

Ministry of Higher Education

University of Babylon

College of Education for Human Sciences

Department of English



The Study of Preposition in English and Arabic Languages

A paper

Submitted to the Council of Department of English, College of
Education, University of Babylon in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for the Degree of B.A in English Language and
Linguistics

By

Duaa Ali Habeb

Supervised By

Prof. Dunya M.M. Ijam (M.A.)

2022 M

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٢)

صدق الله العظيم

سوره البقرة ايه (٣٢)

Glory is to You, we have no knowledge except what " you have taught us. Verily, it is You , the knower , the Wise".

God Almighty has spoken the truth

Surat Al Baqara , Verses
Ali (2006: 32)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe gratitude to my family for being them with me throughout my studying years, to the teaching staff in the English department and to Prof. Dunya M.M. Ijam (*M.A.*) for consultation and guidance may God bless and reward greetings with full respect

DEDICATION

To my kind father....my role model, and my role model in life; He taught me how to live with dignity and honor.

To my tender mother..... I can't find words that can give her right, she is the epic of love and the joy of a lifetime, and an example of dedication and giving.

To my brothers....my support, and I share my joys and my sorrows.

To my friends, and all those who stood by me and helped me with all they had, and in Many levels.

To all my dear teachers; Who did not hesitate to help me I dedicate my research to you.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem of The Study

Both English and Arabic languages have the preposition system to facilitate speech . In spite of that they are not completely similar . It is known that the use of prepositions in English spoken and written discourse is very important and crucial to being comprehensible, and it has been shown that one page of written English may contain about 200 prepositions, which is a very high number that can cause problems when translation takes place .

This paper tries to answer the following question:

1. What are the similarities of prepositions in two language ?
- 2.What are the differences of preposition in English and Arabic ?

1.2 The Aims of The Study

This study aims at :

- 1.Shedding light on the differences and similarities between the two languages in the area of prepositions in English and Arabic.
- 2.Identifying the different categories of prepositions in English their counterpart in Arabic.

1.3 Hypothesis of The Study

It is hypothesized that:

1. In both languages prepositions fall in different categories .
2. The way of dealing with prepositions categories is more diversified in Arabic than those in English.

1.4 The Procedures of The Study

1. Presenting a theoretical background about the different categories of prepositions in the two languages.
2. Conduct a comparison between English and Arabic to highlight the principal differences and similarities between them.

1.5 The Limitations of The Study

This paper is limited to define prepositions in English and Arabic and its system of morphology in both languages.

1.6 The Value of The Study

It is hoped that this paper would be of help to those who have interest in contrastive studies between Arabic and English whether they are students or teachers.

Chapter Two

Prepositions in English

2.1 Introduction

prepositions are words normally placed before nouns or pronouns. Prepositions can also be followed by verbs that must be in the gerund form prepositions are generally used to show the relationship between its object and other words in the sentence. Prepositional phrase at the minimum a prepositional phrase will begin with a preposition and end with a noun ,pronoun ,gerund or clause the object of the preposition . The object of the preposition will often have one or more modifiers to describe it . these are the patterns for a prepositional phrase English and Arabic do not derive from the same language family, English belongs to the Indo-European language family, whereas Arabic is a Semitic language. English contains some simple and complex prepositions, and Arabic encloses separable and inseparable prepositions. (Hamdallah & Tushyeh, 1993, 182).

2.2 Types of Preposition :

2.2.1 Prepositions of Time

Preposition of time is used to say or indicate when something happens. There are several prepositions that can be used as the preposition of time (Dignen, et al 2007:153) , as:

(on, in, at, before, after, until/till, for, since, during, from to, and by)

All of the preposition above cannot be used in the same situation in other word, each preposition has its own rule which settle when to use it correctly

Use "in" with parts of the day (not specific times), months, years, and seasons.

- He reads in the evening.
- The weather is cold in December.

Use "at" with the time of day. Also use "at" with noon, night, and midnight.

- I go to work at 8:00.
- He eats lunch at noon.

Use "on" with days.

- I work on Saturdays.
- He does laundry on Wednesdays. (Ibid)

To refer to extended time, use the prepositions "since," "for," "by," "during," "from...to," "from...until," "with," and "within."

- I have lived in Minneapolis since 2005.
- He will be in Toronto for 3 weeks.
- She will finish her homework by 6:00.
- He works part time during the summer.
- I will collect data from January to June.
- They are in school from August until May.
- She will graduate within 2 years. (Dignen, et al 2007:156)

2.2.2 Prepositions of Place

According to Dignen et al (2007:151) The second kind of preposition is prepositions to show the place. Preposition of place is used to tell someone where someone else or something there are some prepositions that can be used to talk about location; they are in, on, at, near, under, between, beside, among, above, and below.

