A Comparative Analysis of Alternative Questions in English and Arabic

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to explore alternative questions in English and Arabic. In English, an alternative question is a type of questions in which the questioner offers the listener unbiased choices linked by the explicit disjunctive morpheme 'or' and the answer is expected to be identified with one of these choices. On the other hand, in Arabic, an alternative question which invites the listener to select from a predetermined set of answers by the questioner is formed by the use of the interrogative 'hemza' of perception followed by the connected and coordinated particle 'am' only.

This paper falls into three sections. The first section deals with alternative questions in English in terms of scope, types and functions. Following the same way, the second section is concerned with alternative questions in Arabic. The last section concentrates on the similarities and differences in both languages: English and Arabic . Finally, the conclusions sum up the findings of the study.

1.Alternative Questions in English
1.1 The Scope of Alternative Questions

An alternative question is a type of question that offers two or more alternative responses from which one answer should be selected. Alternative questions, which invite the addressee to choose one member of a distinction, are formed by means of the explicit disjunction 'or', and they have no specially interrogative morphology (Carlson,1994: 532).

Alternative questions (henceforth AQs) have a set of alternatives as answers which can be derived directly from the question, " the propositional content being logically equivalent to a disjunction of propositions". The answers to the alternative question,

1. Is his light on or off?

is namely ' his light is on' or 'his light is off' which corresponds to each of the disjoined propositions(Aart,1997 : 185).

AQs carry an existential and uniqueness presupposition that one and only one of the alternatives presented is true. So, example (2),

2. Did John order coffee or tea?

presupposes that "John ordered coffee or John ordered tea, but not both" (Owen, 1986: 118).

Consequently, these questions are called 'close- choice questions' since they invite the addressee to choose an answer from the list of a finite number of answers. The range of possible answers does not require respondents to say anything in their own words:

3. Do you mean to say edit or rewrite?

The speaker here wants the addressee to make a choice and tell him/her whether he/she means 'edit' or whether he/she means 'rewrite'. These are the two alternatives available. This sentence has a more fully expanded counterpart(i.e. do you mean to say edit, or do you mean to say rewrite?)(Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2001: 42-43).

Trainer (2011 :159) shows that in an example such as (4), the second clause is necessarily interpreted as including the semantic representation of the prepositional phrase ' to Japan' though it is not syntactically present. It is semantically present since it is presupposed in the first clause where 'presupposed' means 'not focused'. The focus is considered to be a surface constituent containing the main stress of the sentence, and presupposition is determined by substituting an appropriate variable for the focus in semantic representation:

4. Did John go to Japan by boat or plane?

Syntactically, AQs are distinguished by the obligatory presence of 'or' which cannot be paired with 'either'. The contrastive disjunctive marker 'either…or' which expresses standard disjunction shows that either both disjoined presuppositions are true as in :

5. Do you want either tea or coffee?   (Aart, 1997 : 185)

Trainer (2011:157) states that each clause in AQs contains an element which is contrasted with a corresponding element in the other clause, and these contrasted elements constitute the 'foci' of their clauses which must be parallel to each other on the semantic level, and perhaps on the syntactic level as well. Thus, 'John' and 'Mary' in (6), 'crackers' and 'jelly' in (7) represent the foci of these sentences:

6. Did John or Mary read the book?

7. Does he eat crackers or jelly when he is sick ?

Van Rooy and Safa'rova' (2003: 35) maintain that the main function of alternative questions is to offer an unbiased choice between the alternatives offered by the disjunction. By using 'unbiased', they mean that the speakers signal that they do not consider one of the answers to be more or less likely.

Similarly, Roelofsen and van Gool(2009: 38) illustrate that the utility value of one alternative is equal to the utility value of another value. So, the disjunct in (8),

8. Does Ann or Bill play the piano?

exhausts the possibilities in two ways: First, there is no salient possibility in which neither of them plays the piano. Second, in answering the question, an addressee must choose one of these alternatives rather than picking another.

Alexander (1988: 271) notes that AQs narrow a choice from open choices to a limited number of items, courses of action, etc as in:

9. What would you like to drink? (open-ended choices)

10.What would you like to drink: tea, coffee or milk? (three-   item choices)

11.Which would you prefer, tea or coffee? (two- item choices)

At the same time, these limited choices can be presented with two or more verbs as in :

12.Did you laugh or cry?

13.Is he sleeping, reading or watching TV?

The forms that are used in AQs are expressed by the following in which examples (14-16) start with wh-words phrases followed by the choices whereas examples (17-20) begin with auxiliaries as operators accompanied with 'or'. Such examples reflect a sense of variation as far as these forms are concerned:

14.What\ which would you prefer, tea or coffee?

15.Would you like tea or coffee? Tea or coffee? Milk?

16.How shall we go, by bus or by train?

17.Did you go there, or didn't you?

18.Did you or didn't you go there?

19.Did you go there or not?

20.Did you or didn't you?   (Alexander, Ibid.: 271)

Ahn(2005: 2) points out that in English , there is a variety of categories in the disjunctive constituent of AQs ranging from a noun (phrase) as in (21), an adjective as in (22), a prepositional phrase as in (23), a verb phrase as in (24), to an indefinite pronoun as in (25):

21.Would you rather study physics or chemistry next

22.semester?

