

## ANALYZING PREPOSITIONAL ERRORS "TO & FOR" COMMITTED BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FOR IRAQI EFL LEARNERS

Mohammed Hameed Rasheed

College of Education for Women / Kirkuk University Department of History

E-mail. mohammed-hameed@uokirkuk.edu.iq

ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>The main purpose of this paper is the basic applications between two English prepositions {To &amp; For} using contrastive analysis. In this regard, it is assumed that second language learners struggle with preposition use. Thus, this study seeks to assess the performance of college students in applying prepositions involving prepositional errors {To &amp; For} among undergraduates studying English as a Foreign Language in Iraq, can shed some light on the challenges encountered by learners when mastering correct usage. This study offers an in-depth understanding of the specific difficulties that Iraqi EFL learners encounter with these prepositions and proposes areas for instructional focus. However, prepositions are a vital component in English grammar. The correct usage of prepositions is important not only for the right communication but also in writing and speaking, too. This paper considered the pair {To and For} as words used frequently by many people who sometimes confuse them.</p>	

### Introduction

This paper investigated the use and misuse of prepositions by English language EFL learners. It discusses factors contributing to persistent errors the learners' use of preposition. The EFL learners may face a number of common errors when speaking or writing in English language. For EFL learners, learning prepositions is difficult and problematic (AbiSamra, 2003). When speaking, this difficulty becomes a serious issue for university students, which has an impact on their achievement scores as well as their ability to communicate with other language speakers. This is probably because of learners' low proficiency levels or interference from their first language (Zughoul, 1979).

Azad T. Hamawandy. (2012) says that one of the called functional morpheme that is related to closed class is preposition and it has fixed number of item.

Thus, the most effective method for characterizing and elucidating mistakes made by non-native language speakers is error analysis (Johanson, 1975).

So, this paper demonstrates the main differences between them and how the EFL learners avoid them to utilize correctly for their future work. A concise and simple answer that one gets in this paper and comprehend what a preposition of {To & For} are and how to use them effectively in their daily

conversation. It serves as a small guide helping to understand the meaning of prepositions in general, as well as the main use and misuse in them. If someone asks ‘why are English language EFL learners using these two prepositions {To & For}?’” The researcher conducted a questionnaire, which is found at the end of the paper, to find the main problems and confusions between them.

## 2. The definition of a preposition?

The grammatical classification of words referring to a set may be preceded by one or more prepositions for the formation into single constituent in structure. (Crystal, 2008, Chalker, 1992, Thomson and Martinet, 1986)

Prepositions are words in language that serve to summarize a meaning in a few words. Correct use of the preposition represents a problematic area in language practice for Iraqi EFL students, even at advanced levels (Nasir, 2001)

Prepositions can be defined as function words that join with nouns or pronouns to form prepositional phrases that can be adjectival or adverbial in relation to other words (<http://define.com/preposition>).

“A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence” (Wise & Buffington, 2008) prepositions and adverbial particles describe what in many other languages form part of the meaning of the verb stem.

Kennedy (2003), it was noted that prepositions make up 8% of words used in spoken language and 12% of words used in written language

According to Allsop (1986), “Prepositions are words that show the relationship between things, people or events”.

Prepositions can be used in front of nouns or noun phrases, pronouns or gerunds to state a relationship between one person, thing, event, etc. and another: (Alexndar, 1990)

Josef Essberger, 2012 says that the name “preposition” (pre + position) means “place before”.

**e.g. preposition + noun:** / *gave the book to Charlie*

**preposition + pronoun:** / *gave it to him.*

**preposition + gerund:** *Charlie devotes his time to reading*

Prepositions, a category of minor word class, play an essential role in combining primary words, especially nouns, with other components within a sentence. They are considered a closed class, meaning that new prepositions are not regularly introduced (Chalker, 1984). Prepositions belong to the closed word class, characterized by their fixed nature (Aarts and Aarts, 1988).

e.g. George sat between the two deans.

George jumped on it

George went from this to that.

A preposition comes in two types. Simple ones have just one word like ‘at, in, or for’. Complex ones have more than one or two words. Both are in the same group.

A) Adv. or prep+ prep.: as for, away from, along with

B) Verb / adj./ conj. / etc + prep. : because of, due to, owing to

C) Prep. + N + prep. : by means of in front of,

(Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973)

(See also Stageberg, 1981, Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960).

