Influence of Arabic Language
Upon the Learning of English Prepositions
by Secondary Students in Jordan

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ABSTRACT
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This study of prepositions learning strategies was conducted to address the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and the differences between Arabic prepositions and the English prepositions?
2. What are the difficulties involving using the English prepositions by Jordanian students?
3. Do male and female students differ in their relative utilization of various English prepositions?
4. Do literary and scientific students differ in their relative utilization of various English prepositions?
The sample of this study consisted of 500 male and female second secondary students (Literary and Scientific) in the academic year 1987-1988. It was selected from the secondary schools in the District of Irbid Directorate which had both streams.

For the purposes of this study, the data were collected by using the following tests or procedures. 1) A twenty-item multiple-choice preposition test was designed to measure the students' ability to guess preposition meaning from context. The twenty prepositions which were chosen from eighty prepositions of the twenty-sentences, were randomly presented with the alternatives that included the correct meaning of the stem 2) A twenty item cloze proposition test, from which twenty preposition were deleted, was used to measure the students' Language proficiency. 3) A twenty-item preposition error correction test was developed to test and analyse the types of prepositions errors and to test EFL encoding processes. The data were analysed using the SPSS-X program. A two way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used—sex and stream as independent factors and the sources of committed English prepositions errors as dependent factors and was employed to test the aforementioned questions at 0.05 level of significance.

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The following relevant and significant findings can be concluded on the basis of data analyses:

1. There were statistically significant differences of the whole sample in the following categories: L₁ interference, overgeneralization, literal-translation, incomplete acquisition of L₂ rules, different preposition functions, ignorance of exceptions to rule, grammar-translation and target L₂ system. L₁ interference caused the highest number of prepositions errors, fewer prepositions errors were committed as a result of overgeneralization and L₂ system caused the fewest number of prepositions errors.

2. There were no statistically significant differences between male and female students with respect to literal-translation and overgeneralization errors.

3. There were no statistically significant differences between literary and scientific students with respect to grammar-translation, literal-translation, different preposition functions, overgeneralization and incomplete acquisition of L₂ rules errors.

4. L₁ interference errors were the most frequent sources of prepositions errors regardless of stream and sex.
The researcher conjectured that prepositions errors were triggered as a result of the following sources: L₁ interference, overgeneralization, Literal-translation, incomplete acquisition of L₂ rules, different preposition functions, ignorance of exceptions to rule, grammar-translation and L₂ system. The strategies revealed in this study were the following: avoidance, Language switch, prepositions transfer, word coinage, communication and simplification strategy. The study provides implications and suggestions on the influence of Arabic language upon the learning of English prepositions by secondary students in Jordan, as well as, on learning and teaching of English and Arabic prepositions. It also provides the teachers of English with some strategies of conducting various types of tests and analysing them.