23.Do you consider him smart or dull?

24.Do you live in Queens or Brooklyn?

25.Do you like her or love her?

26.Did you buy it, or did someone give it to you?

In form, alternative questions are similar to yes\ no questions in starting with the finite operator and not containing a question word as in (26):

27. Will you go by train or bus?

In function, they may be similar to wh- questions in that they ask for a specific piece of information to be filled in:

28.Which one should I use, the blue or the pink? (Archer, 2005:24)

1.2 Types of Alternative Questions

There are two types of alternative questions: those that resemble yes/ no questions, and those that resemble wh- questions(Quirk etal., 1985: 823):

1.2.2 Yes/ No Alternative Questions

An alternative question is structurally similar to a yes/ no question in opening with the operator followed by the subject, but rather than expecting an answer in terms of yes or not, it represents alternatives for the addressee to choose between:

1. a. Do you want one or two?
    b. Two.

So, example (28) does not propose that only one of two mutually exclusive possibilities is true. However , in a yes/ no question, one of the choices is true while the second is not as in (29). Sometimes, the choices offered by the speaker are neglected by the hearer as in (30b):

2. a. Do you like my hair cut?
    b. Yes.

3. a. Would you like tea, coffee or mineral water?
    b. No, Pepsi please . (Biber et al, 1999: 207)

Unlike yes/ no questions, not only near- identical alternatives can be conjoined in alternative yes/ no questions, they may be conjoined with different subjects as in (31). They may also contain three conjuncts as in (32):

4. Did you lose it, or did it get stolen?

5. Did you read it, did someone tell you about it, or did you hear it on the radio?

Besides, they may be constructed of clauses with different tenses and subjects which can appear as alternatives:

6. **Did you brush the dog, or am I going to have to do it?**
   (Celce- Murcia and Larsen- Freeman, 1999: 264)

Levinson(1983: 184) maintains that AQs presuppose the disjunction of their answers non-vacuously as in (34) which means " Newcastle is in England or Newcastle is in Australia". However,   yes\no questions have vacuous presuppositions, being the disjunction of their possible answers as in (35) which means " Either there is a professor of linguistics at MIT or there isn't":

7. **Is Newcastle in England or in Australia?**

8. **Is there a professor of linguistics at MIT?**

The syntax of a yes/ no alternative question is that of a yes/ no question, but instead of a final rising tone, a rise occurs on each alternative of the question, followed by a fall on the last alternative. The fall tone on the last alternative indicates that the list is complete. The difference in intonation between alternative and yes/ no questions is important, in that ignoring it leads to misunderstanding as the contrast between these answers indicates:

9.   **a. Shall we go by BUS or TRAIN? (alternative question)**
     b. By BUS.

10. **a. Shall we go by bus or TRAIN? (yes\no question)**
     b. No, let's take the CAR. (Quirk et al., 1985: 823)

Similarly, the intonation pattern used for AQs is called a contrastive intonation. The first element of a disjunction rises strongly. Then, there is a pause before 'or', the second part of the disjunction may start a little higher and then quickly falls (Han and Romero, 2001:265).

Under this account, the final fall is what is required for an alternative question. It indicates that the list of alternatives is closed, and such a closure leads the speaker to believe that the correct answer is among the choices he provides. If the speaker has some doubt about whether the correct answer is among the items he lists, he is not likely to close off the list, and as a result there is no comparable presupposition. When there is no presupposition, there is no AQs. Crucially, the final fall which signals list 'closure' is also in turn signals 'exhaustivity' (Zimmermann, 2000: 262).

Bartles(1999: 105) points out that in order for a multi-phrasal, wide scope disjunctive question to be interpreted as an alternative question, not only did its final phrase accent have to be falling, but also all non-final phrase accents had to be rising. If final and non-final phrase accents are rising, the utterance is interpreted as a yes/ no sequence for it lacks the connotation of exhaustiveness of choices which is crucial to alternative questions. If, on the other hand, non-final phrase accents are falling and the final phrase accent is rising, the resulting sequence is incoherent.

Karttunen(1977: 35) states that in actual utterances, different intonations will disambiguate the two readings of yes/ no and AQs as illustrated in the following:

11.**Did Sandy want COKE or ICED tea? (said by Bill)**

12. **Did Sandy want coke or ICED tea?**

Sentence (38) is interpreted as an alternative question since what Bill asked as whether Sandy wanted coke or Sandy wanted iced tea. But (39) is interpreted as a yes/ no question since what Bill asked Sandy is whether or not she wanted one of the two drinks Sandy wants.

As far as the focal structure is concerned, Aloni etal.(2007: 132) point out that in AQs, the focus is on the alternatives presented in the list whereas the focus in yes\no questions is on the whole sentence. As far as the answer is concerned, the expected answers in

AQs are the alternative themselves, but yes\no questions leave open the possibility that some other contextually available alternatives might be offered, besides the alternatives presented in the question. So, the speaker chooses the spelled –out alternative over the others.

Leech(1989: 317) illustrates a special kind of yes/no alternative question which is formed with two complementary alternatives; this is most easily indicated with an 'or not' phrase providing the second alternative. Such an alternative is unspecified but understood:

13.Are you going to resign or not?