Some sentence structures use prepositions at the end, like relative clauses, passive voice, infinitive phrases, exclamation sentences, questions that start with "wh," and common expressions. Aziz also adds another structure called the "ing" construction.

e.g. That is the article I told you about. (Eastwood,1994)

The locked had been tampered with.

Clay is fun to play with

Which room did you find it in?

What are you looking at

(Aziz, 1989)

This is the man I was

looking for (Ibid, 1989)

(Quirk & Greenbaum,1973) say that a prepositional phrase is made up of a preposition followed by a noun, question word clause, or clause with a verb ending in -ing. (Teschner & Evan, 2007)

e.g. At the bus

From what he said.

By singing a peace treaty.

In a preposition phrase ( a preposition and noun) , dissimilar the other kinds of phrase, both components are obligatory and neither form for the phrase as a whole- as head noun can form for a noun phrase as a whole

e.g. In the garden, after the party. (Jackson, 1982)

e.g. The student studies in the library. (Azar & Hagen. 2009)

They died for their country

She cannot cut it with a knife

Some of these boys are coming with us

They travelled by car.

The door was opened by a servant.

### 3. Error Analysis

One of the best ways to characterize and clarify mistakes made by L2 learners is to conduct error analysis. This kind of analysis can identify the causes of these mistakes and the circumstances surrounding their regular occurrence. The solution, as well as the direction and order of upcoming instructions, can be decided upon once the causes and sources have been identified.

"A technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the errors made by someone learning a foreign language, using all the principles and procedures of linguistics" is how (Crystal,2003) defines error analysis. In order to connect the learner's understanding of the target language to the instruction they have received, error analysis can also be used to describe the learner's proficiency with the language at a given stage of their learning [5]. (Crystal,2003) defined the of failure analysis in this investigation.

According to James (1980), the field of error analysis includes the function of diagnosis. There are two purposes for Error Analysis (EA): theoretical and practical. The application of all that knowledge to overcome gaps between the learner's knowledge and the situation is the practical area of (EA). Theoretical areas are crucial in aiding researchers in uncovering psychological processes and the relationship between learners' knowledge and the instruction they have received, even though they

describe learners' knowledge in terms of their second language. According to (Corder,1981) the main issue with diagnosis is linguistic variation or mismatching.

Also, An approach to language analysis that concentrates on the mistakes made by students is called error analysis. It entails contrasting the mistakes committed in the target language (TL) with the target language itself, (Corder, 1967).

The researcher claims that while the nature of the variance or mismatching is measured qualitatively, the degree of the mismatching is measured quantitatively. As (per Richards,1985) the error occurs when a language item is used in a way that a native or fluent speaker of the language interprets as demonstrating incorrect or lacking action.

Errors are systematic, according to (Gass and Selinker,2001). These happen frequently, and the learner is unaware of their own mistakes. As a result, only the researcher or instructor could find them or direct others to them. They first occur because students are unable to distinguish between right and wrong.

#### **4. The main uses of the preposition " To "**

The main uses of prepositions “ to ” are explained below:

##### **1. "To " as a preposition of motion**

A) The preposition " to " is used to express motion from one place to another  
( Fitikides,2002:83, Yate, 1975:5 , Eastwood, 1994)

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-use-preposition-to-1211798>

- (1) We come to school every morning
- (2) We went to the café (Eastwood,1994)
- (3) We went to the cinema ( Vince, 1993)

B) It is used with distance (Ibid)

- (4) We walked to the river and beach.

C) The preposition " To " is used for a destination such as (Eastwood,1994)

- (5) We are going to Doncaster.

D) The preposition " To " can have an expression of moving to another person. Usually with these words such as ( go/come /walk + up +to ), as in

- (6) A man came up to me in the street and asked me for money (Ibid).

E) The preposition " To " is used to indicate direction with reference to levels.  
(Alexandar, 1990)

- (7) He has gone to the fourth floor and now he is on the fourth floor.

- (8) He has gone to Paris and now he is in Paris (Ibid).

##### **4.1 Other Uses of the Preposition "To "**

A) There are some verbs, which are used with the preposition " to " (Sargeant, 2007) such as

- (9) Does this book belong to you?
- (10) We are listening to you
- (11) I lent my skate board to sue.

