The Effect of Arabic Prepositions
On the use of English Prepositions

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"Abstract"

This paper is concerned with the effect of understanding Arabic prepositions on the use of English prepositions. The data of this paper was drawn from non-department students in the faculty of Education who have been tested before and after explaining the different meanings of Arabic prepositions to them.

The analysis of data revealed that’s understanding the different meanings of Arabic prepositions can eliminate the misuse of many English prepositions.
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Introduction

There are various ways in which L1 can be used in teaching L2. Corder (Cited in Ellis 1996, P. 137).

Suggests that "the learner's L1 may facilitate the developmental process of learning an L2, by helping him to progress more rapidly. Larsen-Freeman (1986, P:97) states 'The students' native language is used to make meaning clear. Lado (internet) believes that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meaning and distribution of forms and meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture.

Although the structure of English grammar is not problematic in many ways, it does represent considerable problems to many university students in Misurata.

Identifying the problem:

Based on my experience as a teacher for seven years at the English department.

I have noticed that prepositions are one of the most difficult aspects of English for Libyan students to learn. It also has been noticed that the extent of the difficulty is not always the same, and that students face much more difficulties in using some English prepositions than others. Moreover, the majority of students usually commit the same errors such as.

- **The use of the preposition "from" in sentences as.**
  1. Part from the plan.
  2. Some from my friends.
  3. We have lived in Misurata from 1975.

- **The use of the proposition "on" as in:**
  - I will thank him on his advice.
  - They told him on everything.
Consequently, there must be a reason behind the learner's misuse of some English prepositions, which makes us wonder:

Do Arabic prepositions play any role in the misuse of some English prepositions?

Therefore, the answer to this question will be the field of this study.

**The aim of the study**

This study attempts to determine the main source of difficulties which some Libyan students encounter in using English prepositions and will highlight the areas to which language teachers should pay attention in order to help their students understand English preposition. On the basis of the results obtained from this study, it is hoped that the researcher can provide some suggestions which may eliminate the misuse of many English prepositions.

**English prepositions:**

In English, the prepositions are one of the eight parts of speech, specifically, prepositions are connectors, their function is to connect a noun or pronouns (called the object of the preposition) to another word in a sentence. According to Show (1986, P: 220), there are sixty words that can be used as prepositions in English.

Most of them show relationship of direction, location and time and some can show a relationship of exclusion Chalker (1992, P:217) says that at, by, for, from, in, on, to and with are the most frequently used prepositions in English.

Because this paper is concerned with the effect of Arabic prepositions on learning English prepositions, the focus will be only on these which are equivalent to some Arabic prepositions which lead Libyan learners of English to commit errors.
The Effect of Arabic Prepositions On the use of English Prepositions

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<td></td>
<td>Somebody / something</td>
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<td>/ ؤ I ّ /</td>
<td>towards somebody</td>
<td>سأذهب إلى طرابلس</td>
<td>TO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ something</td>
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<tr>
<td>/ mودع /</td>
<td>point of time in the</td>
<td>لم مر منذ زمن طويل</td>
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The meaning of Arabic prepositions:

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<td>/ mIn /</td>
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<td>مات من الخطة</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ساعدته لأحمد</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in accordance with</td>
<td>وقتاً لهذا الوقت</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>purpose or benefit</td>
<td>هذه لك</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ fi /</td>
<td>indicating state</td>
<td>في حالة مثارة</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>into a place</td>
<td>العصتر في القفص</td>
<td>in</td>
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How can standard Arabic help students in using English preposition?

When we compare the prepositional uses in Arabic and English, we find that there are cases where Arabic and English use similar prepositions to express the same meaning, e.g. “the use of “from” to indicate starting point” as in I came from Tripoli; the use of “with” to indicate company as in she lives with her mother.
Direct transfer from Arabic, in this case leads to positive transfer. On the other hand, there are cases where direct transfer leads to negative transfer.

*e.g. *some from my friends. *I will thank him on his advice. These errors could be attributed to the fact that the same form of most Arabic prepositions has more than one meaning, e.g. 

students know only the common meaning of Arabic prepositions to which they appear to know only one English equivalent. This is because of the lack of the knowledge of standard Arabic.

By identifying the areas in which negative and positive transfer occur in using English prepositions, it seems that students who understand the different meanings of Arabic prepositions know more equivalents, and therefore, can find a wider areas for positive transfer than those who do not master the Arabic prepositions.