Such a type of question can be considered as impolite since the speaker insists on the addressee to provide an answer.

As noted by Chellian(1997: 142), there are two restrictions on the conjuncts: Both alternatives must have the same aspect and if one of the alternatives is positive and the other is negative, the positive alternative must precede the negative one. The second restriction is supported by (41):

14.Have you read the book or not?

Pragmatically, an alternative question differs from a yes/ no question in foregrounding the exhaustiveness of the alternatives, in a way that may give rise to an emotive overlay of aggressiveness or impatience (Aarts,1997: 185).

Harnish(2005:74) states that since AQs restrict the answer not to yes-no, but to the alternatives mentioned, it has the force and content of requesting the hearer(H) to specify which of the alternatives the speaker resembles. The speaker utters a sentence of the form V+S+O+ or +(V+S)+O\ to ask an alternative question if:

{Preparatory}

1. **Conceptually necessary conditions for H asserting one of: S+V+O, S'+V'+O', are satisfied,**

2. **Circumstances of the utterance of C+S+O+ or + (V'+S')+O' are appropriate for the production of an obligation, O,{Normative}**

3. **By uttering V+S+O+ OR +(V'+S')+O\', U lays on H an obligation, O, to assert one of: S+V+O, S'+V'+O',{Point}**

4. **U utters V+S+O+ or +(V'+S')+ O\' to get H to assert one of: S+V+O, S'+V'+O'.**

2.1.2 Wh- Alternative Question

Celce- Murcia and Larsen- Freemen (1999: 264) state that this type of alternative question is a compound of two separate questions, a wh- question, followed by an elliptical alternative question:

1. **Where did you go, the bakery or the grocery store?**

2. **What do you want me to do- sing, dance or twirl the bat on?**

Biber et al.(1999: 208) point out that alternative wh-questions are related in function to wh- questions. Both types of interrogatives ask for specification of an unknown element, in one case represented by a wh- word and in another by listed alternatives. Both types may combine in the same context:

3. **Which one should I use, the blue or the pink?**

Here, the wh- question is followed by an elliptical alternative question. The alternative question narrows down the range of possible answers offered by the wh- question.

At the same time, Nordquist(2011: 2) illustrates the point of difference between wh-questions and alternative wh-questions in that the former is considered as open-ended which allow any answer whereas the latter is called as closed questions since they invite the addressee to an answer from the list of a finite number of answers and not to depend on their own words.

Mc Cawley(1998: 514-15) states that in wh-alternative questions, the wh-expression can be any possible wh-word other than 'whether' as in:

4. Whose mother did you talk to, John's or Mary's?

At the same time, the list of alternatives appears to be either at the end as in (46) or immediately after wh-expression as in (47):

5. How did he escape – by digging at tunnel or by climbing over the wall?

6. What day- Monday or Tuesday- is Mary arriving?

1.3 Ellipsis in the Syntax of Alternative Questions

Questions about alternatives are often abbreviated in two ways. The first way of abbreviating a question is to avoid repeating the same verb:

1. Did you want a black and white film or colour?

The second way is by giving the choices only as in:

2. Tea, coffee or mineral water? (three or more choices)

3. True or false? (two items)

4. Ready? (one item) (Alexandar, 1988: 271)

The structure of alternative yes/ no questions follows the pattern of coordination, the elliptical forms generally being preferred, where they are possible:

5. Did 'Italy win the world cup or did BRAZIL win the world cup?

6.   Did 'Italy win the world cup or did BRAZIL?

7.   Did 'Italy win the world cup or BRAZIL?

Often the remaining part of a second or subsequent alternative question is fronted to the appropriate position in the first question:

8. Did Italy or BraZIL win the world cup?

Such a type of fronting is also possible for the vacuous negative alternative:

9. Are you COMing or AREN'T you(coming)?

10.ARE you or AREN'T you coming?

However, there is no fronted version of Are you coming or not? (*Are you or not coming?). This is because fronting words violate the requirement of structure equivalence of conjoins(Quirk etal, 1985: 824).

Han and Romero (2001: 269) points out that a pitch accent on each noun phrase within the disjunction is needed for alternative reading to obtain. Example(58) is an alternative question showing focus pitch on each disjunct:

11. Did John drink COFFee or TEA?

They state that the function of this double focus is the double focus one encounters in elliptical constructions.

Ellipsis can be clearly seen in the negative clause of alternative questions as in the following:

12.Are you coming or not?

This sentence can take on several forms of increasing redundancy:

13.Are you coming, or aren't you coming?

14.Are you coming or aren't you?

15.Are you coming or are you not coming?

The choice of which to use would be dependent upon the mood of the situation and the speaker. One might detect an increasing degree of irritability that coincides with the level of redundancy   (Celce- Murcia and Laresn- Freeman, 1999: 266).

1.4 Functions of Alternative Questions

In the case of alternative question, a question is the form A or B asking which of the propositions is true. For the alternative reading, the question cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no' and has to be answered by a sentence providing information about the truth and falsity of the respective disjuncts such as John is in London, or Mary is not in London(Chellian, 1997: 143).

Bolinger (1978: 90) states that when asking an alternative question, the speaker is simply in search of the answer to whether A or B holds. The speaker wants to give the impression that he has no bias with respect to one or the other alternative as being more useful for the conversation goal.

