظراً لأن اللغة الكردية البهدينية لغة تكون مفردات الاستفهام فيها في موضعها، فإن المتعلمين غالباً ما يخطئون في تقدير التراكيب الإنجليزية التي تتطلب الحركة، مما يؤدي إلى أخطاء منهجية في تفسير الأسئلة وصياغتها. باستخدام مهمة تقييم القواعد النحوية (GJT) مع 40 متعلماً جامعياً، حدد البحث أنماطاً واضحة لنقل اللغة الأولى، وخاصة في الهياكل المعقدة مثل الإحداثيات وجزر مفردات الاستفهام. وتكشف النتائج أن المتعلمين غالباً ما يقبلون الجمل غير القواعدية نظراً لغياب قيود مماثلة في لغتهم الأم. تُسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على الدور الحاسم للتعليم الصريح، والتحليل التبايني، والتدخل التربوي الموجه في بيئات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ومن خلال ربط النظرية اللغوية بالممارسة الصفية، تُسهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أدق لاكتساب اللغة الثانية لدى المتعلمي الكرد، وتؤكد على أهمية معالجة التفاوتات النمطية عند تصميم مناهج قواعد اللغة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلفيات لغوية متباينة هيكلياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اكتساب اللغة الثانية، إعاقة حركة مفردات الاستفهام، النقل من اللغة الأولى، الجزر النحوية، منهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.