Effects of a Remedial Linguistic Program to Improve the Translation of Arabic Prepositions by Translators

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Abstract
Prepositions initiate major problems to translators when they translate texts from Arabic into English or vice versa. This study is designed to identify the difficulties concerning prepositions, which Arab translators face when translating into English. It aims to answer two questions: First, is there an effect of a proposed remedial program to improve the translation of prepositions from English into Arabic by translators working at translation offices? Second, which of these themes (replacing a preposition with a preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, preposition omission, preposition addition, and preposition misplacement) of the remedial linguistic program will improve the proficiency of the translators in translating prepositions from English into Arabic? To answer these questions, 50 sentences were translated from English into Arabic by twenty translators selected randomly from the Middle East. This study sample was divided into an experimental group that executed the remedial linguistic program, and a control group that did not. The (t-test) was utilized to test the statistical significance of the differences between the two groups. Results showed statistically significant differences in mean scores between the experimental group and control group to the reference of the experimental group. It was indicated that the remedial linguistic program achieved its purpose to enhance the correct usage of prepositions by translators when they translate texts from English into Arabic.
*Keywords***:** Arabic Prepositions, preposition omission, preposition misplacement, preposition addition, translation

1. Introduction

Prepositions in English and Arabic are used to link words, phrases, or clauses to other words in the sentence, they express a relation between two entities. Prepositions according to Thornbury (2002) are grammatical words or functional words that usually enhance the syntactic formation of the sentence. Also, Cho (2002) states that prepositions are part of syntax categories but are challenging to English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. They are the most problematic items to master in a second language (Celce-Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999; Gass *et al.*, 2013; Hendricks, 2010). English prepositions are considered problematic to learners due to the multiple meanings for most of them depending on the context (Koffi, 2010). With reference to Arab EFL learners, they encounter problems in using English prepositions (Jalali & Shojaei, 2012; Sabbah, 2015; Tahaineh, 2012).

Arab grammarians classified words into three classes: nouns, verbs, and particles. Prepositions "ḥuruuf l-jarr" were separated from the class of particles (Hamadallah & Tushyeh, 1998). This term consists of two parts: ḥarf and *al-jarr* as it was first named by Sibawayhi (2006). The term *al harf* (particle) is not a noun nor a verb according to Sibawayhi (2006); whereas the term *a-jarr* (genitive case) refers to the effect of a preposition on the noun following it.

The syntactic function of prepositions in the structure of the Arabic sentence is to connect the meanings of verbs with their subjects, and they connect intransitive verbs with their objects when they are not connected. Ibn Alssiraj (1996, P.408) states: "Connecting the verb with the noun as *"marartu bi Zaid"* (Lit. translation: I passed by Zaid), since the preposition *"bi"* (by) connected passing with Zaid". In addition, a preposition sometimes supports a transitive verb by elucidating the execution of the verb, as *"katabtu bi al qalam"* (Lit. translation: I wrote with a pen). Also, prepositions are used with nouns as *"al kitaab li Zaid"* (Lit. translation: the book is for Zaid); the preposition *"li"* (for) indicates the owner of the book.

Thus, Ibn Ya'ish (1995) named prepositions *"hurüf al idafah"* (genitive particles) as they add the meanings of preceding verbs to the following nouns. Accordingly, prepositions are basic joints for speech synthesis and formulation in terms of semantic reference because they play the role of connection between words in order to clarify the pending sense among them.

Prepositions in Arabic are characterized by structural and semantic features affected by several considerations represented by the verb to which the preposition is related, the meaning of the preposition, and the genitive noun that follows the preposition (Al Malqi, 1999; Ibn Hisham, 2005; Ibn Jinni, 2002); hence such considerations created difficulties in the uses of prepositions (preposition difficulties).

A large number of studies (Almaloul, 2014; Al-Marrani, 2009; Al Yaari, 2013; Hashim, 1996; Jalali & Shojaei, 2012; Kharma & Hajjaj 1997; Tahaineh, 2012) have investigated the difficulties and errors that EFL learners encounter in translating prepositions from Arabic into English and vice versa. The researchers have not found a study conducted on translators' ability in translating prepositions. Therefore, this study focuses on the translators' ability to use

prepositions correctly in their translations from Arabic into English corresponding to the preposition-verb, preposition-noun and preposition-preposition syntactic-based collocation set by linguists and grammarians through the compliance with the features of prepositions and not to generalize such features for the entire use of language.