An alternative question can be posed with the interrogative marker on both alternatives, which may both be positive as in (63) or negative as in(64 and 65):

1. Was it one tire or two?

2. Are you going or not?

3. (tell me) did they tell you to do it or not?

These examples show that the solicitive or is used as a performative marker of asking, best translated as I ask you please-----. It, 'or', softens the force of the question, making it a polite request rather than a demand of information(Chelliah, 1997: 141).

In a study of question–answer sequences in primary classroom interaction, Margutti(2006:340) demonstrates how teachers use AQs with a regular pattern to guide students in choosing the right option by placing the correct answer in second position. The first alternative, in repeating an item from the student's text or prior talk, calls it into question. When the teacher then provides an alternate, he\she is conveying to the student that the newly proposed item should be considered over the original item. The second alternative is thus proposed as a candidate correction of the words in the first alternative. It is a candidate correction because it is still up to the student to choose the second alternative. Students' answers almost invariably repeat the second, or preferred, alternative.

Role-playing in pairs is a good way to practice the intonation for AQs. The teacher reviews the pattern with students first. Then, he\she hands out slips of paper describing situations that involve alternative choices, such as buying airplane ticket through a travel agent, shopping in a department store for an item that comes in different colours and ordering tickets for the opera or theatre:

4. Student A(customer): I want to fly to Washington next week.

   Student B(travel agent): when do you want to travel?

   Student A: Friday or Saturday.

   Student B: Good. Will you like to travel on Friday or

          Saturday?

Student A: Friday.

Student B: Fine. Would you like to return on Monday,

Tuesday or Wednesday?(Cowan, 2008: 83-84)

There are certain contexts in which alternative questions can be used. One context is when the speaker provides the hearer with certain suggestions. This can be seen clearly when the hearer, for example, suffers a headache so that the speaker offers him\her choices in order to get relief:

5. Shall I bring you a cup of tea or give you an asprine?

Other examples include:

6. Should I telephone you or send you an email?

7. Here is our coffee. Shall I pour now or then?

Another context is when the speaker uses AQs to request information about someone\something as in:

8. Does Bob want cake o for the party?

9. Who arrested the thief? John or Richard?

AQs can be also used in contexts where the speaker wishes to offer a help to someone who is really in need of it:

10.Shop-seller: Can I help you please?

Customer: Yes, please. I would like to buy this shirt.

What about its colours?

Shop-seller: What remains is two colours only? Would you

like the blue shirt or the red one?

At the same time, the speaker might offer something for the hearer. For example, you ask your friend to study together at home. So, once you want to offer him something, you might say:

11.What would you like to drink? Coffee or tea?

Bolinger (1978: 92-95) adds that alternative questions with 'not' and yes\no questions are not interchangeable. He offers different contexts in which yes\no questions are fine whereas alternative questions are not. They are as follows:

12.Pleas and Request

It seems odd to use a negative alternative question to express pleas or requests as opposed to yes/ no questions which are available in such contexts. So, example (66) shows how a prisoner pleading with his guard could utter (a), but he/she can hardly utter (b):

13.a. Will you please let me go?

** *b. Will you please let me go or not?**

1. Invitations

It seems impolite to use a negative alternative question in the context of invitation since politeness often works via a series of inferences and background assumptions, so it is notoriously difficult to handle invitation theoretically. However, there are certain situations in which it is preferable to use an alternative question rather than a yes/ no question when the speaker does not want to come across as being pushy or insinuating something about the hearer's preferences:

1- a. cigarette?

   *b. cigarette or not?

2. Requests for Information

When the speaker is trying to discover what the date is, for example, he/she should use a yes/ no question as in (69 a). But it is important to use the alternative question once the date is indeed the seventeenth since he/she has an appointment on that date as in (69 b):

1- a. Is today the seventeenth?

   b. Is today the seventeenth or not?

3. Biased Questions

They are somewhat similar to the category of acknowledgements (or drawing inferences) in the sense that they depend on contextual evidence in support of a certain conclusion. Here, however, the evidence is non-linguistic. For example, if somebody comes inside with his/her clothes soaking wet, he/she could be asked (71 a) but probably not (71 b):

1- a. Is it raining?

   *b. Is it raining or not?

4. Negative Polar Questions

It seems that at least with one type of negative yes/ no questions, alternative question variants are not possible. Thus, (74) is not a paraphrase of (72), it is actually difficult to think of a context in which it could be used (though 73 is acceptable, so this may simply be due to a convention on the order of alternatives in the question):

5. Don't you realize what you're doing?

6. Don't you realize what you're doing or do you?

7. Do you realize what you're doing or don't you?

2. Alternative Questions in Arabic
2.1 The Scope of Alternative Questions

An alternative question is a minor type of questions which offer two or more choices as answers that can be derived from it. It is formed by the use of the interrogative 'hemza' with the connected and coordinated particle 'am' only as in:

1. أعندك زيد أم عمرو؟

   Is zayd or Amir with you? (Khalil, 1999: 112)

Similarly, Wright(1996: 307) states that if another clause be connected by the coordinated 'am' with the one beginning with interrogative 'hemza', there arises a disjunction or alternative question.

