The Impact of Arabic on The Written English Performance of Second-year Students in Relation to Prepositions

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Abstract

The present study focuses on English prepositions that are used by Arab second year students of English in their written performance. Hence, the aim of the study is to show the difficulties, sources, scopes of the incorrect uses of these prepositions and to find out the co relation between learners' attitude towards English and their performance in the target languages. It is argued in this study that the students of English use and apply the target prepositions according to their native language. In this descriptive analytical approach Arabic is treated as source language and English as target language. Consequently, the researchers hope that this piece of information will be a helpful tool for instructors of courses and the students to avoid the increasing of bad writings. Consequently, the real discovery of this work is that many of ill-formed writings of student's performance of English are made because of the different structures of the two distinct languages and this make the students choose the propositions when needed arbitrarily.

Key Words: Prepositions, learners, teaching, writing, Errors.

تأثير اللغة العربية على الأداء الكتابي الإنكليزي لطلاب المرحلة الثانية فيما يتعلق بحروف الجر

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الخلاصة

تركز الدراسة الحالية على حروف الجر اللغة الانكليزية المستخدمة من قبل طلاب المرحلة الثانية في الاداء الكتابي. وبذلك ، فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو بيان مدى الصعوبات والمصادر ونطاقات الاستخدامات غير الصحيحة لهذه الحروف ومعرفة العلاقة المشتركة بين موقف الدارسين تجاه اللغة الإنكليزية وأدائهم باللغات المعنية. تفترض الدراسة أن طلاب اللغة الإنكليزية يستخدمون حروف الجر وفقًا للغتهم الأصلية. وفي هذا النهج التحليلي الوصفي، تعامل اللغة العربية كلغة مصدر والإنكليزية كلغة مستهدفة. وبالتالي، يأمل الباحثون في أن تكون هذه المعلومات أداة مفيدة للمدرسين والطلاب لتجنب الكتابات الغير دقيقة. واستنتجت هذه الدراسة بأن العديد من الكتابات الخاطئة للطلاب هو بسبب تاثير لغتهم على اللغة الانكليزية مما يدفعهم لاستخدام حروف جر عشوائية عند الاداء الكتابي وايضا بسبب التراكيب اللغوية المختلفة بين اللغة العربية والانكليزية.

الكلمات الدالة: حروف الجر، المتعلمين، التدريس، الاخطاء

Introduction

Language learning and teaching are interesting field of research to investigate. It is assumed that learner's first language interferences with the learning of the second language; where there are dissimilarities between the patterns of first language(L1, henceforth) and the second language (L2) which function negatively and negative transfer would occur. In the case of similarity, learners L1 helps the learning of L2, in this situation it functions positively and positive transfer would occur.(Singh,2009).Thus, Investigations on second or foreign languages have generally focused on students' errors since they take into consideration expectation of the challenges faced when learning a second or a foreign language. Consequently, instructors can be mindful with these problems and be experienced by their students' errors. Prepositions, on which this paper centers, are one of these problems. Thus, the primary target is to search the reasons for mistakes in using prepositions of English which are oftentimes performed by the second-year students of English. The speculation of this investigation shows that there is no measurably critical distinction between the mistakes committed by the students because of the native language obstruction and those because of other teaching methods. The researchers expect that the students will comprehend straightforwardly English, discuss reasonably with an English talking individual inside certain sensible regions, read basic English effortlessly, familiarity understanding, and to write paragraphs using basic structures of the language. Hence, inquire about errors investigation is a good instrument for illustrating and clarifying mistakes done by users of foreign language (Johanson, 1975). The students of English as a foreign languages' (EFL, for short)errors are required to be investigated because of a few unique causes. The one is brought about by difficulty from the F1 language and the other is brought about by impedance from different structures in the goal language. The main kind of mistake happens while a student of a subsequent language extends the propensities for his L1 into the later language.

This interlingual obstruction implies that hisL1 (examples, frameworks or standards) intervene or anticipate the student, somewhat, from securing the examples and principles of the subsequent language (Corder, 1971). The second kind of mistakes is brought about by the impedance of the second language itself. This is named "intralingua impedance". The students, for this situation, "... attempt to determine the standards behind the information to which they have been uncovered and may create theories that relate neither to the primary language nor to the objective language" (Richards, 1970:6).Students might be interrupted by interference of their native languages. (Kamil and Hazem,2019:327).

