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Iraqi EFL Learners' Use of Prepositions of Place

A Research

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَفَاكِ
رَبِّ زِدْنِي عَلَيْهَا

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمَ

Dedicate

To My Family and Friends

Acknowledgement

.First of all, I am thankful to Allah for helping me to fulfill this work . I wish then to express my thanks and appreciation to my supervisor **(Asst.Prof.Maraim D. Saffah , PH.D)**

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Chapter One

Introduction

0.1 Introduction

Prepositions are words in language used for compressing meaning into few words. The correct use of preposition constitutes a problematic area in language practice for Iraqi EFL students even advanced ones (Nasir 2001:1).The significance of mastering the use of prepositions requires paying closer attention on the part of teachers of English to this learning area. The problem of mastering English prepositions has three dimensions :form, meaning and use. One of the problems which contributes to misuse of prepositions is that foreign students confuse their meaning by using one preposition instead of another(Fitikdes,2002:83)

1.1 The Problem

This study investigate the use of preposition of place by Iraqi EFL learner's , It sets itself to the task of answering the following question:

1. What do preposition of palce refer to?
2. What are the types and functions of prepositions of place?
3. What difficulties do Iraqi EFL learne's face when using preposition of place?

1.2 The Aim

The study aims to :

1. Specifying the prepositions of place.
2. Shedding some light on the different types and functions of preposition of place
3. Finding out the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learner's in using prepositions of place.

1.3 The Hypotheses

1. A preposition of place is a preposition which is used to refer to a place where something or someone is located.
2. Iraqi EFL learner's face difficulty in the production of preparations of place.

1.4 The Procedure

In order to fulfil the aims of this study , the procedure are as following

1. Reviewing literature on prepositions of place, enhancing their synthetic nature.
2. Testing the fourth year students in the department of English to identify the problems faced by them in using prepositions of place.
3. Drawing conclusions depending on the finding of the study.

1.5 The Limits

This study concerns itself with investigating the use of preparations of place by Iraqi EFL learner's.

1.6 The Value

It is hoped that this study would be of value to those who are interested in English language and grammar. It will also be valuable for students who took the test in developing their knowledge of prepositions of place in the English language.

Chapter Two

Theoretical backgrounded

2.1 Introduction

New Mark (1988: 24) stated that " most common prepositions have multiple functions in most languages ". In fact, prepositions in all languages represent a fundamental part of speech which one would never write a text or a paragraph to be empty of. That is why using them is one of the important ways to make any sentence more accurate and acceptable.

Prepositions may performs different functions and have different meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. Consider the examples below:

1. Sally lost her keys at home.
2. Mary always does her exercises at breakfast time.

In the first sentence, the preposition "at" refers to a place (home), whereas in the sentence, " at " refers to the time (breakfast time).

Prepositions are often conceptually different from one language to another and direct translation cannot be relied on. The lack of correspondence means that a one-to-one translation will produce ungrammatical sentences. Besides, the loss of the rules governing the use of prepositions causes a lot of problems to EFL students (Alexander, 1988: 146).

It can be noticed that using one preposition instead of the other in the same sentence will usually create completely different meanings in English. For instance, replacing "in" instead of "at" creates different interpretations and meanings. As in:

3. Anne is at school. (She is a student).
4. Anne is in school. (She is at a place, i.e., not at home).
5. Anne is in the school. (She is within the building).

Iraqi learners face such difficulty and many errors and mistakes may be noticed in their use of these prepositions.

2.2 Definitions of Prepositions

According to Stageberg (1971:156) prepositions are words like of, in, and to which are usually followed by a noun, personal pronoun, or noun substitute called the object of the preposition. The unit of preposition –plus- object of preposition is called a prepositional phrase. e.g. George sat between the two deans.

Alexander (1993:284) defines preposition as "a word we use in front of nouns or noun phrases, pronouns or gerunds to express a relationship between one person, event, etc."

Trask (1993:214) defines preposition as "a lexical category, or a member of this category, which typically combines with a noun phrase to make a larger constituent, a prepositional phrase, which in turn can typically occur inside a verb phrase or inside an Nbar.

According to Eckersley and Eckersley (1997:277-78) prepositions are words used with nouns (or noun equivalent) to show the relation in which these noun stand to some other word in the sentence. e.g. The horse is in the stable. the preposition 'in' expresses the relation between horse and stable.

