



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Errors in the Usage of Preposition in Translation from English to Urdu Language at Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

It is observed that Pakistani students have some serious concerns in translation of ideas from English into Urdu language and vice versa from elementary level to secondary level schooling. The study indicates that the students are facing some serious challenges in recognition and usage of correct prepositional words for suitable Urdu words. The present study was conducted on 75 randomly selected students from government secondary schools of District Muzaffar Garh, Punjab, Pakistan. A questionnaire consisting of multiple choice questions of secondary level is conducted by the students and prepositional mistakes are highlighted to fulfill the requirement of the research.

Key words: Prepositions, Prepositions of movement, place and time, problem analysis, traditional, collocation, prototype.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the most powerful source of communication and self-expression through which we express our feelings, emotions and share ideas (Saeed, 1998). It is an effective tool through which we transmit and transfer knowledge to various people. All the activities from entertainment to highly scientific projects are delivered in English. English is no more a lingua franca in Pakistan; rather it has replaced Urdu as official language de facto. In Pakistan, it is taught from the very first day of schooling to graduate level as a compulsory subject. Its matchless value can be observed from the fact that intelligent level, maturity, status, prestige- all these aspects revolve around the English comprehension and implementation. In short, it has become true lynch pin of Pakistani society. That is the reason, in Pakistan, there is a strong and robust full demand for having a sound grasp over English language. Despite of all these valuable facts, errors in English pronunciation, articles mistakes, spelling errors, usage of traditional vocabulary in spoken and written form and above all of these- preposition mistakes- are clearly observable from first day of schooling to Master level. These problems are faced because of influence of mother tongue over Target language. For Example, after checking essays of students, I find problems in the usage of "on", "in", "at" "off" and "from" mostly. It is due to the difference in words selection and usage of mother tongue and target language.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

English Language has attained significant place in educational setup of Pakistan. As presented earlier it has uplifted itself as an official language of Pakistan. The correspondence in defense institutes, educational institutes, business, public as well as private sector and day to day official matters are discussed in English Language. It obviously needs strong grip over Language, free from common mistakes. Gardner (1985) holds the view that the social and cultural milieus in which learners grow up determine their attitudes and motivational orientation towards the target language.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the main causes of prepositional errors?
2. What types of prepositional errors are done by students?
3. How can we overcome the errors of preposition?

METHODOLOGY

In order to find out problems and mistakes of prepositions, the researcher utilized quantitative approach. For this purpose, the researcher selected 75 students from different government schools of Muzaffar Garh District. The researchers selected these students randomly from 8th class. After selection, students were informed about the type and date of test.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected in objective and subjective form from all participants. For this purpose, a questionnaire of Mcqs comprising of all types of prepositions was framed. The students were also given task to write an essay of 250-300 words. All these copies were checked thoroughly by researchers in order to highlight different types of prepositional mistakes.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to highlight problems of students in correct usage of preposition, preposition categories were formed. It also presented which types of mistakes are mostly done by students. The researcher divided preposition in under mentioned categories:

1. Movement Preposition Error [MPE]
2. Place Prepositional Error [PPE]
3. Time Prepositional Error [TPE]

ERRORS IN MOVEMENT PREPOSITION

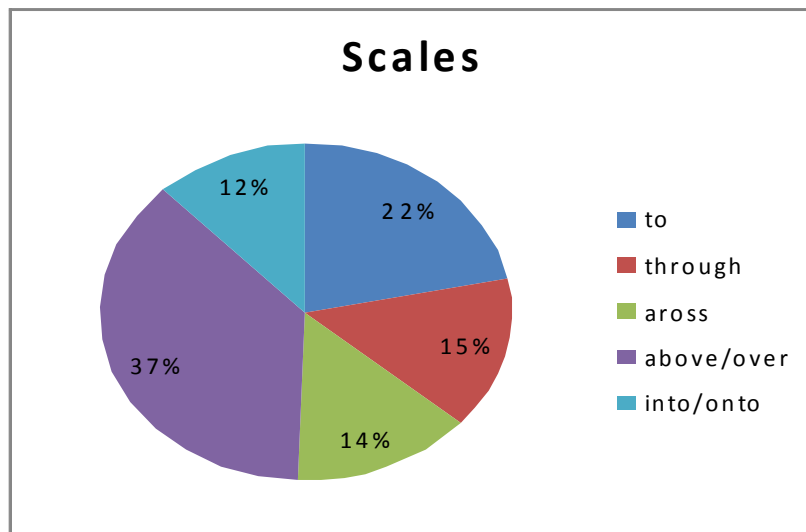
Analysis of student presents that they do not have concrete idea about utilization of movement prepositions (to, through, across, into and onto). Out of observed 354 Mistakes of prepositions, the movement preposition sum was 124. The participants lack skills to use "to" for specific direction while "through" for movement from one corner to another corner. Similarly, they fail to use "into" and "onto" correctly. The probable reason of these mistakes might be the interference of mother tongue through which they could not differentiate between Place and Direction Prepositions. Moreover, they are not taught about these types deeply and concretely. Superficial knowledge of prepositions hinders their capabilities to overcome such mistakes. These mistakes are also committed due to incomplete application of grammatical rules or the overgeneralization of those rules. The errors committed by participants are mentioned below:

