Investigating the knowledge of Iraqi EFL Learners of Prepositional Phrases

A paper

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Dedicate

We dedicate this research project to our family, especially our Parents, who are tired for our Comfort , and also to everyone who supported us with this project.

Acknowledgement

In the name of Allah most gracious most merciful.

First of all, we are thankful to Allah for helping us to fulfill this work, we wish to express our thanks and appreciation to our supervisor Dr.Lahath mubarak

List of Tables

Table (١) the performance of the students at the recognition level

(١٠).

Table (٢) the performance of the students at the producing level

(١٢).

Table of Contains

Abstract

To master the learning of any language, one must be familiar with the four language skills and language areas of that target language. With prepositions and prepositions, an important language area is seen as the backbone of the language in which one can speak and write correctly. Many EFL learners in general and Iraqis in particular make various errors in the use of prepositional structures such as the relative pronouns since, for, and subject to, in speech and prepositions. Thirty Iraqi university students of English as a foreign language were randomly selected to represent the study sample and then they underwent a two-question test. The first question measured their ability at the recognition level while the second objective was to measure their ability at the production level. The results also showed that the students of the Iraqi University of English as a Foreign Language were able to identify the learners of prepositions, where the number and percentages of correct answers exceeded the number of incorrect answers in the first question. As for the second question, the results appeared on the level of production. The results of data analysis for the second question showed that the students of the Iraqi University of English as a Foreign Language are unable to produce prepositions as a result of the percentages of the numbers of correct answers that are very close to the wrong answers.

Chapter One

Introduction

١.١ The problem

Traditionally, there are eight to ten parts of speech or word classes. A distinction can generally be observed between lexical and grammatical morphemes with the former comprising nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs and the latter comprising conjunction interjection, determines and prepositions. Following the traditional approach, prepositions therefore fall into grammatical morphemes yet ,there are several points of similarity between prepositions and other word classes and constructions such as conjunctions, adverbs ,participates and adjectives. (Hameed B. A., ٢٠١٥)

The present study sheds light on answering the following questions,

١.What is meant by preposition in English?

٢.What are the prepositions of phrases ?Are the students face difficulties in recognizing and the prepositions ?

٣. In which levels the students are good recognition or production?

١.٢ The Aims

This study aims at:

١. Showing light about the knowledge prepositional phrases with their types

٢. Explaining the difficulties face Iraqi EFL learners in using prepositional phrases .

٣. Investigating the good level of Iraqi EFL learners in recognition or production.

١.٣ The Hypotheses

The study hypothesizes that :

١. There many information knowledge of prepositional phrases in English Language.

٢. There are many difficulties face Iraqi EFL learners in using prepositional phrases .

٣. Iraqi learners EFL face difficulties in production level .

١.٤ The Procedure

١. Presenting a theoretical background about the prepositional phrases .

٢. Design testing students from the department of English Language /

University of Babylon at fourth grade in the academic year of ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢..

٣. Making a conclusion of the study

١.٥ **The Limits**

This study is limited to finding out Investigating the Iraqi EFL knowledge of prepositional phrases include production and recognition levels.

١.٦ **The Value**

It is hoped that this study would be of help to those who have interest in grammar whether they are students or teachers, text book writers , linguists and syllabus designers.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

٢.١ **Definition of Prepositions**

A preposition is a word or group of words that accompanies a noun (or pronoun) showing the relationship of the noun (or pronoun) to another word in the sentence, i.e. showing location, position, time, or process. The term preposition utilizes the concept of previous positioning. It's not fair to assume a preposition necessarily precedes a noun or a pronoun, but most of the time, it does. Prepositions in English are most frequently dictated by fixed expressions. While there are some general guidelines to follow, many prepositions are used idiomatically with certain verbs. In these cases, it is best to memorize the phrase instead of the individual preposition. the prepositions are relations which incorporate prepositional

sentences. A noun phrase is the most typical complement in prepositional sentence.