According to Biber et al (1999:74) prepositions are links which introduce prepositional phrases. As the most typical complement in a prepositional phrase is a noun phrase, they can be regarded as a device which connects noun phrases with other structures.

Finch (2000:114) says prepositions are words which relate two parts of a sentence together where the relationship is typically one of time, place, or logic, as in the following examples:

Time: He went home after/during/before the lecture.

Place: She went in/to/by/from the house.

Logic: She went because of/ in spite of you.

Leech et al (2001:410) defines preposition as "a word which typically goes before a noun phrase or pronoun". e.g. of the world, with the best friend, at a hotel. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, preposition is a word that is used before a noun, pronoun or gerund to show that words connection with another word, such as 'of' in 'a house made of wood', and 'by' in 'we open it by breaking the lock' (Longman group Ltd, 2002:1111).

Crystal (2003:368) defines preposition as "a term which is used in the grammatical classification of words, referring to the set of items which typically precedes noun phrase (often single noun or pronoun), to form a single constituent of structure."

Hornby (2004:996) states that preposition as "a word or group of words, such as in, from, to, out of, and on behalf of used before a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or method."

2.3 Types of Preposition

2.3.1 Simple and Complex Prepositions

Most of the common English preposition, such as ‘at’, ‘in’, and ‘for’, are simple, i.e. consist of one word. Other prepositions consisting of more than one word are called Complex. Most preposition are in one of the following categories:

- A) Adverb : along with, as for, away from, out of, up to, etc.
- B) Verb Adjective /Conjunction / etc. + Prep : owing to, due to, because of, etc.
- C) Prep +Noun +Prep : by means of, in comparison with, in front of, etc.

In the third type, which is the most numerous categories, the noun in some complex prepositions is preceded by a definite or indefinite article, for example: In the light of, as a result of, for the sake of, in the case of, etc. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:14)

2.3.2 Free and Bound Prepositions

Free prepositions have an independent meaning; the choice of preposition is not dependent upon any specific words in the context. Bound prepositions often have little independent meaning, and the choice of the preposition depends upon some other words (often the preceding verb). Example:

A) Free preposition:

-She wants to play with one of the kids.

-Every morning in June, he uses to take a shower before going out.

B) Bound preposition:

-They have got to be willing to part with that bit of money.

-She confined in him above all others.

Although some prepositions can be both free and bound (as in the examples above), many prepositions are always or almost free: above, across, against, among, before, toward, near, until, etc., (Biber et al, 1991:74).

2.3.3 Post Posed Prepositions

Normally a preposition must be followed by its complements; but there are some circumstances in which this does not happen, either because the complement has to take first position in the clause, or because it is absent:

WH-Questions:

Which house did you live it at?

At which house is he staying? (formal)

Relative Clauses: the old house which I was telling you about is empty (about which I wastelling you: formal)

WH-Clauses: What I'm convinced of is that the world's population will grow to an unforeseen extent.

Exclamations: what a mess he's got into!

Passives: She was sought after by all the leading impresarios of the day. Infinitive Clauses: He's impossible to work with (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:144).

2.4 Classification of English Prepositions

2.4.1. Prepositions of place: Introduction

In this type, prepositions of place are used to show the relationship with the noun phrase in the context of the place prepositions of place is used to give information about the position or the location of someone or something. They are written before the location. A place preposition indicates "..... where a person, place or thing is?" (Dart, 1982: 7). For example:

- "He lives in Kirkuk". (It means that the speaker is located within this city "Kirkuk").

But if he says: "We stopped at Kirkuk on the way to Bagdad". (It means that the speaker sees Kirkuk as a point on his way, i.e., it may be a stopping point, an eating place. The table below shows the three prepositions with examples: at point in enclosed space.

Table 1 The Preposition of Place (Dart, 1982)

at POINT	in ENCLOSED SPACE	on SURFACE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● at the bottom of the page● at the bus stop● at the corner● at the crossroads● at the door	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● in a box● in a building● in a car● in France● in my pocket● in my wallet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● on the page● on the ceiling● on the cover● on the door● on the menu● on the wall

2.5 At, In, and On

In - Is usually used to talk about a position within a large area, or something within a large space: There's been another forest fire in California. She looked again in her bag and, to her relief, there were her keys. Thatcher (2008)

On - Is usually used to talk about a position touching a flat surface, or on something we think of as a line such as a road or river: Is that a spider on the ceiling? (Notice we also say 'on the wall/floor'). She owns a house on the Swan River. (ibid)

At - Is usually used to talk about a place we think of as a point rather than an area, and about an event where there is a group of people (ibid)

2.6 How At, In, and On Can be Used Instead of Each Others ?

- We usually use at before an address and in or on before the name of a road:

They've opened an office at 28 Lees Road.