The research in error analysis carried out within the context of the classroom. It collects data from classrooms that serve as input to theoretical discussion and make analysis. After analysis of the data, it provides feedback to design the remedial curriculum and pedagogical remediation. It involves recognition, description and categorization of errors according to the hypothesized cause and evaluating their seriousness. (Singh, 2009:12).

Characteristics of Arabic and English Prepositions

It is obvious that students face difficulties when they come to use prepositions. Both Arabic and English have common characteristics of prepositions. There are different uses

and different numbers of prepositions in Arabic and English. Abbas Hasan, (1960) states 'that there are 20 prepositions in Arabic'.

(من- الى – حتى – خلا – حاشا – عدا – في-عن- على –مذ- منذ – رب – اللام – كي – الواو- التاء – الكاف- الباء – لعل- متى)

Wright (1984) points out that there are some adverbs can be regarded as prepositions in case there is a noun follows them, but they remain adverbs when there is on adverbs follow them, these are:

(عند – قبل – بين – تحت- فوق- دون- قبل - امام- قدام- خلف- وراء- حول)

Grammarians said that the purpose behind this use is to generate the new meaningful clause. Abbas Hasan, (1960:536). Some linguists such as Hayden, 1956 and Seidl, 1978) point out that English has 57 prepositions. A prepositionis that associate with names, or associate names with verbs.

1. One of the most interference feature between Arabic and English prepositions is that they are not used as full content words, i.e. they must associate with nouns or verbs. They become meaningful through the contexts.

2. There are different numbers of prepositions in both languages and these characteristics lead Many learners to use any preposition that serves his/her purpose in translation. There are some prepositions 'في'/fi/used as offset. In Arabic, this preposition is a channel that all English counterparts must approve. It is used to refer to time and space and appears with many distinct words in theoretical and symbolic uses. Therefore, /fi/ as well as other Arabic prepositions, interfere with the choice and use of English. Consider the following examples:

تعلمنا في المدرسة
Taalam.na fi al madrasat-i
Learned-1st pl. in the school
We learned in the school.

تقابلنا في المساء
Taqabal.na fi al masa
Met.1st pl. the night
"We met at the night".

الحياة بالقرية / في القرية ممتعة.
Life in/at the village is enjoyable.

صليت حتى مطلع الفجر/ الى مطلع الفجر.
I prayed till/ until Fajr.

ارجو انتباهك لما يقول.
Pay attention to what he says.

Sometimes, a preposition is used as extra:
(الى) اين ذهبت ؟
Where have you been to? (to)

بعد ان انتهيت من عملي ذهبت الى البيت.

After having finished my work I went home. (after)

البيت لوالدنا.

The house is for our father.

يباع بالمتر.

Sold by meter.

A preposition is used as contrast, such as:

هو غير مقتنع مع ثروته الكثيرة.

He is not content for all his wealth.

Heaton, (1985: 93) states that "if the verb takes the direct object, the preposition follows the direct object. For example:

اقترض فلوسا كثيرة مني.

He borrowed a lot of money from me.

Heaton, 1965:134) said "On certain occasion it is both necessary and correct to end a sentence with a preposition".

   This is the boy to who I gave the book. → This is the boy I gave the book to.

The relative pronoun followed by a preposition in the original sentence.

In Arabic, the omission of a noun after a preposition is not allowed.

هذا هو الولد الذي اعطيت له الكتاب.

But a preposition only can be omitted from the sentence such as:

هذا هو الولد الذي اعطيته الكتاب.

In case of deletion, the prepositional phrase can whole deleted but not a part of it.

 (Abdulrahman, 1994)

هذا هو البيت الذي ولدت فيه.

هذا هو البيت الذي ولدت في.*

ماذا تسمع (له).

Other characteristics of prepositions of Arabic and English are:

Most prepositions do not alter the meaning of the verbs they follow (Heaston, 1965:93):

ذهبت الى بغداد

I went to Baghdad.

Sometimes a preposition gives a verb a new meaning or causes the verb to assume a secondary or subsidiary meaning. (Ibid)

هو معروف باسم رومل.

He goes by the name of Rommel.

يستغل النزيل سخاوة مالك المنزل.

The lodger trades on his landlord's generosity.