Many English prepositions relate to case-inflections in other languages. Most familiar prepositions in variable forms are short: about, after, around, at, without, etc. Prepositions look pretty short and simple but they have very significant roles.

Prepositions are words that are used with nouns in sentences that include details about time, place, and other relations or connections that include actions and items.

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Some authors state that prepositions are structural phrases, and that they almost belong to a language closed-set. The closed-set items belong to a class whose membership is fixed or restricted, i.e. they cannot usually be expanded by additional members being formed. Closed-set items members exhibit an interdependence of meaning and use. The words that follow a preposition are called the object of the preposition. For examples:

• The cat ran under the car.

(The word the car is the object of the preposition under.)

• Can you give this parcel to him tomorrow?

(The word him is the object of the preposition to.)

Prepositions are very common words in English sentences. Using prepositions is one of the important means to make sentences more agreeable. The most common prepositions have multiple functions in most languages ". The same prepositions may have different meanings and perform various functions depending on the context in which it is employed. Consider the following:

١. I left my car at the cottage.

٢. I saw him at breakfast time.

In the first sentence, the preposition "at" refers to place , whereas in the sentence , " at " refers to time (Hameed A.٢٠٢٠:٧٨)The prepositional complement is characteristically a noun phrase, a nominal wh-clause, or a nominal -ing clause as follows in Table ١ (AL-BAYATI, ٢٠١٣).

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٢.٢ **Meaning and Form of Prepositions**
Generally, speaking English prepositions can be classified according to their form and meaning and it is necessary to distinguish between them. Basically, a meaning is always in someone's mind, whereas a form (spelling and pronunciation) can be in a mind or it can be concrete, i.e, visibly written or audibly spoken. the forms of a preposition described as a member of lexical category which typically combines with a noun phrase to make a larger constituent.

It is believed that a preposition is not a "word which has no meaning at all", nor it is a "word with a clearly determined meaning". Therefore, readers can derive it from the linguistic context in which it occurs. A preposition may or may not have the same meaning in two different

contexts. It can be said that "by" has a different meaning in: " I'll be here by six o'clock", which means "at", than it does in the following two examples: "come and sit by me ", and "We stayed in a cottage by the sea" which has the same meaning and it means "beside, very near"

Prepositions are involved in a vast number of collocations. They may occur at the beginning (in trouble), in the middle (one by one), or at the end (depend on) (Hameed B. A., ٢٠١٥)

٢.٣ **Meaning, Sense and Usage of Prepositions**

English Prepositions explained is primarily concerned with the meanings of prepositions, not with how they pattern grammatically. For the sake of economy in wording, we use the word meaning broadly to cover all of the following:

١.The schematic visual and motoric (or kinaesthetic) mental images which speakers of English evidently associate with given prepositions. For example, from the standpoint of a viewer like the woman in Figure ١, the preposition behind will be associated with a schematic image (or images) of Thing B being on the other side of and at least partly hidden by Thing A:

٢.The notions and functional roles that speakers of English associate with a preposition. For example, behind is associated with the notion of 'concealment,' as in (a), while by is often used to signal that the landmark of the preposition fulfills the role of 'agent', as in (b):

(a)Suddenly, Metwo sensed a human approaching and leapt behind a bush.

(b)The car was stopped by the police. (Lindstromberg, ٢٠١٠)[Lindstromberg, Seth. ٢٠١٠. English Prepositions Explained, Revised edition. Amsterdam / New York: John Benjamins]

٢.٤ Types of Prepositions

There is a traditional dichotomy between "simple prepositions" and "complex prepositions. Most of the common prepositions consist of only one word that has no distinctive ending, and do not vary. Several prepositions, however, consist of more than one word. Simple, or single word, prepositions include: about, at, before, by, down, for, from, in, of, on, out over, round, since, through, to, under, up, with. Complex or multi-word prepositions include:

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• 		two words, such as ahead of, because of, due to, instead of, near to,

• 		three words such as, by means of, as far as, in accordance with, in spite of, on behalf of.