This type of question falls under the use of al- hemza of perception and the connected and coordinated 'am'. Such a use justifies that the questioner has the knowledge that the two choices are true, but he/she wants the listener to determine one of them. So, السـبكي (2001: 518) points out that example (2) shows an interrogation of perception which requires an answer that should be determined according to the choices in the question. The answer to this question is known as التعيين determination:

2. أدبسٌ في الإناء أم عسلٌ؟

   Is there molasses or honey in the dish?

الهـــاشمي (2001: 55-56) notes that there is a variation in the categories expressing alternative questions in Arabic. They can be used to ask about a subject as in (3), a predicate as in (4), an object as in (5), adverb of manner as in (6), adverb of time as in (7) and a prepositional phrase as in (8):

3. أأنتَ فعلتَ هذا أم يوسف؟

 Have you done this or Yousif?

4. أراغبٌ أنتَ عن الأمرِ أم راغبٌ فيه؟

Do you refuse the matter or desire it?

5. أياساً تقصدُ أم سعيداً ؟

Do you mean Yaas or Saeed?

6. أراكباً حضرتَ أم ماشياً ؟

Did you attend by car or on feet?

7. أيومَ الخميسِ قدمتَ أم يومَ الجمعةِ ؟

 Have you come on Thursday or Friday?

8. أفي البيتِ تركَ الكتابَ أم في المدرسةِ ؟

Did he leave the book in the house or at school?

The structure of alternative questions consists of two equal parts. The first starts with interrogative 'hemza' followed by what is going to be asked about, whereas the second part starts with connected 'am followed by the same structure of the first part. This means that if the first part is nominal, for example, the second should be nominal as such. So, example(9) shows that the two clauses are nominal whereas example (10) shows verbal clauses:

9. أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيل وَإِسْحَــقَ وَيَعْقُوب وَالأسْبَاطَ كَانُواْ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى قُلْ أَأَنتُم

أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللّهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَم شَهَادَةً عِندَهُ مِنَ اللّه وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿البقرة\ ١٤٠﴾

Or do ye say that
Abraham, Ismail, Isaac,
Jacob and the descendents were
Jews or Christians?
Say: Do ye know better
Than Allah? Ah! Who
Is more unjust than those
Who conceal the testimony
They have from Allah?
But Allah is not unmindful
Of what ye do!(Ali, 2001: 57)

10. أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ أَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا   (مريم\ ٧٨)

Has he penetrated to
The Unseen, or has he
Taken a contact with
Allah, Most Gracious?(ibid.:760).

In this sense, فيود (2004: 307) states that it is wrong to say, for example,

11. أزيداً أكرمتَ أم أهنتَ؟

since it shows a contrast between the structure of the clause after interrogative 'hemza' which is a noun 'أزيــد ' and that after the connected 'am' is a verb 'أهنــت ' where it is supposed to be a noun. So, this does not only violate the structure of alternative question in Arabic, but it also shows contrast as far as perception is concerned. This is why the particle 'am' is characterized as being equal to interrogative' hemza' semantically and syntactically speaking.

In AQs, the meaning of interrogative 'hemza' is of perception, i.e., the speaker recognizes the individual rather than the proportion. That he/she has a knowledge in relation to the action denoted by the verb ,but he/she ignores which part to choose. Also, the speaker asks the hearer such a question in order for him/her to determine one of these choices:

12. أمشترٍ أنتَ أم بائعٌ؟

Are you buying or selling?

In example (12), the questioner knows that both 'buying' and 'selling' are true, but he/she is hesitant of which of these choices to select. The questioner does not want to know the proportion of the predication whether the answer is Yes or No, because it is already known as 'buying' or 'selling'. As such, the answer should be 'selling' for example (الجــازم وأمــين , 1429: 193).

Moreover, الــوراق (2002: 711) maintains that the meaning of connected 'am' is similar to that of أي 'which' when it is accompanied with the interrogative 'hemza' of perception. So, example (13) indicates that which of the two men is with you, Zayd or Amer? The answer to this question would be one of these proper nouns:

13. أزيدٌ عندكَ أم عمروٌ؟

Is Zayd with you or Amer?

سيبويـــــه (1983 : 169) points out that the particle 'am' that occurs only in questions means 'which أيهم، أيهما. The question:

14. أزيداً لقيتَ أم بشراً؟

Have you met Zayd or Bishr?

indicates the questioner's knowledge of the occurrence of the act of meeting, yet he/she cannot decide which one of them he/she has met. He adds that the subject زيــد 'Zayd' is fronted since the questioner has a doubt about the two subjects rather than the action denoted by the verb phrase 'has met'.

Also, the particle 'am' in alternative questions is coordinated because if the noun after the interrogative 'hemza' is indicative, for example, the noun after 'am' will be indicative as such. At the same time, it is called 'connected' because it occurs between two connected things that cannot be separated ,i.e. what comes after 'am' is connected with what comes before it, after interrogative 'hemza'. The two parts of the alternative question are considered as one speech in which each one depends on the other(الهروي, 1977 :352).

Wright (1996:308) illustrates that there is a difference of meaning between 'am أم' and 'or' أو . The question أزيــدٌ عنــدكَ أو عمــرٌ؟ implies ignorance as to whether either of them is there or

not; أزيدٌ عنـــدكَ أم عمـــرٌ؟ implies the knowledge that one of them is there and the questioner asks the listener to determine one of the two choices.