Arabic learners have another problem in using specific English prepositions according to his/her native language. Therefore, through literal translation, for example when the Arabic context needs a preposition or does not require anything, learners provide wrong answers, as shown in the following examples:

ذهب الى البيت

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Journal of University of Babylon for Humanities, Vol.(28), No.(2): 2020 The First Scientific Conference of Al-Hamdaniya University for Pure and Human Sciences

Thahab-a ila al bayt-i

Went-3sg. Acc to the- home.

"He went home".

Many of the Arab students make mistakes in translating a sentence like above, so in responding to the question by a teacher, the students may use the preposition "to" considering that it as equivalents to his Arabic proposition " الى" so, they translate the sentence such:

He went to home.

The findings of the study are hoped to be helpful for students of a foreign language and instructors who are specialized in teaching the second or a foreign language to teach or apply the results of the study to the students in order to fill the gap of prepositions.

Wren and Martin (1974:177), divide Prepositions into three types:

1. Simple Prepositions

   These prepositions are single words such as (at, by, for, in, of, off, on, out, though, till, to, up, with)

2. Compound Prepositions

   These prepositions which are generally forming by a preposition (usually a = an (or) be = by) to a noun, an adjective or an adverb. (Ibid:176).

3. Phrase Prepositions

   Phrase prepositions are group of words used with the force of a single preposition. (according to, be means of, in order to, etc.) (ibid:176).

On the other hand, Quirk et al. (1985) divide prepositions into two types, the first type is simple as Wren whereas the second type named Complex prepositions, these are:

1. Adverb + preposition

   (out of, apart from, along with).

2. Adverb/ adjective/ conjunction + preposition

   (because of, due to, owing to)

3. Preposition + noun + preposition

   (by means of, in comparison with)

Literature Review

Many researchers and scholars have written about Prepositions and many of these studies were in different tools and methods. Tadros, (1966) made a study in Khartoum university and asked the students to use the relative clauses in their writings. "There is a widely wide-spread consensus amongst instructors of English as a foreign language concerning the concern of prepositions" (Zughoul, 1979:24).

According to (Khampang, 1974: 215), the instructors and researchers of EFL are properly conscious that preposition is one of the most challenging parts for students. Prepositions are always a problematic issue for foreign beginners of English (Mukattash, 1976:269). Arabic learners have difficulty in using English prepositions because they usually associate them with their preposition system. The reason for this difficulty is the distinction in the number, meaning and use of prepositions. The study of Scott (1974) provided English language skills with useful information related to where students often skip common English. The study examined two factors in speech and writing time among Arab university students enrolled in an intensive English course to assess the types and frequency of speech and writing errors and identify sources of errors where possible.

(Scott, 1974). Most of the relevant studies are those conducted by Scott and Alami. Scott and Alami emphasized the challenge of English prepositions for Arab learners. Khampang (1974) has shown that "different language companies no longer affect learner's performance in using English prepositions"; in other words, using prepositions is difficult. Thus, the two results complement each other. In Scott's study, preposition errors ranked second only with verbs, although they ranked Mukattash among common grammatical errors. These indicators are useful, not only now for this study but also for all teachers of English as a foreign language.

The errors are described, categorized and then divided as follows: 1. Prepositions concerning to 'Time': 1.a. Omission. 1.b. Addition. 1.c. Misuse. 2. Prepositions associated to 'Space': 2.a. Omission. 2.b. Addition. 2.c. Misuse. three "Miscellaneous" prepositions that consist of prepositions used after nouns, verbs and adjectives: 3.a. Omission. 3.b. Addition. 3. c. Misuse.

Data Analysis

This study carries out linguistic analysis of the students' errors in using prepositions in written English committed by the second- year students of English at university of Al Hamdaniya, for the academic year 2018-2019. This study involves identification, description and explanation of errors. The present study concentrates on some special areas of prepositions. These areas of prepositions are:

1. Omission of a preposition
2. Addition of a preposition
3. Misuse of a preposition

The main target of our study is to examine interference mistakes in the written English. Firstly, the students have been asked to write four paragraphs in different subject matters. Secondly, the researchers intended to analyze all paragraphs of the students and exclude all errors committed by them. For the collection of data, the researchers used students' written performance which was done in their exam. The study describes the identification of errors, description of errors in linguistics terms and provides explanations of errors in terms of their sources. One of the main aims of the present study is to provide some important findings that can assist to improve the process of learning of EFL. This research is expected to be relevant to the learning of English. The essential objectives of the research are to identify, analyze and explain the errors in the specific areas of prepositions and to find out the co relation between learners' attitude towards English and their performance in the target languages.