The words in these prepositions do not vary freely, as they do in other circumstances. In spite of, for example, cannot change to 'out spite of' or 'in spite for'. In general expressing a relation of meaning between two parts of a sentence, a preposition most often shows how the two parts are related in space or time:

• 		We sat on the bench.

• 		They left at three.

What prepositions tell can be illustrated in the following types:

١. Prepositions of place e.g. in the office, under my chair, across the road.

٢. Prepositions of time e.g. at six o'clock, before dark, for three weeks.

٣. Prepositions with other meanings e.g. a present for my sister.

٤. Many idiomatic phrases with prepositions such as: for sale in a hurry by mistake.

٥. Many idioms where a preposition comes after a verb, adjective or noun e.g. wait for a bus afraid of the dark an interest in music. (AL-BAYATI, ٢٠١٣)

Chapter Three
Method

٣.١ The Participants

The sample was applied at the University of Babylon in the Department of English and the total number of the sample was ٣٠ students from the Department of English in the fourth stage .who were homogenous in regard to their level of academic achievement.

٣.٢ The Instrument

Only one tool was used in the research, which is the test.

٣.٣ The Features of a Good Test

A good test should have the following features**:**

٣.٣.١ Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study.(Twycross,٢٠١٥,p١)

A. content validity.

This category looks at whether the instrument adequately covers all the content that it should with respect to the variable. (Ibid)

B. Face Validity

Is the degree to which non-experts perceive a test to be relevant for whatever they believe it is being used to measure

٣.٣.٢ Reliability

Reliability relates to the consistency of a measure. A participant completing an instrument meant to measure motivation should have approximately the same responses each time the test is completed. Although it is not possible to give an exact calculation of reliability, an estimate of reliability can be achieved through different measures. (Ibid)

٣.٤ The Test of the Current Study

The test was designed to achieve the objective of the study. The test consists of two questions. The first question is dedicated to investigating participants' ability to identify different forms of interdependence.

The first question consists of ١٠ items, and each question contains three choices. . The second question is to check the participants' ability to be productive, and also consists of ١٠ items, each question includes the answer (time or place) .

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results

This section is dedicated to describe the procedures used to analyses and discuss the obtained data to arrive at the main findings.

١.Frequency and Percentage of the Iraqi EFL University Students' Responses to Question One:

The first question is set to measure the students' responses at the recognition level. The following table shows the frequency and the percentage of the students' responses to each item in this question see Table (١) below.

Table ٥: Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Responses in Question (١)

Q١ Recognition Number of item	Correct answer	Percentage	Incorrect	Percentage	Total

S١	٢٨	٩٣٪	٢	٧٪	٣٠
S٢	٢٢	٧٣٥	٨	٢٧٪	٣٠
S٣	٢٥	٨٣٥	٥	١٧٪	٣٠
S٤	٢٢	٧٣٥	٨	٢٧٪	٣٠
S٥	١٨	٦٠٪	١٢	٤٠٪	٣٠
S٦	٠	٠٪	٣٠	١٠٠٪	٣٠
S٧	٧	٢٣٪	٢٣	٧٧٪	٣٠
S٨	٣٠	١٠٠٪	٠	٠٪	٣٠
S٩	٣٠	١٠٠٪	٠	٠٪	٣٠
S١٠	٢٤	٨٠٪	٦	٢٠٪	٣٠
Total	٢٠٦	٦٩٥	٩٤	٣١٪	٣٠٠

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The total correct responses according to numbers and percentages are ٢٠٤ correct answers forming ٦٩٪ respectively.

While total incorrect responses according to numbers and percentages are ٩٤ incorrect responses and ٣١٪. It can be concluded from the results presented in the table above that most of the students are able to recognize the learners of preposition phrases, since the percentage of the correct responses exceed that of the incorrect ones.

٢.Frequency and Percentage of the Iraqi EFL university students' responses to question two .