بن يعيش (1999: 98) adds that the connected 'am' does not occur after the particle هـــل since it indicates that the speaker ignores the judge concerning a specific action which is not the meaning expressed by 'am'. So, if someone combines the interrogative particle 'هـــل' with 'am', it will lead to a contrast as far as the meaning expressed by both is concerned. Example (15) illustrates that the speaker does not know whether Zayd travelled or not. Such a meaning is opposite to that of the connected 'am' when it is preceded by interrogative 'hemza':

15. هل سافرَ زيدٌ؟

Did Zayd travel?

2.2 Types of Alternative Questions

In Arabic, there are two types of alternative questions: Yes/ No alternative questions and wh- alternative questions.

2.2.1 Yes/ No Alternative Questions

An alternative question is similar to yes/ no questions in that both of them start with the interrogative particle 'hemza'. Whereas an alternative yes/ no question begins with the interrogative hemza of perception that is followed by the connected 'am' only, yes/ no questions start with the interrogative particles hemza or هل only (فيود, 2004: 306).

In addition, yes/ no questions that begin with interrogative 'hemza' expresses التصـــديق. This means that the questioner has a doubt whether the answer will be yes or no. so, in (16) , the questioner does not have a knowledge whether the action has happened or not. The questioner knows the parts of the predicate, but he/she ignores the judge or the content of the action denoted by the verb. By such a question, (s)he tries to know the judge and the answer will be either yes or no accordingly:

1. أضربتَ زيداً؟

Did you hit Zayd?   (الأوسي,1988: 194)

However, in yes/ no alternative questions, the questioner does not seek information concerning the content of the sentence. By using the interrogative hemza of perception with connected 'am', he/she tries to recognize the individual rather than its proportion by determining one of the parts of the sentence or predication. Also, the questioner is in search of the answer to whether one of the choices holds:

2. أمحمدٌ جاءَ من السفرِ أم خالدٌ؟

Did Mohammad or Khalid come?   (عباس, 2000: 179)

الأوسـي) 1988: 194) points out that in yes/ no questions which starts with al- hemza of التصـــديق, the person/ thing/ action asked about comes after this particle as in (18) which shows that what is asked about is the action denoted by the verb 'ضربت':

3. أضربتَ زيداً؟

Did you hit Zayd?

On the other hand, in yes/ no alternative questions, the persons/ things/ actions, as alternative, asked about come after both the interrogative 'hemza' of perception and after the connected 'am':

4. أزيدٌ قائمٌ أم قاعدٌ؟

Is Zayd standing or sitting?

الهــاشمي(2001: 71-72) illustrates that most of yes/ no questions can be expressed through the use of verbal sentences as in (20) and (21). But a few of nominal sentences can be used as yes/ no questions as in(22):

5. أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى   (العلق: ١٣)

Seest thou if he
denies (Truth) and turns away?(Ali, 2001:1673)

6. اَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ الْحَاكِمِينَ   (التين: ٨)

Is not Allah
The wisest of Judges?(ibid: 1670)

7. وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا

خَاسِرِينَ (المائدة:٥٣)

And those who believe
will say: "Are these
The men who swore
Their strongest oaths by Allah,
That they were with you?
All that they do
Will be in vain,
 And they will fall
 Into (nothing but) ruin.(ibid.: 265)

However, yes/ no alternative questions can be manifested through the use of nominal as well as verbal sentences:

8. أشمسٌ تلكَ أم قمرٌ منيرٌ   أقولُ وشفَ سجفُ القزِ عَنها

2.2.2 Wh-Alternative Questions

This type of questions consist of two questions: the first one represents a wh- question while the second introduces an elliptical alternative question as in :

9. كم درهماً لكَ؟ أعشرونَ أم ثلاثونَ ؟

How much money do you have? Twenty or thirty?

10. من أينَ انتَ؟ أمن البصرةِ أم من الكوفةِ ؟

Where are you from? Are you from Basrah or Kufa?

11. كيفَ أنتَ؟ أصحيحٌ أم سقيمُ ؟

How are you? Are you fine or sick?

These questions share certain features with wh-question in that both of them start with the particles that denote perception such as 'how كيف, when مـــتى, where أيـــن, and so on. Also, both types seek information concerning a particular part of a sentence(الأوسي, 1988:393-99).

الأوسـي(ibid.: 402) illustrates that the point of difference between the two types is that a wh- alternative question is followed by a number of choices to be determined by the listener whereas wh- questions are not. Moreover, the piece of information searched by the speaker is expressed by a wh- word in wh- question as in (27). But, in wh- alternative question , it is represented by the list of alternatives as in (28):

12. ؟ متى السفرُ

When is your travelling?

13. ؟ متى جئتَ ؟ أسحراً أم نَهاراً ؟

When did you come? At night or day?