1.1 Statement of the problem:
The study investigates the ability of translators working at translation offices dealing with Arabic prepositions when they translate texts from English into Arabic. Their inability to use prepositions correctly might lead to ineffective translations.
This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there an effect of a proposed remedial program to improve the translation of prepositions from English into Arabic by translators working at translation offices?
2. Which of these themes (replacing a preposition with a preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, preposition omission, preposition addition, and preposition misplacement) of the remedial linguistic program will improve the proficiency of the translators in translating prepositions from English into Arabic?

1.2 Significance of the study:
The significance of the study stems from the topic it deals with, which intends to inspect the uses of Arabic prepositions by translators working at translation offices when they translate English texts into Arabic. It is one of the earliest studies to the best knowledge of the researchers. It is anticipated that the study will encourage researchers who are concerned with this field to conduct further relevant studies. In addition, it reveals the significance of translators to acquire abilities to use the prepositions correctly in Arabic.

1.3 Limitations of the study:
The present study is limited to random selected translation offices in Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Besides, the gender of the translators was not taken into account during sampling.

3. Theoretical Background
Arab grammarians and linguists identify five phenomena of the erroneous use of Arabic prepositions by Arabic speakers. Such wrong uses will affect negatively the translation of English texts and utterances into Arabic. The following incorrect uses are:

2.1 Replacing a preposition with a preposition:
Some Kufic linguists allow replacement of prepositions by other ones since a preposition is not limited to one meaning, it has more denotative not connotative meanings, and they consider this as homonymy according to Al Sayuti (1998). Whereas, Ibn Jinni (2002) declines this judgment as it might lead to perplexity of meanings and misunderstanding of the language.

Regarding the semantics of prepositions in case a preposition is detached from its origin or used in another meaning, it is better to keep its original meaning and to imply a logical meaning for its transitive verb (Al Astrabathi, 1998).

The speakers of Arabic language commit a prevailing error by replacing a preposition with another. They skip the correct and appropriate meaning of the preposition which agrees with the verb, which will affect negatively the target language. Various examples of this replacement can be exposed such as the replacement of (*f ī* في and *bi* ﺑ) with (`*alaa* على) along with the verb (*'athara* أثر: affected) in sentences like: "*athara `aalay-hi*" (Lit translation: He affected him), "*lak aalay-hi tathir 'iijabiun*" (Lit translation: You have a positive effect on him). The verb (*'athara*) must be transitive with the prepositions (*f ī*) and (*bi*), as "*lm yu'athir fii natijatih*" (Lit translation: It did not affect his result). The reason that this verb is used with the preposition (`*alaa* على) is due to the translation from European languages since the verb in French is transitive with (sur) as (influer sur lui), and in English as (it is under influence) (Al Samirra'i, 1983).

Such replacement between prepositions is due to the influence of non-Arabic utterances such as English and French when translating from English and French into Arabic. Arabic speakers transformed such an expression from French (En son honneur) or English (On his honor) (Al Samirra'i, 1983).

2.2 *Replacing an adverb with a preposition:*
Arabic language speakers replace some adverbs with prepositions for semantic or structural doubts. The most familiar Arabic adverbs which replace prepositions are (*taht* تحت: under), (*hawl* حول: around) and (*'eind* عند: at).

There are several examples of such a replacement, as the replacement of the preposition (*f ī* في) with the adverb (*taḥt* تحت) like: "*alqadiat tḥat almudawala*" (Lit translation: the issue is under deliberation). The correct sentence is "*alqadiat fii almudawala*" (Lit translation: The case is in the deliberation) because (*taḥt* تحت) is an adverb of place which is the opposite of (*fawq* فوق: above) (Al Musa, 1990). Such an adverb is ambiguous and it must be assigned to a particular place, whereas (*almudawala* المداولة) does not refer to a place.

Arabic speakers have resorted to the adverb (*taḥt* تحت) instead of the preposition (*f ī* في) due to the English language influence in an expression like (It is under the influence or It is under study) or the French language influence in an expression like (Il est influence or Il est soin étude) (Al Samirra'i, 1983).