To conclude, the right preposition and renewing is given too. The following prepositions illustrates:

in:

'In' is a function word which indicates inclusion, position or duration. It is clear that *in* in English is the main equivalence of the preposition /fi/ فيin Arabic. Moreover, the preposition *fi*has many equivalents in English, one of them is*in* since it can be also translated into *at, on*, and *during* if the reference to the time only, and it may be translated into the preposition *into* if the reference is to the place. However, the examples listed below show that the student confused between which of the prepositions must be used. Let us take a look at these examples:

- *<u>In the end I love this topic.</u>

Students here misuses using the correct preposition which it is *at* because *at* is used more in such contexts. Syntactically speaking, the effect of mother tongue is very clear here since the right rendering is:

<div dir="rtl">

ففي نهاية الامر احببت الموضوع
</div>

as well as *fi* in Arabic is the first equivalent which comes in mind in front of *in*. Similarly, consider the following examples:

- *In the last,
- *In conclude,
- *In my opinion,
- Friendship is a relation between many people* *in* the world.,
- I am happy *in relationships with friends.

These are other errors are committed by our students by using *in* instead of *at, to, from*, though, by, respectively.

The interference from Arabic language is obvious in the above examples because the correct Arabic equivalent of the previous examples are:

<div dir="rtl">

لدي , الصداقة عبارة عن علاقة بين العديد من الناس <u>في</u> العالم اجمع , <u>فمن</u> وجهة نظري , <u>وبالنتيجة</u> , <u>في</u> النهاية
انني سعيد <u>بعلاقاتي</u> مع الاصدقاء , العديد من الاصدقاء <u>في</u> البلدان الاخر
</div>

All the examples above show that students substitute or misuse the right preposition in the right context.

On:

On is another complicated preposition to indicate position or time which also causes confusion to the students since it can be used interchangeably with many other prepositions as: at, in, to and or it may de during too. So, the reference of this preposition may be to time or place. Now let us consider the following examples:

- *On the 8 o'clock.
- I love Prego restaurant because it is the best place I go *on it in my life.
- You can know *on friends *in the different countries.

Although that this information is known in which *at* is used with hours, but the student made a mistake too because of the effect of his colloquial Mosuli Arabic on using English since the exact equivalent of this sentence is:

<div dir="rtl">

بالساعة اثنين.
</div>

The same interference appears also in the second above example. This means, during writing, our students collect their ideas by depending on their mother tongue consequently, rendered these ideas into English. However, the response of the second example is:

<div dir="rtl">

احب مطعم بريكو لانو احسن مكان اروح <u>عليه</u> بحياتي.
</div>

Thus, the English preposition that can be used instead of *in* is *to*. The 3rd example consists of two prepositions both of them mustn't be used in such a context because the exact equivalent of this example is:

<div dir="rtl">

يمكنك التعرف *<u>على</u> الاصدقاء *<u>في</u> عدة بلدان..
</div>

This is normal use of such prepositions in Arabic but if it is translated into English literally, it would be unacceptable. Lastly, the student here inserts unnecessary element which is the preposition على since he can say *you can know friends from different*

countries. Also, we need to change في into *from* which is more suitable here in this example.

To:

This preposition is used usually to refer to place or an action but, unfortunately, students confused between *it* and many other prepositions. Look at the following students' errors:

-It can *to help many people.

- I wish I* *had* stay with my friend *to forever.

In these two examples the students add the preposition *to* although there is no need to insert them in both cases as well as he made error by putting the preposition *to* after can which it is the modal and must be followed by a base form of the verb. Whereas, in Arabic there is no fault in adding these two prepositions in both above sentences. However,

بالامكان *ان* **تساعد الناس   واتمنى** *ان* **ابقى مع صديقي** *للابد.*

respectly are acceptable. Alternatively, he omits using the preposition *to* after wish in the second example and he uses *I had* which it is wrong and redundant in the same time. Now we will go to other errors as in:

- It is not very far ***to** my home.
- Cold air come ***to** restaurant from the river.