1. Don't worry; I pass your message onto him.
2. He swam through/into the river.
3. We will move into the Jungle.

Fig. 1: Diagram of preposition of movement



Fig. 2: Scale of errors of movement prepositions



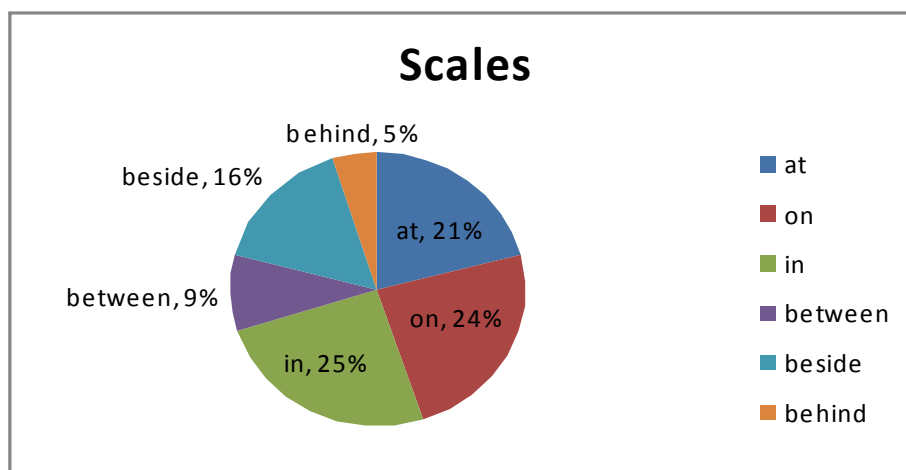
PLACE PREPOSITION ERRORS

Analysis of errors of place prepositions presents that students are making errors in their correct usage due to minute variation of place with another prepositional word. The participants without any concrete background of specific word usage makes errors in usage of "on", "in", "at", "over" and "above" mostly. Moreover, mother tongue interference and false concept building about usage are also contributing factors in errors of prepositions. The participants failed to segregate use of Over/above according to the location of thing. Analysis shows that 112 errors were made by the participants. Following errors were observed in their test.

They are waiting **on** the bus stop.

1. The cat sat **at** the table.
2. My father is about to reach.
3. He is **in** his way.
4. My house is **over** the lake.

Fig. 3: Scale of errors of place prepositions



ERRORS OF TIME PREPOSITION

Analysis of data shows that students made second highest errors of prepositions in time type. Deep scrutiny presents that the students remain confused about the proper use of preposition with different times of day, names of months and hours. Here again, influence

of mother tongue is observed at highest level. Apart from this, the students have superficial knowledge, do not know rules of using preposition, and confusion of “on”, “in”, and “at” are also contributing factor in their errors. Analysis shows under mentioned errors were done by the students.

1. We will buy gift **at** this Eid.
2. I saw him wandering there **on** 10:45pm
3. I started this job **on** 2004.

Fig. 4: Scale of errors of time prepositions

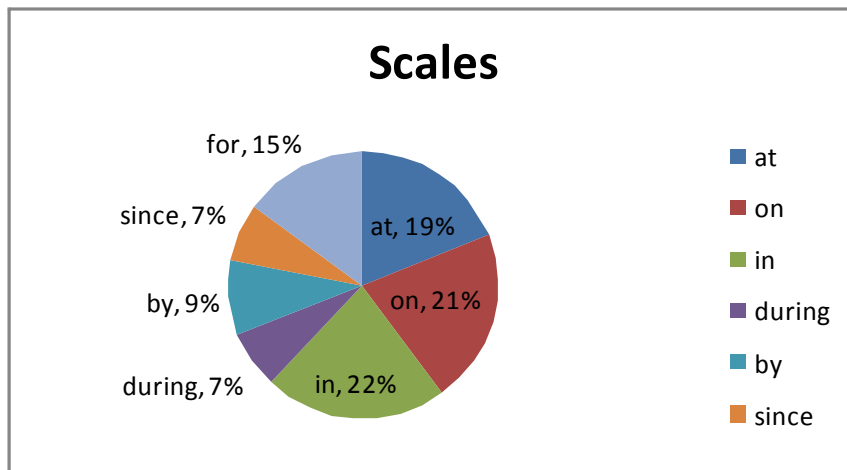
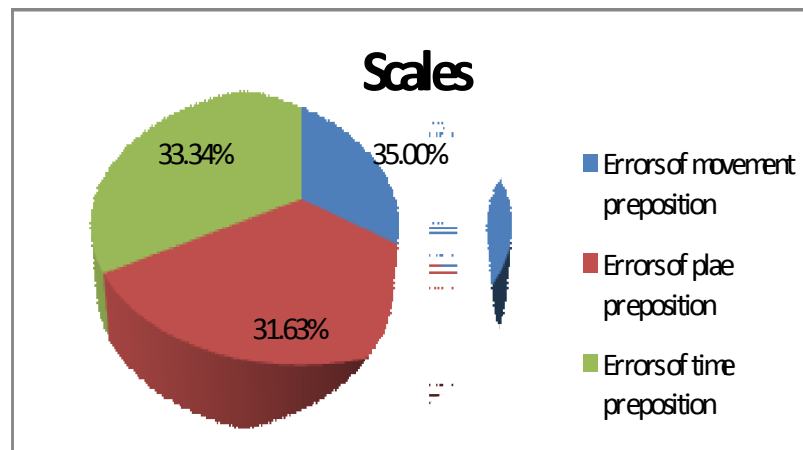