- They will meet in the lunchroom.
- She was waiting at the corner.
- He left his phone on the bed.
- Place the pen inside the drawer. (Ibid)

To refer to an object close to a point, use the prepositions "by," "near," "next to," "between," "among," and "opposite."

- The gas station is by the grocery store.
- The park is near her house.
- Park your bike next to the garage.
- There is a deer between the two trees.
- There is a purple flower among the weeds.
- The garage is opposite the house. (Dignen, et al 2007:158)

2.2.3 Intransitive Prepositions

As argued by Emonds (1985:34), adverbs such as home, downstairs, and afterward or post-verbal particles seem to be better treated as prepositions. It is not difficult to note that post-verbal particles behave just like ordinary prepositional phrases, too:

_Tom ran into the opera house.

2.2.4 Transitive Prepositions

Central prepositions in English select a noun phrase as its complement and cannot have a that-clause or an infinitive clause as a complement:

- _He was surprised at (that) she noticed him.
- _He was surprised at to see her.
- _He stayed at home because of the strike.
- _He fell out of the window.
- _Few people outside of the immediate family know.
- _Sam disappeared down into the darkness.
- _Tom pushed John up against the ropes.
- _The ice is over under the bridge.

Even there are cases that we might think the prepositions just take a noun phrase only. (Bennet ;1975: 4-5)

2.2.5 Ditransitive Prepositions

In the same spirit, it is assumed that there exists ditransitive prepositions such as from, down, and into (Jackendoff ;1973:90). Examples in illustrate this point:

- _The mice raced from one end of the part to the other.
- _An old man lumbered down the street toward the frightened child.
- _A drunken pianist staggered into the smoky room from out of the cold.

2.2.6 Multiclasses

The observations also imply that just like verbs, one preposition also can have different sub-categorization information:

- _Tom jumped out of the bushes.
- _Tom ran out the door.
- _Tom jumped out.

(Hall 1986: 4)

2.2.7 One-word Prepositions

Aboard

- We went aboard the boat.
- Is there a doctor aboard the plane?

about

- What do you think about Mary?
- Let's talk about something different.
- I've just read a book about President Kennedy.

above

- We are flying above the clouds.
- We live in the hills, 1,000 metres above sea-level.

across

- We drove across the desert.
- The dog ran across the road.

against

- Did you vote for or against the suggestion?
- He put his bicycle against the wall.

Along

- We walked along the beach for two miles.
- There are trees along the road. (Ibid)

2.2.8 Prepositions of Path

Some grammarians have made a sharp distinction between prepositions of place and 'prepositions of path' (or prepositions of 'direction', or of 'movement', or of 'motion') (Palmberg,2000, 113). A preposition of path can highlight one of the following aspects of a path of movement:

1)Its end:

_Put the bread in the oven

2) Its beginning:

_The sound came from the house beginning.

3) Its orientation, and whether the distance between the Subject and the Landmark is increasing or decreasing

_We headed toward town.

4) Is the Moon moving away from the Earth? Yes it is, but very slowly.

5) An intermediate point or location:

_I stopped by his place intermediate location

Broadly speaking, prepositions of place can be used as prepositions of path and vice versa. For any preposition which locates a Subject in space or describes a path ('a change of location in space'), the blanket term is spatial preposition (Palmberg,2000; 115).

2.2.9 Double Preposition

Double prepositions are two (prepositional) words which are joined together to connect nouns, pronouns, and phrases with other words in sentence.(Ibid)

(Outside of, out of, from behind, up to, next to, because of, according to, etc.)

- Suddenly he emerged from behind the curtain.
- The match between Pakistan and India was delayed due to rain.

- Nobody outside of this class should know about the plan.
- According to the news reporter, the weather will be cloudy today.
- Next to skiing my favorite sport is skating.

2.2.10 Participle Preposition

Participle preposition are verbs + ing that function as a preposition in a sentence is called participle preposition.

2.2.11 Common Participle Preposition:

(Barring, considering, during, following, including, etc.)

- Barring accidents, we should arrive on time.
- He took charge of the family business following his father's death.
- No one should talk during the class.

2.2.12 Phrase Prepositions (Prepositional Phrase)

Phrase preposition is a phrase containing a preposition and functions as a preposition in a sentence and connects nouns, pronouns, or other phrase toothier words in a sentence.

2.2.13 Common Phrase Prepositions:

(On behalf of, on account of, with regard to, in spite of, to the fact that etc.)

- I am playing in the team on behalf of captain today.
- He succeeded by means of perseverance.