The second question is intended to measure Iraqi EFL university students'. The following table shows the frequency and the percentage of the students' responses to each item in this question. See Table (٢) below:

Table: Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Responses in Question (٢)

Q٢ prodiction Number of item	Correct answer	Percentage	Incorrect	Percentage	Total
S١	١٤	٤٧٪	١٦	٥٣٪	٣٠
S٢	٩	٣٠٪	٢١	٧٠٪	٣٠
S٣	٤	١٣٪	٢٦	٨٧٪	٣٠
S٤	٢٠	٦٧٪	١٠	٣٣٪	٣٠
S٥	١٩	٦٣٪	١١	٣٧٪	٣٠
S٦	٢٣	٧٧٪	٧	٢٣٪	٣٠
S٧	١٤	٤٧٪	١٦	٥٣٪	٣٠
S٨	١٧	٥٧٪	١٣	٤٣٪	٣٠
S٩	١٦	٥٣٪	١٤	٤٧٪	٣٠

S١٠	٢٣	٧٧٪	٧	٢٣٪	٣٠
Total	١٥٩	٥٣٪	١٤١	٤٧٪	٣٠٠

We note from the table that the total number of correct answers according to numbers and percentages is ١٥٩ correct answers and ٥٣ respectively while the total number of incorrect answers according to numbers and percentages are ١٤١ and ٤٧ respectively.

It can be concluded from the results presented in the above table that the students are not able to produce prepositional phrases, because the percentages of correct answers is close to incorrect answers.

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Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

٥.١ **Conclusions**

It can be concluded that:

١.We concluded that students were able to recognize prepositional phrases because the number and proportions of the correct answers outweigh the incorrect answers in the first question.

٢.At the production level, the results of data analysis for the second question showed that the students of the Iraqi University of English as a Foreign Language are unable to prepositions because of the percentages, the number of correct answers is close to the incorrect answers.

٥.٢ Recommendations

Based on the findings and the results of the analysis of the data, the following are recommendations that can be summed up as follows:

١.Teachers have to put due emphasis on these of preposition phrases.

٢.The results also showed that Iraqi university students who speak English as a foreign language are not able to use these prepositions especially in the production test. Therefore, teachers should devise kinds of tests in prepositions for students to learn.

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Appendix I

Q١/ Choose the correct answer for each of the following sentences :-

١_ .... I discovered this bar, I used to go straight home after work.

a) of

b) since

c) before

٢_ The store is open……..midnight.

a) during

b) until

c) from

٣_ He usually arrives…………… ٣ pm.

a) around

b) after

c) about

٤_ The train passes………… the tunnel.

a) into

b) within

c) through

٥_ The cat is………….the table.

a) under

b) front

c) between

٦_ He kicked the ball………….the wrong goal.

a) above

b) towards

c) without

٧_ My house is…………… the supermarket.

a) beyond

b) till

c) next to

٨_ Don't go………….the fire.

a) near

b) behind

c) with

٩_ The mouse is………….the bed.

a) over

b) beside

c)for

١٠_ I came…….bus.

a) inside

b) until

c) by

Q٢/ Indicate whether the following prepositions refer to place or time.

١_ The film will be begin at ٧:٣٠ p.m.

٢_ In the evening, I listened to some music.

٣_ The pen is under the table.

٤_ I'll be here on Saturday.

٥_ we lived there through summer.

٦_ I have known her for a long time.

٧_ What time is it please?

٨_ The garden is located around the house.

٩_ I have been waiting since ٧o'clock.

١٠_ Iwant to traval to New York.

Appendix II

Answers of Q١ :

١_ before

٢_ until

٣_ around

٤_ through

٥_ under

٦_ towards

٧_ next to

٨_ near

٩_ beside

١٠_ by

Answers of Q٢:

١_ time

٢_ time

٣_ place

٤_ time

٥_ time

٦_ time

٧_ time

٨_ place

٩_ time

١٠_ place

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