B) Prepositions like "to" are used with certain nouns. (Ibid)

- (12) What is the answer to this question?
- (13) Traffic can cause damage to the environment.

C) The preposition "to" expresses the actual recipient. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973)

(14) He gave a beautiful doll to his daughter.

D) The preposition "to" is expressed motion toward a place especially with these verbs

(run, hurry, travel, fly, walk, ride)

(15) He runs to school

(16) He goes to bed

(17) He walks to the library

(18) He flies to the city

(19) He travels to the country.

E) The preposition "to" can be used when counting the time until a future event. (Swan, 1989)

(20) It is another three weeks to the holiday.

F) In these expressions (get used to, be used to), the -ing form comes after the preposition "to" (Swan, 1989).

e.g. (21) I am used to driving in London

G) The preposition "to" can be used after the preposition "from" such as

(22) I usually work from nine to five (Ibid).

I) The preposition "To" can also be a part of the infinitive form of the verb.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-use-preposition-to-1211798>

(23) It was late, so we decided to take a taxi home. (Murphy, 2004)

J) There are various phrasal verbs that can employ the preposition "to," such as the following:

(24) *look forward to something*

(25) *object to something*

(26) *appeal to someone*

(27) *get to something*

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-use-preposition-to-1211798>.

H) The preposition "to" is also used as to-infinitive that states purpose and result (Eastwood, 1994)

(28) I came here to get some information.

(29) We got home to find visitors on the doorstep.

1) Preposition of direction can be used to state the direction of something.

(30) They are going to the classroom.

## 5. Main Uses of the preposition "For"

The main uses of the preposition "for"

A) "for" as a preposition time:

1) To express how long something lasts, the preposition "for" is used with a period of time. (Eastwood, 1994, Murphy, 2004, Murphy and Altman, 1989).

(30) Rachel plays computer game for hours on end

(31) I once stayed at that hotel for a week

B) One way to express an exclusion duration is to use the preposition "for" with negative and superlative constructions, as in.

(32) I haven't seen him for years (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973).

B) The present perfect tense can be used with the preposition "for". such as (Swan, 1989)

(33) I have known her for a long time.

### **5.1 Other Uses of the preposition " for "**

A) A purpose or justification for doing something can be expressed by using the preposition "for" before a noun., such as (Swan, 1989)

(34) We went to the pub for a drink

(35) I went to London for an interview

A) Swan (1989) claims that the preposition "for" is used following these two terms (enough, too) (Ibid).

(36) It is too heavy for you to fit

(37) It is warm enough for to snow to well.

C) The preposition "for" designates a beneficiary or recipient. ( Yate,1986)

(37) I have a present for you

C) The preposition " for " refers to a special purpose: ( Ibid)

(38) You need a coat for winter

(39) He has a bicycle for transportation

D) The preposition " for " can be described how something is used (Vince, 2003)

(40) This is for the lights

(41) This is for starting the engine.

E) The preposition " for " is used in order to help something.

(42) What can I do for you?.

## **6. The Test**

### **6.1 Description of the Test**

The current study is delved upon an objective test that is administered to the third-year students of the English Department College of Education; College University Qalam. The Test is designed with the appointment to test students capacity by means of using the prepositions “ For ” and “ To . It is made up of (50) multiple choice questions that are meant to cover critical aspects of the basic uses of the preposition ‘ for , and ‘to’ held in Grammar subjects.



There are fifty items on the test, and you have to select the appropriate preposition (To & For}. The test's multiple locations are covered by the carefully chosen items.

## 6.2 Categorization and Analysis of the Error

The test provides information about the test takers' selection of the prepositions {For & To}. The table below should be carefully examined as it contains a number of detailed points.

Table No (1) The special statics of the student response according to the form of the answers {To & For} are explained in detail using various points.

Items	Number of correct response	The percentage of the responses	
To	50	1700	68%
For	50	800	32%
Total		2500	100%

The test results have showed that the prepositions {To & For} are used by third year students of the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Qalam College University. It consists of (50) multiple-choice items that cover a wide range of basic uses of the prepositions {For & To}. The total percentage of students who answered correctly (To) 1700, which is 68% of the proportion of male and female students, and 800, which is 32% of the percentage replies to (For). Therefore, the highest percentage of student errors occur in {For} and not in {To}. The main reason for students' failure is to refer to the exact preposition, that English is an analytical language and the two prepositions are somehow equivalent in Arabic, so students think that they are the same in Arabic. Therefore, students must translate the preposition into Arabic terms as illustrated more in the conclusion its problems and solution, too.