The church is in/on Park Road.

- However, we sometimes use on instead of in when we talk about long streets or roads:

The town is on the Pacific Highway.

- We can use at instead of in when we use a street name to refer to an institution in that street:

There was an important meeting of ministers at Downing Street today.

- But notice that we say 'on Wall Street' to mean the financial institution.

Compare:

I'll meet you on the corner of the street. and The lamp was in the corner of the room.

2.7 Potential Difficulties with Prepositions of Place

Is it any wonder that prepositions create such troubles for learners of English language? We say we are at the hospital to visit a friend who is in the hospital. We lie in bed but on the couch. We watch a film at the theater but on television. For native speakers, these little words present little difficulty, but try to learn another language, any other language, and you will quickly discover that prepositions are troublesome wherever you live and learn. Here are some interesting (sometimes troublesome) prepositions. To address all the potential difficulties with prepositions in idiomatic usage would require volumes, and the only way English language learners can begin to master the intricacies of preposition usage is through practice and paying close attention to speech and the written word. Keeping a good dictionary close at hand (to hand?) is an important first step. Pay attention to the chart below:

Table 2 Potential Difficulties with Prepositions of Place (Thatcher , 2008)

My dream is to play at Wembley Stadium. Didn't I see you in/at the pool yesterday?	seen as a point -either seen as within the pool itself, or as a building which is a point in town.
He lives in Perth. We stopped in/at Milan, Florence and Pisa on our way to Rome.	within the city - we use at when we see the cities as points on a journey, and in when we see them as enclosed area where we stayed for some time.
They were a great success in/at Edinburgh.	we can use at when we use a place name instead of an institution or event-here, the

	Edinburgh Festival; in suggests the city.
He's in Los Angeles on business. He's at Manchester studying Linguistics.	staying or living there. - a student at Manchester University
She works at Marks and Spencer. She works in a shoe shop.	the name of a particular organization. - the kind of place.
I stopped at the shop on the way home. I was in the bank when in came Sue. (Notice we say: 'I work on a farm', but 'I work in a factory'.)	we use at to talk about buildings such as the dentist's, the supermarket, the bank, school, etc.; we use in to emphasise that we mean inside the building
I read the paper in the taxi on the way. I'll probably go on the bus.	or travel using taxi and cars - for travel using bus, coach, plane, or train; but we use in if we want to emphasise inside the bus, etc.

Chapter Three

The Results and Conclusions

3.1 Introduction

The population of this study is limited to the fourth-year student at English Department (morning studies) / College of Education for Human Sciences / Babylon university during the academic year 2023 -2024 .Since the population of the study is limited, they are all considered as a sample of current study. The sample consists of (18) Male and female students.

3.2 Features of a Good Test

A Test is a process through which students can share their educational experiences. In order for a test to be a good tool for measuring students' knowledge and skills, it should have the following characteristics of examination that are essential for the success of any test. According to Klinger ,(2016 : 112) the features of good test are following:

3.2.1 Reliability or Consistency

Reliability or consistency of a test means that learners should perform the same or get the same score if they are exposed to different questions in different times and places. A test is considered reliable when the same result is achieved over different tests. (Ibid)

3.2.2 Validity

A validity of a test can be achieved when the test measures what it is really intended to measure. Therefore, certain criteria must be selected. Validity is very important to gauge the quality of a given test as questions must be in line with the selected criteria and measures. (ibid)

According to Azorlosa, (2006 : 67) There are some different types of validity:

- **Content Validity:** A test should fairly represent the content of the course or the field of study.
- **Criterion Validity:** It is used to predict the performance of a job applicant or a student.
- **Convergent validity:** This is mostly used in the field of sociology or psychology.
- **Discriminant Validity:** Discriminant validity means that a test of a concept is not highly correlated with other tests that are set to measure theoretically different concepts.

