



## ERRORS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS BY UZBEK LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

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**Abstract.** The research is an attempt to investigate prepositional errors by Uzbek learners on English usage. Prepositional rules in English language are inconsistent; that is certain prepositions can be applied in one form, but not in another. More so, prepositions are polysemous. Thus, Uzbek learners often become frustrated when they have to determine prepositional meanings and when to use them appropriately. The research is guided by the following objectives; identifying prepositional related errors in learners' composition and describing the errors. The study concludes that prepositional errors are more of lexical errors since they affect the meaning of the entire sentence. Thus, the study recommends that learners should be taught rules of prepositions systematically and that a revision of course books should provide specific rules that may lead to proper acquisition of prepositions.

**Keywords:** errors, prepositions, Uzbek learners, postpositions, prepositional errors, .

The use of prepositions is the most crucial problem for the Uzbek learners of English. These short, simple, innocent-looking prepositions of English are, in fact, very tricky. Takahashi writes: "Aside from the correct usage of particles, the greatest problem facing the students of English as a second language is, no doubt, the correct usage of English prepositions." These prepositions sometimes, become a problem even for the native speakers. An obvious reason is that the number of prepositions used in English are limited but they have to serve a variety of relational meanings. These prepositions form a closed system. In Uzbek, too, the prepositions or, what is technically called, postpositions form a closed system. There are, however, some fundamental differences between the prepositions in English and the postpositions, in Uzbek. The postpositions in Uzbek are even fewer than the prepositions in English. As a result, when Uzbek uses one postposition for expressing one kind of relational meaning, English uses a number of prepositions for expressing the same kind of relational meaning depending upon its meaning dimension. For instance, a single Uzbek postposition of time '-da' imparts the same relational meaning which four English prepositions 'at, in, on, during, but, in the latter case, they exhibit different shades of relational meaning of time. In this way, there are about eight postpositions of time in Uzbek, while English uses seventeen prepositions for the same. This makes the task of Uzbek learners of English more complex. Another point of difference is that postpositions in Uzbek do not behave like adverbial particles as we find in English. Thus, the behavior of prepositions may prove very confusing for Uzbek learners.

In order to study the learners' errors, it is necessary first of all to classify their errors. Here it is essential to point out that in extracting the erroneous sentences, attention has been given to those errors which are 'systematic' and 'asystematic' not to 'unsystematic' errors. 'Systematic' errors, according to M.P. Jain (1973), are those which are caused by the learners'

application of overgeneralization. 'Asystematic' errors, according to him are 'those which 'stem from' generalizations which have not acquired the status of rules but continue to stay as hypothesis. Again, 'unsystematic' errors, according to him, are those which are slips of the tongue or pen, caused by purely psychological reasons. Such 'unsystematic' errors have not been discussed in this study because, they do not have the pedagogical significance. Broadly speaking, There are three types of errors in relation to the use of preposition which can be detected in the writings of Uzbek learners of English.

1. *Omission of Preposition*: The learners drop using any preposition in the sentence where it is obligatory.

- a) I woke up in the morning 5 O'clock.
- b) My class started 10 to 4 O'clock.
- c) I was waiting the bus.
- d) I explained my teacher why I was late.
- e) I came my lodge.

2. *Insertion of preposition*: Students supply prepositions in the sentences where it is undesirable.

- a) I reached to the Campus.
- b) I saw to my teacher.
- c) I read the books since to 4 O'clock.
- d) He has described about the incident.
- e) My teacher entered into the class.

3. *Selection of incorrect preposition*: Students supply prepositions in their sentences, which are not appropriate.

- a) I came here in the 15th of July.
- b) I came in Campus at 10 O'clock.
- c) My father prevented me to go to the film.
- d) He has done it from a systematic manner.

All these types of errors are local, not global. Global errors are mistakes in overall organization, which confuse the relations among the constituent clauses: "local errors", according to them, are errors within clauses. The erroneous use of preposition in the above cited examples is local because it does not interfere with comprehension.

It is not easy to specify the sources of errors. Sometimes, errors are so complex and ambiguous that it is difficult to regard one particular source as responsible for that error. However, it is essential to explore the source of our learner's errors for arriving at certain measures to eradicate them. The erroneous sentences cited in the previous section indicate that they are mainly two sources of learner's errors interlanguage interference and intra-language interference.

a) *Intra language Interference*: When the learner After mastering his mother tongue is exposed to a target language, it is a natural process that he applies transferring some of the rules of his L1 to his target language. Sometimes this transfer is positive when the rule of his mother tongue fits into the system of his target language. But sometimes this transfer is negative when it does not conform to the system of the target language. This negative transfer is called 'interlanguage interference.' The pull of mother tongue is responsible in three ways for the learners' errors in the use of prepositions.

In Uzbek, no postposition is required in sentences where it is obligatory in English. Sometimes in Uzbek, there is the choice of omitting or inserting a certain postpositions, while in English it is obligatory.

(a) Uzbek: Men qishloqqa keldim.

(I village came)

English: I came to the village.

(b) Uzbek: Men siz bilan soat 4da uchrashaman.

(I you 4 o'clock shall meet)

English: I shall meet you at 4 o'clock.

The Uzbek learners of English are influenced by the system of their own language and as a result, they write erroneous sentences like:

I went market five o'clock.

I studied there three hours.

I took breakfast 3 a.m.

This kind of error may be attributed to 'communicative strategy' but the pull of mother tongue cannot be underestimated as a source for this kind of error.

In Uzbek if a noun is the indirect object of a transitive verb, it must take a postposition '-ga'. In English the indirect object will take a preposition like 'to' or 'for' only in a certain order of words.