## Conclusions

The main issue this study seeks to address in its title Analyzing Prepositional Errors (To and For) Committed by Undergraduate Students for Iraqi EFL Learners is the occurrence of wrongly used prepositions, particularly "to" and "for," by students from Iraq studying English as a second language (ESL). This kind of prepositional mistakes may be a cause for misunderstanding and impair correct and clear expressions by learners. The incorrect or excessive use of the prepositions "to" and "for" might be a barrier in communication in English and slow down the process of language development among Iraqi learners of the foreign language (EFL).

**The solution** is in this issue that is finding the causes and implementing the targeted instructional strategies which will improve Iraqi EFL students. Some potential solutions include:

**1. Understanding the challenges:** The educators as well as curriculum designers must acquire comprehensive understanding about how Iraqi EFL students struggle with prepositions in general and

with 'to' and 'for' in particular. This understanding can be utilized in developing effective teaching approaches.

**2. Providing ample practice opportunities:** Learners must be given enough practice with prepositions in a range of situations. The involvement in communicative activities such as discussions, role plays and reality simulations helps the students use the correct form of “to” and “for” and strengthens their comprehension as a result.

**3. Exposing learners to authentic language usage:** Utilizing genuine materials that embody correct prepositions use such as reading texts, audio and video recordings that depict real language context would be a great way of exposing learners to how preposition is used in real life. Such a context enables students to fully realize the differences between when and how to use the words 'to' and 'for'.

**4. Offering explicit instruction and error correction:** Teachers need to be giving explicit instructions on how the differences in usage and meaning between "to" and "for" and the errors that comes with it and how they can be avoided. The error correction process must be carried in a constructive manner that will help students realize what they need to improve and how they can do this with their language skills.

**5. Raising awareness of language differences:** As a native language to Iraqi students, instructors can deliberately focus on the distinction between prepositions in both Arabic and English. The differences in usage and meaning that might be highlighted in this process will certainly enable the learners in avoiding interlanguage interference and enhancing accuracy in use of language. Through the suggested solutions, educators would be able to assist Iraqi EFL students overcome the prepositions mistakes that mainly involves 'to' and 'for'. With targeted teaching, practice, and authentic usage of language as well as comprehending the obstacles that they encounter learners will be able to increase their proficiency in the English language and communicate in it appropriately.

## APPENDIX

### The Test

- 1- He is going to Russia..... a holiday
- 2- I need a lot of experience.....this job
- 3- They need a lot of experience.....do this job
- 4- My friends would need much time.....make a decision
- 5- I will go to the doctor .....a check-up
- 6- I must put on my glasses.....read the letter
- 7- Do you have to wear glasses.....reading
- 8-I wish we had a garden.....the children.....play in
- 9- He is going.....Italy next month
- 10- My father has to go.....the bank today
- 11-When do you often go.....bed?
- 12- Does this train go.....the city?
- 13- Ahmed doesn't go .....work today



- 14- Cruz is ill.....He has gone.....the doctor.
- 15- Would you like to come..... a party on Sunday
- 16- We are going .....a concert tomorrow evening
- 17- I went.....New York last year
- 18- Next year we hope to go.....Canada to visit some friends
- 19- Shall we go .....the cinema this evening
- 20- How often do you go.....the dentist?
- 21- We waited for Sue..... Half an hour but she didn't come
- 22- I am tired. I am going to lie down.....a few minutes
- 23- Next week I am going to Paris.....three days
- 24- Where have you been? I have been waiting for you.....twenty minutes
- 25- I stayed in Rome..... five days
- 26- We watched TV .....three hours yesterday night
- 27- Jill has been in England.....three days
- 28- My aunt has lived in Australia.....15 years
- 29- The bus is late. We have been waiting.....for minutes
- 30- Nobody lives in those houses. They have been empty.....many years
- 31- Mike has been ill.....a long time
- 32- Huda and Ahmed had been married.....20 years
- 33- My students have been taking an English course..... Six months
- 34- I have known her.....a long time
- 35- There has been raining.....an hour
- 36- Why are you going out? I am going out.....post a letter
- 37- A friend of mine phoned.....invite me to a party
- 38- His problem is how .....keep people out of the garden
- 39- The bossess possess a team of body guard .....protect them
- 40- It was hard to get a place..... Park in the center of the town.
- 42- Would you like something.....eat?
- 43- Has he got much work.....?
- 44- I get lonely if there is nobody.....talk to
- 45- My friends need a key.....open this door
- 46- I gave them some money.....buy something for their needs.
- 47- Do you have much chance.....practice your English
- 48- He wanted a few weeks....think of your suggestion.
- 49- There weren't any chairs.....us to sit on
- 50- Do you use this brush.....washing the dishes?