3.2.3 Objectivity

“Objectivity of a test refers to the degree to which equally competent scores obtain the same results,” The test should be away from any personal or subjective judgment. It should be based only on the evaluation of human development. For example, in an essay-type test, students answer differently as each one has his/her own style of writing. Hence, when more than one instructor check the test, they may give different scores according to whether they like the style or not. So, here, the test is less objective. To avoid such bias, sharp rules should be set in evaluating such types of tests. (Klinger ,2016 : 114)

3.2.4 Comprehensiveness

A test should fully cover the entire field of study that students are exposed to during the course. Vague questions should not be included especially during online tests when students are confused and short in time. (Ibid)

3.2.5 Absence of Ambiguity

There has to be no place for ambiguity especially in online tests where examiners are absent. Students should not be left in confusion and all questions have to be crystal clear. Ambiguous questions often result when instructors put off writing test questions until the last minute.(ibid)

3.2.6 Preparation

To ensure the success of any test, instructors should take into consideration the following factors: Students have to be well-prepared for the test through extensive revisions and discussions. There should not be any gaps between the revision period and the exam.Examiners should make it clear to students which topics are expected to be tackled in the exam. Students should be well-trained for the test type. (Ibid)

3.2.7 Appropriateness of Time

One of the top characteristics of a good test is when students have appropriate time to answer all questions. For example, essay questions require more time than multiple choice or true/false questions.Some teachers take the test themselves first and then double or triple the time for students. (Ibid)

3.3 Test Design Material

The test consists of two questions . Question one represents the recognition level and it has 10 items , while question two represents the production level and it also includes 10 items.

3.4 The Analysis

3.4.1 The Recognition Level

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 question one.

Table 3 : Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Responses in Question (1)

Items	No.of Correct answer	Percentage	No. of Incorrect answer	Percentage
1	7	70%	3	30%
2	10	100%	0	0%
3	9	90%	1	10%
4	10	100%	0	0%
5	6	60%	4	40%
6	5	50%	5	50%
7	10	100%	0	0%
8	7	70%	3	30%

9	10	100%	0	0%
10	7	70%	3	30%
Total	114	80%	36	20%

3.4.2 The Production Level

The following table shows the frequency and the percentage of the students' responses :

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Responses in Question (2)

Student's Items	No.of Correct answer	Percentage	No. of Incorrect answer	Percentage
1	8	80%	2	20%
2	9	90%	1	10%
3	8	80%	2	20%
4	8	80%	2	20%
5	8	80%	2	20%
6	8	80%	2	20%
7	10	100%	0	0%
8	7	70%	3	30%
9	7	70%	3	30%
10	7	70%	3	30%
Total	149	90%	31	10%

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The research, aims to clarify and explain the way of using the basic prepositions of place at , in, and on. The researcher has concluded the following points:

1. A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, time, place, location, spatial relationships, or to introduce an object.
2. There are five types of prepositions. They are simple, double, compound, participle, and phrase prepositions. A preposition is used to show a relationship between the noun, pronoun, or phrases in a sentence. They are used to connect people, objects, time, and locations.
3. A preposition of place indicates where something or someone is located. When placed before the noun or pronoun, they help us be specific about where a certain object or person is in relation to that noun.
4. The three most common prepositions used for this specific function are at, in, and on. The locations they can refer to is almost infinite in number.
5. 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.

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Appendix I

The Test

Q1/ choose the correct answer :

1. The museum is _ the end of the street. (at / in / on)
- 2.. 'Where's Alice?' 'She's _ the attic.' (at / in / on)
3. He is usually nervous on his first day _ work. (at / in / on)
- 4.This is the best film you can see _ the cinema now. (at /in /on)
- 5.. Can you give me the book _ that shelf? (at / in / on)
6. I study _the university of Toronto. (at / in / on)
- 7.It's the second door _the right. (at / in / on)
- 8.All the stories _the book are very special. (at / in / on)
- 9.We were _Australia last summer. (at / in / on)
10. I always read when I'm _the train. (at / in / on)

Q2/ Fill in the blanks with appropriate prepositions :

1. See youFriday.
2. I brush my teeththe morning.
3. The match is stadium.
4. We have lunch restaurant.
5. I'm busythe moment.
6. My parents always visit me..... my birthday.
7. He was born the 19th century.
8. He usually goes on holiday July.
9. They always get together Christmas.
10. You can come..... the weekend.

Appendix II

The Answers

Q1/

1. at

2. in

3. at

4. at

5.on

6.at

7.on

8.in

9.in

10.on

Q2/

1.on

2.in

3.at

4.at

5.at

6.on

7.in

8.in

9.at

10.on