Uzbek: Men bu kitobni Samga berdim.

(I this book Sam to gave)

English: I gave this book to Sam. or I gave Sam this book.

In the above Uzbek sentence, the postposition '-ga' is obligatory; it is so in English sentence, but the preposition 'to' has to be dropped in English sentence. Similarly, in the case of verbs which take only one object, no preposition is used before the object in English. On the other hand, nouns in Uzbek will take a postposition if they are the objects of such verbs, for example:

Uzbek: Men Aleksni ko'rdim.

(I Alex to saw)

English: I saw Alex.

Such difference between the source language and target language becomes a barrier for our learners. The system of mother tongue makes its own demand and as a result, the learner writes sentences like:

I saw to my teacher.

I read to the books since 4 o'clock.

Another reason which is largely responsible for the learners' errors is that there is no one-to-one correspondence between Uzbek postposition and English preposition. It has been pointed out earlier that Uzbek postpositions are fewer in number than English prepositions and Uzbek postpositions have general meaning, whereas English prepositions have specific meaning. The learners, in the early stage of learning, realize the meanings of English prepositions by substitute postpositions of Uzbek. In this process, he, sometimes, translates mentally three or four English prepositions into one Uzbek postposition so that the distinction among these English prepositions gets lost. As a result of this tendency to supply exact equivalent of Uzbek postpositions in English, they write erroneous sentences like these:

I came in Campus at 4 o'clock.

I have not studied since two hours.

The girl is afraid from the snake.

He was laughing on me.

b) Intra language Interference: In the process of learning the target language, the adult learner adopts a strategy to simplify the system of the target language by coalescing two or three rules into one and forming an overgeneralization. This is a natural process which even a child adopts for acquiring his L1. But the difference is that while a child expands his simplified system to give a one-to-one correspondence with the adult language of his community, the second language learner is contented with working, upon the simplified system, without further assimilating the subsystem of his target language, This is the case of overgeneralization which crops up in the process of his learning the target language. In the use of preposition, our learner makes overgeneralization of two kinds.

Sometimes, the learner overgeneralizes because of some meaning association between certain words. The learner finds that these pairs of words like 'reach' and 'go', 'enter' and 'come', 'describe' and 'say', 'tell' and 'explain' are alike in meaning and forms a wrong analogy about their usage. While the first item of every pair will not generally take a preposition, the second term of every pair will take a particular preposition. If a learner has made a generalization on the basis of first item, he will drop preposition even in the case of second item and vice versa. The result is the use of their erroneous sentences like these:

I reached to the Campus.

He described about the incident.

You will tell to me later.

I explained to my teacher why I was late.

Certain words in English take certain fixed prepositions. In the same way, certain words which usually take prepositions drop them in certain environment. The learner forgets this kind of lexical restriction and is led to go of. The students make errors of overgeneralization like the following:

I came to home.

My father prevented me to go to the film.

I introduced him with my father.

I am tired with him.

The learner finds correct use of prepositions in the sentence "I came to my village" and this lead him logically to arrive at an incorrect sentence like "I came to home." Certain verbs, underlined in the above sentences take certain prepositions. The use of prepositions in such cases has to be learnt individually. The learner in the process of simplifying the system of his target language makes a generalization which is not valid in such cases.

Sometimes the learners make errors as a result of such generalizations about the use of preposition which have not acquired the status of rules. These generalizations, Mr. M.P. Jain says, continue to stay as hypotheses; they are open to unsettling influences. As a result, the learner is unable to apply these generalizations with any degree of consistency. This is not the case of systematic type of error. Mr. M.P. Jain calls such an error as an asystematic error. Here is an example from the learner's writing:

*Yesterday, I got up early in the morning. I took my breakfast at 7 o'clock. I got ready for study in the half past seven... My class started 10 o'clock.*

Here, the language is not 'rule-governed' behavior. The learner has not formed any definite rule about the use of 'at' and 'in' as prepositions of time.

### **Pedagogical implications**

In order to overcome the mother tongue interference, it is desirable to warn the learners against their tendency to equate English prepositions with Uzbek postpositions. We should show the learners by some precise examples how the postpositions in their L1 overlap with English prepositions. If there is a similarity between the use of preposition of both L1 and L2, this must be demonstrated before the learners for facilitating their learning.

With regard to interlanguage interference, it is necessary to improve the learners' capacity to generalise. The generalizations must include all the sub-rules about the use of preposition.

For encouraging the learners to establish the broader generalizations, there must be the learners' adequate exposure to the target language.

The main emphasis must be given on the teaching strategy and the materials by which the learners will form generalizations about the use of prepositions and will "internalize" them. All the prepositions should not be taught at a time. They should be classified on the basis of meaning they convey like prepositions of time, place, direction, purpose, etc. Before starting teaching any type of prepositions, the teachers should make a good planning. The materials must be well-suited; they must be interesting and must provide ample illustrations of prepositions. After the presentation of the material, the learners should be asked questions involving the use of prepositions of the same type. Then the learners should be helped to form valid generalizations on the basis of illustrations from the text and from the learners' response. Finally, the learners should be administered a test with exercises in variety for reinforcement. 'This method of teaching grammar is a combination of both "induction and deduction; Corder, S. Pit calls this method "a guided inductive method."

After teaching all the prepositions based on notions, like prepositions of time, of place, of direction, of purpose, etc., the prepositional phrases like 'on account of', 'by means of' and the collocations of prepositions with certain verbs, nouns and adjectives should be taught. Such phrases and collocations are 'open-ended' and, like other lexical items, "they have to be selected, graded and sequenced on the principle of frequency and range of their occurrence.

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