- We could not win the match in spite of playing good.
- Natural honey has been used for centuries on account of their healing properties.

2.3 Functions of Preposition

There are some functions of preposition:

1. Preposition after particular words and expressions. It is not always easy to know which preposition to use after a particular noun, verb or adjective. Here are some of the most common combinations which cause difficulty to students of English. e.g. drive into: Granny drove into a tree again yesterday. Emonds (1985:34)

2. Preposition at the ends of clauses: A preposition often connects two things: (1) a noun, adjective or verb that comes before it, and (2) a "prepositional object". A noun phrase or pronoun that comes after the preposition. This is a present for you. In some structures we may put the preposition object at or near the beginning of a clause. In this case, the preposition does not always go with it. It may stay together with „its“ noun, adjective or verb at the end of the clause (Ibid).

Chapter Three

Prepositions in Arabic

3.1 Introduction

There are many differences between English and Arabic prepositions. Prepositions in Arabic are much less in number than their English counterparts (Al-Marrani , 2009:56). English language comprises about one hundred prepositions (Leacock et al, 2014:54) whereas, in Arabic the number of prepositions is about (29) (Aldahesh, 2013:90).

3.2 Forms of Prepositions in Arabic

According to Saeed, (2014:90), Arabic prepositions can be classified into two primary classes: true prepositions and semi-prepositions. More details on the two classes of prepositions are discussed below.

1-True prepositions: This class contains the structures of language that function only as prepositions. True prepositions can be additionally subdivided into two types based on the number of letters that each preposition includes. Separable prepositions and Inseparable prepositions.

2- Semi-prepositions: This type is characterized being multi-functional and comprising language structures that can function as nouns, adverbs and prepositions.

3.3 Functions of Prepositions in Arabic

Arabic prepositions perform different functions in the sentence. Firstly, they serve to link a noun to another noun or a noun phrase to reveal the relationship between the two. It is worth noting that the parts; functions of prepositions and usages of prepositions are clarified with English examples alongside word for word transliteration. Transliteration is rather significant in order to illustrate how prepositions are used in Arabic.

Example:

1- Ahmed is **in** the school.

احمد في المدرسة

In the sentence above, the preposition **in** links the noun **Ahmed** to the other noun 'al-madrasah (school). Arabic prepositions are also used to relate a noun or a noun phrase to a verb in the sentence to reveal the correlation between them. Al-Marrani (2009:87)

3.4 Usages of prepositions in Arabic

According to Saeed, (2014), Arabic prepositions can be classified in these types :

من / From, Some of or One of

This prepositions refers to initiating an action from some place, or it can mean “some of”. It can also refer to the gender or species meaning “one of”.

Example:

I walked from my home to school. / مشيتُ من بيتي إلى المدرسة.

A cup of coffee in Arabic / فنجان من القهوة

I spent from (= some of) my savings. / أنفقتُ من مدخراتي

إلى / To or At

This preposition refers to destination.

Example:

The train arrived at (got to) the station. / وصل القطارُ إلى المحطةِ

عن / From or About

This preposition means “about” or “awayfrom” something or someone.

Example:

I read a book about Naguib Mahfouz. / قرأتُ كتاباً عن نجيب محفوظ

I walked away from the grass. / مشيتُ بعيداً عن الحشائش

(Ibid)

على / On or Above

This preposition refers to the top place of something and means “on”.

Example:

The book is on the desk. / الكتابُ على المكتبِ

في / Fee / In or Into

This preposition refers to something happening inside.

Example:

There are a few students in the classroom. / يوجد القليل من الطلابِ في الفصلِ

بِ / By, With, In or At

This preposition can refer to the reason meaning “by”, or it can mean “with“. It can also refer to the place meaning “in” or “at“.

Example:

You succeed by working hard. / تنجحُ بالعملِ الجادِ

With science, you build minds. / بالعلمِ تبنى العقولِ

Mohammad is at home. / محمدٌ بالبيتِ

The friends meet in the club. / يجتمع الأصدقاءُ بالنادي

ك / الكاف / Like or As

This preposition expresses simile التشبيه meaning “like” or “as”.

Example:

False hopes are like a mirage. / الأمانِيُّ الخادعَةُ كالسرابِ /

He works like a machine. / هو يعمل كالآلةِ /

Time is like a sword / الوقت كالسيف /

(Dignent, et al, 2007:76)

اللام / To or For

This preposition can refer to the reason or the possession.

Example:

Students go to school to learn (for learning). / يذهب الطلابُ للمدرسةِ للتعلمِ /

Success is for the hard-working / النجاحُ للمجتهدين /

حتى / Until

This preposition refers to finishing something or the end of something.