## References

- 1. Aarts, For, and Jan, Aarts (1988) . English syntactic structures: Functions and categories in sentence Analysis. Herfordshire: Prentice.
- 2. Alexander, L.G (1988) Longman English Grammar. London. Longman Group Ltd.
- 3. Aziz, Yowel Y. (1989). A contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic. Mosul: Mosul University Press.

4. AbiSamra, Nada. (2003). An analysis of errors in Arabic speakers' English writings. Investigating writing problems among Palestinian students studying English as a foreign language unpublished doctoral dissertation.
5. Allsop, J. (1986). Cassell's students' English grammar. Liverpool: English Language Book Society
6. Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of a learner's errors.
7. Crystal, David.(2008). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. New York: Sixth Edition, Blackwell Publishing.
8. Chalker, Sylvia (1984). Current English Grammar. London:Macmillan.Publishers Ltd.
9. Crystal, D. (2003).The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. 2nd Edition. Cambridge. Cambridge, University Press
10. Crystal, D. (2003) A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. 5th Edition. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing.
11. Eastwood, John. (1994) Oxford Guide to English Grammar.Oxford University Press.
12. Eckersley, C.E. and J.M. Eckersley (1960). A comprehensive English Grammar. London: Longman Group Limited.
13. Error Analysis (2000).Corder S.P, London, Longman Publisher.
14. EssbergerJosef (2012) English Preposition List, (England, Cambridge CB1 1AH England UK
15. Fitikides, T. J ( 2000) Common Mistakes in English. Sixth Edition.Pearson Education Limited.
16. Gass, Susan M, & Selinker, Larry. (2001). Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course Second edition.
17. Hamawandy. Azad T. (2012). Derivational Morphemes in English with Reference to Dialects in Kurdish ( A Comparative Analysis ). Kirkuk University Journal- Humanity Studies Vol:7 No:3 year:2012
18. Jackson, Howard (1982).Analysis English: An introduction to Descriptive Linguistics. Second Edition: pergamon Press Ltd.
19. James, C. (1998). Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis. New York:Pearson Longman
20. Kennedy, G. (2003). A structure and meaning in English. London: Longman.
21. Murphy, Randolph (1987). English Grammar in Use. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
22. Quirk, Randolph and Sidney Greenbaum (1973). A university Grammar of English. London: Longman Group Ltd.
23. Richards, J.C et al (1985). "Dictionary of Applied Linguistics". Longman Group Limited, Essex.
24. Stageberg, Norman C. (1981). An introduction English Grammar.Fourth Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston
25. Thomson, A.J and A. V. martinet (1980). A practical English Grammar. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
26. Swan, M. and C, Walter (2001). The Good Grammar Book.Oxford.Oxford University Press.
27. Sergeant, H. Basic English Grammar. California: Saddle-Back Education Publishing.
28. Teschner, R. and Evan, E (2007) Analysis the Grammar of English Georgetown University Press.
29. Yate, Jean (1985). The Ins and Outs of the prepositions
30. Vince, Michael ( 2003) First Certificate language Practical: English Grammar and Vocabulary. Macmillan Publishers Limited.

31. Wise, J. & Buffington, S. (2008). First language lessons: For the well-trained mind. Peace.Hills Press.
32. Yousif Amal Mohammed ( 2010 ). The Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs by English Department Students in Iraq. Kirkuk University Journal- Humanity Studies. Vol:5 No:2 year:2010

## **Internet References.**

[https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/for\\_1](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/for_1)

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-use-preposition-to-1211798>