The exact equivalent of the preposition *to* in Arabic is الى and the students wrongly use *to* here instead of the prepositions *from* and *towards* respectively which should be used here-in these two sentences- instead of *to*. Again, both examples are affected by the standard and colloquial language which they are**:**

انه ليس بعيد المسافة *الى* **بيتي و. يهب الهواء البارد** *الى* **المطعم من النهر**

From:

This preposition typically describes a place of origin and the exact equivalent of it in Arabic is من   but students misuse using it in several contexts because they depend on their literal rendering of their ideas as the following examples:

-I like social relationships ***from** many reasons.

-We can make relationships ***from** our work.

The first example has many equivalents in Arabic and the standard one is:

احب العلاقات الاجتماعية *لعدة* **اسباب**.

or it can also be rendered into:

احب العلاقات الاجتماعية *من خلال* **اسباب عدة**.

In brief, there is interference between *from* and *for* and some of our students confused between which of the two prepositions must be used because *for* here is more suitable. Whereas the equivalent of the second example is:

و بامكاننا تكوين علاقات *من خلال* **عملنا**.

The preposition *from* in this sentence mustn't be used as an equivalent of من since English has many prepositions can be used in such a context as: *during* or *through.*

Of:

The meaning of the preposition *of* is either belonging or possession. Different errors have appeared in the students' writings in using this preposition and we chose several of

them. However, meaning of this preposition in Arabic is من. Let us take the following errors:

-The friendships are important*of through them.

The effect of mother tongue is clear because the origin of this sentence in Arabic is:

الصداقات مهمة من خلالهم.

which it is used normally in such expressions in Arabic, but it is unacceptable in English to use two successive prepositions. Take another error:

- Our relation *of them is good.

And the preposition *with* in this example is the correct rendering for the original text.

علاقتنا بهم جيدة.

The main rendering of this example in Arabic is:

Also, our students sometimes don't know the meanings of the prepositions exactly and they have difficulty to give an exact equivalent.

With:

with is another preposition which it is used to indicate combination and it used by the students increasingly and sometimes is used wrongly as in the following example:

-I like to eat this and enjoy **with* it.

The student here inserts the preposition *with* whereas there is no need to add it in such a context. Even in Arabic the equivalent is

احب ان اكله واستمتع به.

the relation between the enjoyment and the food is direct. So, the student must say

I like to eat this and enjoy it.

Similarly, in

-You will enjoy **with* the ocean.

In this example the student must use another part of speech instead of *with* by saying

- You will enjoy looking at the ocean.

Conclusions

The analysis of the prepositions in the performance of foreign language learners has been attempted to find out the possible nature of errors. The study leads the researchers to the following findings: the students' deficiencies are found in the uses of the three prepositions namely, 'in', 'on' and 'at'. The first two are appeared many times and they are used widely in many places to responses to Arabic one and the majority of their uses are errors. Some prepositions such as "among, between" do not appear in the performance of many students. The consequences of this study proved that the students confine themselves by a limited number of prepositions and they don't have a full background knowledge about this topic and most of these prepositions are: in, to, on, of, with, for, from and about. /fi/ 'in and /alaa/ 'on' cause the most common mistakes. Most students find it difficult to choose the correct prepositions, especially those that indicate spatial relationships. The most errors committed by our students between omission, addition or misuse. The researchers adopt Scott's (1974) model, which recommends investigating early use of prepositions. The researchers noted that university students at this level have trouble in using prepositions in English and popular English as evidenced by their low level of achievement. Then, the conclusion emphasized our doubts that

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Journal of University of Babylon for Humanities, Vol.(28), No.(2): 2020 The First Scientific Conference of Al-Hamdaniya University for Pure and Human Sciences

English prepositions can be considered one of the most challenging areas among different linguistics phenomena for non- native speakers especially for Arabic learners. This is due to the different number of prepositions in both languages since English has a great number and different uses of each preposition compared with Arabic. However, we ignore all the weak writings and don't take them into our consideration. Lastly, the factor of mother- tongue impact is the most effective factor among other factors. The writings were written by students gave concrete evidence that they are making a lot of mistakes in this area. This is because students are discovering an additional position in mastering comparable English patterns, but somehow different from their own language patterns which they discover in identifying the differences. Among the mistakes made due to the intervention of the Arabic language, replacement errors were the most frequent. Deletion and repetition errors followed replacement errors. Finally, other areas of equal importance which should be considered, in order to make the study complete.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
There are no conflicts of interest

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