Example:

People learn until they die. / يتعلم الناسُ حتى يموتون /

و / And

This is used when there are multiple items to be listed.

Apples and oranges are my favorite fruits

التفاح والبرتقال من الفواكه المفضلة لدي

(Dignent, et al, 2007:76)

Chapter Four

Comparison between English and Arabic Preposition

The use of prepositions can vary greatly between Arabic and English, and it is often the case that the worldview of speakers of both languages determines the prepositions they use, which of course depends on context. For example, where Arabic speakers use 'in' to refer to days, English speakers use 'on', instead, Emonds (1985:84) .

The first prepositions to look at is 'on':

(On)

The most obvious use for this preposition, that is the position 'on top of' of an object in relation to a surface, is the same in both languages.

1- The cup is **on** the desk.

الكوب على الطاولة.

However, 'on' can also be used to refer to moving surfaces or objects, such as buses and planes.

2- I'm on the bus.

In Arabic, على 'ala (on) is never used to express this concept. Instead, في fi (in) is used.

So, the same example would be expressed in Arabic as:

I'm **on** the bus.

انا في الباص.

The third way in which the English preposition 'on' is used is in reference to the time. For example: Bennet (1975: 70)

3- I'll visit you **on** Monday.

In Arabic, the concept is also expressed differently. In Arabic, one could either use في fi (in) to refer to days:

I'll visit you *on* Monday.

سأزورك في يوم الاثنين.

Or one could get rid of the preposition altogether. For example:

I'll visit you *on* Monday.

سأزورك يوم الاثنين

***The second instance (no preposition) is usually preferred to the one with 'fi' in it.**

The second preposition to look at today is:

(About)

When 'about' is generally used to talk about a topic or a subject matter, which is the most common usage, things are straightforward and both languages express the idea in the same way. As you can see in the next example, the simple equivalent to 'about' in Arabic is "an".

1- I talked *about* Ahmed today

تكلّمت عن أحمد اليوم.

About can also be combined with the adjective 'mad' to create the adjective phrase 'mad about'. In Arabic, however, we use بِ bi and not عن "an". For example:

2- She's mad *about* Mike.

هي مجنونه بـ مايك.

Finally, and while 'about' is again used to refer to 'estimation of value', there's again another preposition in Arabic that is specifically used for this concept, that is حوالي 'hawaali' (approximately).

3-There are *about* twenty people.

هناك حوالي عشرين شخص.

(Ibid:76)

Chapter Five

Conclusion

English and Arabic refer to two distinct language families. While the former belongs to Germanic languages, the latter belongs to Semitic family .Therefore, it is expected that the two languages have two different prepositional systems. In an attempt to understand the differences and similarities between prepositions in English and Arabic, the researcher conducted a cross -linguistic comparison between prepositions in the two languages.

According to Quirk ,et al. (1985, p. 673) , “ preposition expresses a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement, the other by another part of the sentence”. With reference to the quotation above, a preposition has the function of connecting two parts of speech in the sentence. Usually the preposition is followed by its complement in a construction called prepositional phrase (PP) where the preposition links its complement or direct object to another part of speech in the sentence such as nouns, verbs or adjectives.

The Differences

1. Prepositions in Arabic are much less in number than their English counterparts . English language comprises about one hundred prepositions whereas, in Arabic the number of prepositions is about twenty.

2. English prepositions can be grouped into simple and complex whereas, in Arabic there is no such classification; all prepositions are simple.

3. Many of the English prepositions are not considered as prepositions in Arabic but adverbs or semi- prepositions such *as down, beneath, below, up, over and above*.

4. In English language, the Prepositions are always free morphemes but In Arabic it sometimes comes as an affixes (prefix) attached to the noun.

5. Some Arabic prepositions have more than one meaning like the preposition (في Fii) and it has many meanings like: At, On, All over, To...

6. Sometimes, the meaning of the preposition differs between Arabic and English according to its meaning like in the examples:

- Mohammad arrived on time .

محمد وصل في الوقت

7. Sometimes the meaning of the preposition differs in the same language like in English the following example:

- This interview is about world economics

8. In English language, the pronoun that follows the preposition must be in the object state like the example:

- Shadi offered the present to him

9. Some English prepositions have various states when translated into Arabic such As the English preposition "of"

The Similarities

1. There are similarities between the rules of mother tongue and second language, there is positive transfer which is called facilitation. the first language of the learner may facilitate the development process of learning a second language by helping him to progress more rapidly along the universal route when the first language is similar to the second language.
2. In both languages the preposition doesnot have a dependent meaning and it cannot stand alone.

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