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Title: The usage of prepositions in English language, and common mistakes Saudi students usually make.

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Abstract

In this research I am going to investigate the common mistakes in using prepositions, this study is confined to three prepositions only, on, in, and at. It gives us an example of common mistakes students usually commit. I will focus on one kind of mistakes which is the replacement of the preposition. There will be a test in this research which contains questions that have a missing preposition, the participants will be asked to choose the appropriate preposition.

Participants also will be asked about how they learned the English language in general and using prepositions in particular. This will help us to improve the method of teaching the usage of prepositions.

Introduction

English prepositions are more difficult than any part of speech for non native speaker as many experts say. Using wrong preposition causes ambiguous sentence or it can change the meaning completely. The variety of preposition and its usage in English have not been found in other languages.

“ Prepositions errors accounts for a significant proportion of all ESL grammar errors, they represented the largest category about 29% of all by 53 intermediate to advanced ESL students” (bitchener 2005).

Literature review

(koosha.2006) Find that, the influence of L1 on the use of collocations is considerable, about 68.5 percents of errors are due to interference from L1. This result showed that, the Impact of L1 on the use of prepositions seemed to be highly significant. The author focuses on teaching prepositions collocation;

however, with some noun we use different prepositions so, teaching collection does not work all the time.

(Essberger. 2012) The author lists the most English prepositions in use today. He divided prepositions into two sections:

1- One word preposition

2- Complex preposition

The author gives us a good definition of the name of preposition (pre + position) means “place before” prepositions usually come before another word, usually a noun.

Significance of research

The importance of this research comes from the importance of prepositions itself. The most of sentences and expressions in the English language contain one preposition at least, and; therefore, you have to be skilled in using prepositions to understand and speak the English language as natives.

The English language has a lot of prepositions, one word prepositions, and complex prepositions as well. 30% of grammatical errors according to some previous researches relating to prepositions, whether a replacement, or missing and unwanted prepositions.

This research is going to give us how much do we have errors regarding the usage of prepositions, and how can we improve the prepositions teaching methods.

Research question

This research answers three main questions.

- 1- How often do students make errors in using prepositions?
- 2- Is the method of learning English affect the usage of prepositions, how?
- 3- To what extent students feel that they have a problem in using prepositions?

Research methodology

This research focuses on three prepositions only, in, on and at. In function of time and positions, method is going to be a test and questionnaire.

Participants:

Participants in this research are students of an English language institute in my city Makkah. They will be around 50 students at intermediate level.

Task:

Participants have to answer 25 questions by choosing the appropriate preposition to fill in the gap; participants also should answer the questionnaire in order to know the relationship between their test score and questionnaire answers.

Test

The test is divided into two sections, first section concerns with time-prepositions, the second section concerns with position or place prepositions.

Ethical considerations

I am going to take permit from both the institute management and their students to do this study.

Student's names are not important; also the institute's name will be secret.

Limitations of research

The result of this study relies heavily on students' answers to the questionnaire, and since we are not sure about the accuracy of these answers, that will give us an unreliable result.

The result will be more accurate if we divide students into three groups, each group will be taught by a different method, and all groups will be controlled for one semester.

First group takes typical class, the second group focuses on listening, and the third group focuses on reading. Doing this test before and after the semester gives us an accurate result; so, we can notice the difference.

Expected result

I expect about 50% of students will make mistakes in the test, I also expect a lot of these mistakes are using (in) instead of (on) or (at). I think some errors due to Transfer (Yule, 2006, *The Study Of Language*, p. 167) explained that the transfer is using sounds, expressions or structures from L1 when performing in L2. So I think a huge number of errors in using prepositions come from transfer an Equivalent preposition from L1 which is Arabic language when performing in L2 which is an English language; however, sometimes the transfer tends to be positive when the same preposition in both languages is suitable.

References

Bitchener, J. Young, S. and. Cameron, D. 2005. The effect of different types of corrective feedback on esl student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*.

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Appendix

Test

Choose the appropriate preposition in, on, and at.?

Time prepositions:

- 1- Emily and I arrived **at** the same time.
- 2- I will see you **in** the morning.
- 3- Do you work **on** Sunday mornings?
- 4- Mozart was born **in** 1756.
- 5- I will be ready **in** two hours.
- 6- He doesn't have a job **at** the moment.
- 7- I am going to take this exam **on** 14 February.
- 8- She will finisher project **in** April.
- 9- I will see you **on** Friday.
- 10- What are you doing **at** the weekend?

Place or position prepositions

- 1- The bus was very full. There were too people **on** it.
- 2- Mary arrived **in** a Taxi.
- 3- I will be **at** work until 5, 30.
- 4- I saw Ahmed **at** a football match.
- 5- We had dinner **at** the hotel.
- 6- All the rooms **in** the hotel have air conditioning.
- 7- In Britain we drive **on** the left.
- 8- We stopped at a small village **on** the way to London.
- 9- Write your name **at** the top.
- 10- When I go to the cinema, I like to sit **in** the front row.
- 11- Budapest is **on** the river of Danube.
- 12- When we were **in** Italy, we spent a few days in Venice.
- 13- Turn left **at** the traffic light.
- 14- The hotel is **on** a small island in the middle of the lake.
- 15- There is somebody **at** the door. Shall I go and see who it is?

This test has been collected from Raymond Murphy (2004) *English grammar in use*. Cambridge University Press.

Questionnaire

- 1- How long have you been learning English?
- 2- Do you listen to native through the media, how often do you listen?
- 3- How do you learn English language?
- 4- How do you learn using prepositions in particular, and grammar in general?
- 5- Do you read English books, newspapers, and magazine, how often do you read?
- 6-Do you find difficulty in using prepositions?