Fig. 5: Analysis scale of Prepositional errors



DISCUSSION

It is difficult to use prepositions correctly due to various factors. We can present these factors as:

1. Influence of mother tongue over English.
2. Prepositions are generally polysemous. Polysemy is “a semantic characteristic of words that have multiple meanings” (Koffi, 2010, p. 299).
3. English has 60 to 70 prepositions; a higher number than most other languages (Koffi, 2010, p. 297). It offers three to five English prepositions for one word of another language. It hinders in students’ learning about use of preposition.
4. Lack of competitive English teachers.
5. Traditional and out dated methods of teaching are used in Pakistan.
6. Fear of Grammar as forbidden tree in the minds of students is another contributing factor.

Apart from these issues, many other factors such as, lack of proper language labs in schools, cramming system and lack of concrete knowledge about prepositions are also multiplying errors.

Ratios of errors presents that “in”, “on”, “at”, and “for” are the most troubling prepositions for students. In Urdu language, same job can be done with single preposition which is performed by two or more words in English language. For instance, in Urdu language we use “ooper /u:per/” for something pace over another thing.

“Jug maiz k ooper pra hei” is an urdu sentence and it can be translated by Urdu speaker as:

Jug is placed over the table.

Jug is placed on the table.

Jug is placed at the table.

Jug is placed above the table

All these translations satisfy Urdu native speaker during translation. The reason behind this is that English language offers polysemic words for one word in other languages. It is due to this issue that Urdu speakers find it most difficult to use polysemic prepositions accurately. Moreover time specification in English language is also absent in urdu language. For instance, “at” is used for specific time while “in” is used for non-specific time. Moreover, “at” is used for small cities and cantonments while “in” is used for larger cities. But this specification does not exist in Urdu language.

SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME ISSUES

Prepositions are known as spices of English grammar. Its usage with verbs and other words for phrasal verbs and prepositional phrases enhance its importance in language. Unfortunately, no or little attention is paid to teach prepositions in scientific ways. Computer has attained valuable place in educational technology. It has been proved by researchers that learning with the help of computer (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is very effective for building concrete concepts in students. Traditional approach (GTM) is of little value in learning as it encourages literal and context to context learning. Lam’s (2009) study highlighted that those students who learned through traditional method had limited confidence in their ability to use prepositions properly. As Lam (2009) elaborates, “trying to remember a list of individual, unrelated uses is hardly conducive to increase learners’ understanding of how the prepositions are actually used and why the same preposition can express a wide range of meanings” (p. 3). Thus, we should use some other methods to teach prepositions which grasp it strongly in the minds of students.

THE COLLOCATION APPROACH

Kristen Lorincz (2012) encourages collocation approach to replace traditional method of teaching. The collocation is fixed relationship of words that sound right to natives. So, using such relationship in teaching prepositions can be very fruitful for learning prepositions. We can teach simple prepositions with verbs in the form of phrasal verbs. For instance, instead of teaching “On” alone, we can teach it as, “to rely on, to wait on to carry on, to keep on, to work on etc. Similarly, same verbs with different prepositions are used to give different meanings. We use verb “break” with into, to, through, out, up etc to get various meanings. Its use with meanings can be recalled after practice and sentence making. In addition to phrasal verbs, prepositional phrases can also be taught as Formulaic sequences, such as *on time*, *on schedule*, *on...screen*, or *on...leg* (Mueller, 2011, p.484).

THE PROTOTYPE APPROACH

Lakoff presented his prototype theory which was later on explained by Lindstromberg (1996) and Lam (2009). They argue that prepositions’ learning is easy, comprehend able, build confidence and longer retention if done in semantic way. This theory shows that

prepositions have multiple meanings, but only one meaning is taken as most significant. As prepositions are used to show link of noun/pronoun with other part of the sentence, so, prepositions take prototypical model at physical touch. For instance, the preposition *on* has multiple meanings, but the prototypical extension of *on* is “physical contact of an object with a line of surface” (Lindstromberg, 1996, p. 229).

In the nut shell, it is observed that use of prepositions is a hard nut to crack for students. Traditional approach of teaching, lack of competitive teachers, boring classroom environment and non-availability of modern educational technology in classrooms has made it difficult for student to learn prepositions at concrete footing. The proper application of above mentioned approaches can be helpful in learning of prepositions and can mitigate errors to great extent.

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