For example, by examining the cases in which students misuse the English prepositions “on”, it appears that students who lack the knowledge of different meanings of Arabic preposition (§1) appear to perform as below:

On=

Leave the book on the table. 
I will thank him on his advice. 
They told him on everything.

On the other hand, students who learned to use the Arabic preposition /لما/ appear to perform as follows:

On, for, about =

Leave the book on the table. 
I will thank him for his advice. 
They told him about everything.

Another example is the preposition /من/ in Arabic, the /من/ in “من” differs from its meaning in “من” in Arabic, the /من/ in "من" is called /لت objection / from which something starts, (Al-Ansari 1979, Almuradi 1973 Hassan, 1975, Said 1999, Alzagbi 1992,
Khafji, 1961). In other words, it expresses a physical movement which can be traced clearly. It is the equivalent to the preposition “from, and both” / mln alebledda / “From” is used to express the same meaning. Understanding its meaning may facilitate the use of the preposition “from” when it is used:

- To indicate place or direction from which somebody / something starts.
  
  e.g. I will go from Tripoli to Benghazi.
- To indicate time at which somebody / something starts.
  
  e.g. We study from 8 am till 5 pm every day.
- To indicate who sent, gave something.
  
  e.g. A letter from my brother.
- To indicate where somebody / something originates.
  
  e.g. I’m from Libya
  
  Draw water from a well.
- To indicate the lower limit of a range, numbers, prices ..etc.
  
  e.g. He writes from 10 to 15 letters daily.
  
  Tickets cost from 3 to 11 dinars.
- To indicate distance between two places.
  
  e.g. 10 miles from the coast.


The function of this / mln / is to express the relationship between the part and the whole the member and the body to which that member belongs.

However, Kharma and Hajjai (1989:78) argue that Arabic speakers find difficulty in using the English preposition “of”, because it does not have a counterpart in Arabic language except the /sidafa/ (the genitive case). But, it appears that the justification that they provide for their argument does not govern the different meanings of / mln attabfadl / because if we examine the function and the meaning of this / mln / and “of” we can easily realize that both give the same meaning and are used in the same way. This means that this / mln / is the equivalent to the English preposition “OF”. So, understanding the meaning of / mln / can facilitate learning the use of the preposition “OF” when it is used:

- To indicate the material used to make something.
  
  e.g. Shirts made of cotton.
- To indicate what is measured, counted or contained.
  
  e.g. A pint of milk.
which have different meanings, it appears that students know only common
question: use the preposition "in" in such case). Consequently, this raises another
book with twenty dinars.

Some of them may say * I will write by a pen. They usually say * I bought this
(whom I've already questioned), students usually say * I will write with a pen.
attention to this point may help them to use "for" correctly in many cases.
However, based on my experience, and according to most teachers of English
(whom I’ve already questioned), students usually say * I will write with a pen. They usually say * I bought this
book with twenty dinars.

But, students do not say * I met him with / by the mosque ( they usually
use the preposition “in” in such case). Consequently, this raises another
question:

**Why do Libyan students use the same English preposition in some cases and use different English prepositions in others?**

From the point of view of this study, the answer to this question might be summarized as follows:

Although, both English and Arabic prepositions are polysemous words which have different meanings, it appears that students know only common
meaning which is more popular and known than other meanings. Therefore, we
find that when the same errors reoccur they are often related to a specific Arabic preposition usage.

For example, in sentences like *I will thank him on his device,* *they told him on everything,* the errors are related to the Arabic preposition /\l/. The same is true in sentences as *some from my friends.* *we have lived in Tripoli from 1975 in which the errors are related to /mln/.* The same can be said about the use of “with” in *I bought this book with twenty in which the use of “with” is related to the Arabic preposition /bI/.

It seems that students resort more often to colloquial Arabic than standard Arabic in choosing English prepositions.

The example for this is the use of “from” instead of /mon\dlu/ or // which are not found in colloquial Arabic.

When students use English preposition, they fall back on the forms of standard Arabic prepositions (to which they know only one English equivalent in most cases). Because in some cases as in جنحت من طرائس جا, I came from Tripoli, leave the book on the table. Both, Arabic and English prepositions give the same meaning. It seems that students apply this as a general rule.

Therefore, we find that most students face difficulty in using the English preposition “since” in spite of the fact that “since” has two Arabic equivalents (/ mon\du and /mo\d/). The students usually say *we have lived in Tripoli from 1975.

The use of “from” instead of “since” can be due to the fact that both /mon\du and /mo\d/ do not exist in the colloquial Arabic, in which preposition /mln/ is always used in such cases.