2.3 Ellipsis in the Syntax of Alternative Questions

الفراهيــدي(1985:234) and (2007: 203) السامرائي state that it is possible to omit interrogative 'hemza' in AQs if there is something in the context of situation referring to it. This refers to the presence of the connected 'am' which comes after 'al- hemza' as عمر بن ابي ربيعة says:

1.   فَوالله ما أدري وإن كُنتُ دارياً   بسبعٍ رمينَ الجمرِ أم بثمانٍ؟

In this line, the poet means 'أبسـبع' which is omitted for certain poetic purposes. The implicit 'hemza' is understood from the linguistic context in which the connected and coordinated 'am' occurs after 'al- hemza' of perception.

الأوسـي(1988: 103) points out that the connected 'am' can be also omitted in AQs for the same reason. It is omitted from the sentence when there is a pre- mentioning for the interrogative 'hemza' of perception. The poet أبي أسود الذؤلي says:

2.   دَعاني إليها القلبُ، إني لأمرِهِ   سميعٌ،   فما أدري أرشدٌ طلابُها؟

Due to the context of the situation, the implicit expression is the particle 'am' in addition to what follows namely ' أم غيي'.

2.4 Functions of Alternative Questions

Arab grammarians and rhetoricians agree that the role of the contextual factor is very important to interrupt all utterances. There are certain contexts in which one can see how an alternative question is used to express further functions away from a mere interrogation . They are as follows:

3. **Drawing Attention** التنبيه على الضلال

An alternative question can be used to show the meaning of drawing the attention of the addressee towards a particular idea or action as in :

4. ألسعادةُ أحبُ إليكَ أم الشقاءُ؟

Do you like happiness more or misery?

In this context, the questioner knows that the listener prefers happiness than misery, and his/her answer will be happiness. But the questioner aims to attract the listener's attention towards it and is trying to teach him/her (الأوسي, 1988: 434).

5. **Affirmation** التقرير

بــن حـــني (1988:64) states that affirmation can be expressed through the use of AQs. When the meaning of the interrogative 'hemza' is of affirmation, so what comes after this

'hemza' is not the person asked about rather the individual spoken to. By asking such a question, the speaker aims not to ask a question rather to let the listener confess or affirm the action that he/she has done. The 'hemza' of affirmation cannot be followed by a subject or object unless the action occurred and ensured. In example (32), the question is not about the action denoted by the verb phrase since Allah knows the one responsible for the action.

6. وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ أَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هؤُلاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا   السَّبِيلَ

(الفرقان: ١٧)

> The day He will gather
> Them together as well as
> Those whom they worship
> Besides Allah, He will ask
> "Was it ye who led
> These My servants astray,
> Or did they stray
> From the Path themselves?"(Ali, 2001: 892-93)

7. **Equalization** التسوية

ألمرادي (1976: 98) points out that an alternative question can be used to express the meaning of equalization once it is preceded by certain expressions including ما ادري، ما أبالي، سواء ، "قد علمت and ليت شعري". So, its meaning is not interrogative rather equalization. Here, the interrogative 'hemza' with the connected 'am' of equalization ensures that the two matters are the same as far as the speaker's understanding is concerned. Example (33) shows that equalization is interrogative by form , but it is constative by nature indicating that it is the same, I do not care, whether you stand up or sit down :

8. ما أُبالي أقمتَ أَم قعدتَ.

> I do not care whether you stand or sit down.

9. **Denial** الإنكار

ابن هشام (1985: 24) illustrates another context in which an alternative question can be used which is denial. It refers to a situation which shows that something is opposite to what is ought to be. Denial suggests that what comes after the interrogative 'hemza' is not correct. Example (34) shows how Allah negate what is forbidden by people informing them whether this forbidden act is here, there or somewhere. This is to show the denial of what has been mentioned as forbidden so that they can realize their wrongness and repent:

10. ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ مِّنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الأُنثَيَيْنِ نَبِّؤُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ   (الأنعام: ١٤٣)

> (take) eight (head of cattle)
> In (four) pairs:
> Of sheep a pair,
> And of goats a pair;
> Say, hath He forbidden
> The two males,
> Or the two females,

Or (the young) which the wombs
Of the two females enclose?
Tell me with knowledge
If ye are truthful: (Ali, 2001:336)

11. Sarcasm   التهكم

Sarcasm is a cutting ,often ironic remark intended to wound the listener and to make its victim the belt of contempt or ridicule. So, it is not intended to ask a question rather to make irony out of the person addressed and put him/her on the notice. When صخر الغيّ says:

12.   أرائحٌ أنت يوم اثنين أم غادي   ولم تسلم على ريحانة الوادي؟

he does not ask himself of what he knows rather he tries to make fun of him(Sarcasm, 2011: 1).

13. Sadness and Pain   التحزن والتوجع

As a sign of sadness and pain, the poet in (36) addresses himself whether he asked about the state of the people of that house or not. As if he refuses to see the house in that status:

14.   أسألتَ رسمَ الدارِ أم لم تسألِ   عن السكنِ أم عن عهدهِ بالأوائلِ   (البغدادي, 1997: 492)

3. Analysis of Alternative Questions

This section tries to follow up the similarities and differences of alternative questions in English and Arabic. This will be done in terms of scope, types and functions of alternative questions:

3.1 Scope of Alternative questions

Alternative questions enumerate a set of possible answers and direct the addressee to choose among them. In English, AQs involve disjunction, as exemplified by or, with at least two disjuncts. In consequence, they carry a presupposition that the alternatives spelled out are the only ones the speaker considers contextually available, and that just one of them is a corollary of the closure operator in combination with exhaustivity and exclusivity of the salient alternatives. In Arabic, AQs which invite the addressee to choose from a list of alternatives as answers fall under the use of interrogative 'hemza' of perception accompanied with the connected 'am'. The questioner has knowledge that the choices presented are true, but he/she is hesitant of which of the choices holds. Using alternative questions, English and Arabic speakers do not have any bias towards a particular choice among others. Moreover, the only possible answers to an alternative question are those alternatives(choices) corresponding to the disjuncts the question spells out in English and Arabic. This reflects the fact that AQs do not require 'yes' or 'no' as an answer.

