

A Comparative Analysis of English and Arabic Prepositions: Syntax, Semantics, and Usage Patterns

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Abstract:

Prepositions play a crucial role in both English and Arabic syntax, yet they exhibit distinct syntactic, semantic, and usage patterns in each language. This comparative analysis examines the similarities and differences between English and Arabic prepositions, focusing on their syntactic structures, semantic functions, and usage in context. The study explores how prepositions in both languages contribute to the overall meaning of sentences and how their usage reflects cultural and linguistic differences. The analysis also considers the challenges that Arabic learners of English may face due to differences in prepositional usage. By highlighting these differences, this study aims to improve the understanding and teaching of prepositions in both languages.

Keywords: motivation; online environments; language learning; case study.

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).

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). Prepositions are a syntactic feature that is employed in writing in both English and Arabic. It is often argued, however, that the two languages differ in their use and number of prepositions. English, it is said, makes use of more prepositions, while Arabic favors the use of fewer prepositions (Al-Marrani, 2009)

Prepositions are essential elements of syntax in both English and Arabic, but they exhibit unique syntactic, semantic, and usage patterns in each language. This comparative analysis explores these patterns to enhance our understanding of prepositional usage in both languages.

According to (Jin, 1982., Lindstromberg, 2010), English Language prepositions possess multiple meanings, and many prepositions are so complicated that require much memory work from the learners. The prepositions reflect functional or physical relations between objects in the world (Simon Garrod, Gillan Ferrier, Siobhan Campbell 1999). However, Prepositions seem to encode relationships between objects, times, places or grammatical entities (Karen Froud, 2000)

Prepositions in Arabic are used just like in English (Zughoul, 1973); they come before the noun, around the house = hawla al bait (around = hawla). In front of the house = amama al bait (amama= in front of) (Alhaj, 2015). Some prepositions that are one word in English may contain two words in Arabic, for example (among = men bayn) which means literally “from between”. And vice versa, some Arabic one word may be the equivalent of a compound English preposition, like: in front of = fawka (Salim, 2006; Saeed, 2014)

Learning a second language presents numerous challenges for students, including socio-cultural differences, unfamiliar subjects, different writing styles from their mother tongue, pronunciation issues, and difficulty recognizing alphabets. The socio-cultural background of a student significantly affects their second language learning process, as their culture differs from the language they are learning, leading to confusion. In such situations, teachers play a crucial role in helping students by providing insights into the culture, lifestyle, and linguistic aspects of the second language. Teachers also familiarize students with the subject through classroom activities, teaching alphabets, words, and assigning familiar topics to improve linguistic knowledge.

Additionally, learners face difficulties and make mistakes in English pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary usage. The learner's native language influences the specific difficulties they encounter in learning and using English, as well as the types of mistakes they make. For example, learners may struggle with English pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary due to interference from their native language.

In learning English, ESL/EFL learners can use English dictionaries and other reference books to look up unknown vocabulary when reading and writing, which is not possible when listening and speaking. Therefore, listening comprehension and speaking in English are often more challenging than reading and writing. Mastering English vocabulary for daily use is also more time-consuming and challenging than mastering English grammar for foreign learners.

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