English is similar to Arabic as far as the grammatical categories that appear in the disjunctive constituent of AQs. They can be used to denote a subject, verb(phrase), adjective, adverb, and prepositional phrase.

3.2 Types of Alternative Questions

There are two types of alternative questions in English and Arabic: yes\no alternative questions and wh-alternative questions. In English, yes\no alternative question, on the one hand, consists of two clauses followed by the disjunctive particle or\ or not. This type of question is distinguished form yes\no questions in that it offers a number of alternatives and the type of intonation. Yes\no alternative questions take a rise tone on each alternative

followed by a final fall on the last alternative to close off the list of choices. In Arabic, this type of question has the structure of two clauses in which the first starts with interrogative 'hemza' of perception whereas the second starts with the connected 'am' . The two clauses , whether in Arabic or English, are supposed to be equal grammatically speaking. On the other hand, both English and Arabic have wh- alternative questions which also consist of two clauses: The first is the wh-word clause and the second is an elliptical alternative clause. This illustrates that the first clause is an ordinary wh-question whereas the second introduces the choices only.

Ellipsis can be seen clearly in the structure of AQs in English and Arabic. In English, ellipsis occurs when certain words in the first clause are repeated in the second clause. Also, one might find only choices presented in the AQs without auxiliary, subject or complement. In Arabic, ellipsis can be seen in relation to the omission of either the interrogative 'hemza' or the connected 'am' أم for certain poetic or linguistic reasons. It is understood from the linguistic context that there is an omitted 'hemza' due to the presence of the connected 'am' which is equal to the question particle أ syntactically and semantically speaking.

3.3 Functions Achieved by Alternative Questions

Positive AQs in English can be mainly used as a teaching device. They can be also used in contexts expressing request for information, offering, suggestion. However, it seems odd to have negative AQs in contexts denoting pleases and requests, invitations, request for information and biased questions. On the other hand, in Arabic, questions can be used to express different meanings than a mere interrogation. So,   AQs can develop further illocutionary forces such as: drawing attention, affirmation, denial, sarcasm and equalization.

Conclusions

Alternative questions in English are similar to those in Arabic. An alternative question is an exclusive disjunction in the speaker's mind; he/she, who is relatively neutral to which answer is desired, therefore expects an exhaustive answer . One of the disjuncts is chosen as the answer, and the disjuncts are interpreted exhaustively. Responses to alternative questions are relatively stable provided that the choices presented are balanced and represent real alternatives.

Both English and Arabic have two types of alternative questions: yes/ no and wh-alternative questions. The first type starts with one of the auxiliaries accompanied by the obligatory disjunction or followed by transformational deletion of identical elements in English, the interrogative hemza and connected and coordinated am in Arabic, with rising tone on each choice and a final falling tone. The second type starts with a wh-word as the first clause followed by options as its second clause whether in English or Arabic.

Pragmatically speaking, the two languages make a benefit of alternative questions to denote further illocutionary forces away from a mere interrogation. In English, they can be mainly used as a teaching device as well as in asking for information, offering and suggestion. In Arabic, they are used in contexts including: drawing attention, affirmation, denial, sarcasm and equalization.

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الخــــلاصة

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كلية التربية /جامعة القادسية

إن الدراسة الحالية هي محاولـة لاكتشـاف الاستفهام التصوري في اللغتين الانجليزية والعربيـة.، إن الاستفهام التصوري في اللغـة الانجليزية هو نـوع من أنواع الاستفهام الـذي يعرض فيه المستفهم خيارات غير متحيزة للمستمع يربطها المورفيم الظاهري المنقطع **أم** ، حيث يتوقع أن تُشخص الإجابة من ضمن هذه الخيارات. من جانب آخر، في اللغـة العربيـة، إن الاستفهام التصوري الذي يدعو المستمع للاختيار من مجموعة محددة مسبقاً من الإجابـات من قبل المستفهم يتكون من **همزة** استفهام   التصور متبوعة **بأم** المتصلة العاطفة فقط.

تقع هذه الدراسة في ثلاثة أقسام. يُعنى القسم الأول منه بالاستفهام التصوري في اللغـة الانجليزية من حيث المدى والأنواع والوظائف. بإتباع الطريقة نفسها، ويختص القسم الثـاني بالاستفهام التصـوري فـي اللغـة العربيـة، في حين يُركـز القسـم الأخيـر علـى أوجـه التشـابه والاختلاف في اللغتين الانجليزية والعربية. أخيراً، تُلخِص الاستنتاجات موجودات البحث.