2.3 Omission of prepositions:
Arab grammarians mentioned reasons for omission of prepositions which are: the frequent use of places and oaths (Al Farra, 1983; Al Jabali, 1995), the clarity of meaning and reference to the omitted preposition (Ibn Ya'ish, 1995), to reduce and shorten the preposition if it has an indication in the context (Al 'Akbari, 1978).

Furthermore, they determined the positions where prepositions can be omitted, which are: with the present verb in the subjunctive mood (Al Halabi, 1997), with the noun used with the particle (*'inn* إنّ) in the subjunctive mood (Al Zajaj, 1988), with the present verb used with the particle (ka*ī* كي) in the subjunctive mood (Ibn Malik, 1990), with oaths (Al Jabali, 1995), before the interrogative particle (*kam* كم) (Ibn 'Aqil, 1980), and after the speech which includes a similar preposition (Al Ghalaini, 1993).

Nowadays, modern standard Arabic speakers omit prepositions for different reasons and positions in contradiction of the aforementioned ones. For example, the omission of the preposition (*f ī* في) in *"qabalat khalidanaan 'athna' alsafar 'iilaa briṭania"* (Lit translation: I met Khaled during travelling to Britain), while the correct sentence comprises the preposition (*f ī* في) *"qabalat khalidanaan f ī 'athna' alsafar 'iilaa briṭania"* (Lit translation: I met Khaled while travelling to Britain). The intended meaning of this sentence is to determine the time of the meeting and the word (*'athna'* أَثناء) never indicates this as it is not an adverb even if it means "the middle of something" (Shakir,1994).

2.4 Addition of prepositions:

Arab grammarians state that these prepositions (*min* من, *al-baa'* الباء, *al-laam* اللام, and *al-kaaf* الكاف) can be added to words. This is applied according to specific conditions, as to be added to an indefinite noun, or to be preceded by a negation, a prohibition or a question with (*ḥal* هل) (Ibn Assiraj, 1996).

Modern standard Arabic speakers add unnecessary prepositions to their linguistic structures causing redundancy and pleonasm. This contributes to transformation of a verb – for example – from a transitive verb into a transitive verb with a preposition. Such an addition is not limited only to verbs, but also to predicates, accusative of condition and adverbs. Addition situations as the addition of a preposition before the direct object of a transitive verb changing it into an object of a preposition, keeping the sentence without a direct object. For instance, the addition of (*al-baa'* الباء) to the direct object of the verb (*dhakar* ذكر: mentioned) as "dhakar alṭabib bi'ana almariḍ sayuashfaa qariban" (Lit translation: The doctor mentioned that the patient will recover soon). The correct structure of this sentence must not have the preposition (*al-baa'* الباء) given that the verb is transitive to the object by itself.

Another addition is the addition of a preposition to an adverb, as an adverb indicates the meaning of the preposition (*f ī* في: in) to refer to time and place. Grammarians and linguists have mentioned that the prepositions precede adverbs are restricted to a criterion adding a new additional meaning to adverbs (Al Zamakhshari, 1999).

Another addition is the addition of a preposition to an adverb. For instance, the addition of the preposition *al-laam* اللام to the noun of time (*'ism alzaman*), such as: *"baqiati f ī aljamieat limudat qasira"* (I stayed at the university for a short period). However, it is better to omit the added preposition *al-laam* اللام as it has no grammatical function in this sentence because an adverb of time is used.

5.2 Misplacement of prepositions:

Misplacement of a preposition occurs when an utterance includes several nouns, and its subject requires a preposition to indicate the intended meaning, but an unintended noun is chosen and the inserted preposition changes the meaning of the utterance. Such a case is only acceptable in rhetorical texts, though such insertion is unfavorable for informative and unrhetorical speech (Ibn Hisham, 1985; Ibn Qutaibah, 1995). This misplacement can be detected in modern standard Arabic speakers' utterances. The followings are instances of such a linguistic phenomenon.

According to grammarian and linguists of Arabic, speakers are allowed to attach static things with moveable objects (Ibn Jinni, 2011). The preposition (*al-baa'* الباء) (with/by), for example, is used to indicate that the action was performed by the help of an object such as: *"katabt bialqalam"* (I wrote with the pen); the word (*qalam*: pen) can be used for assistance, so the preposition has to be inserted to it. However, nowadays, incorrect linguistic structures as "*khabaṭa ra'sihu biljidar"* (Lit translation: He banged his head against the wall) are used. The acceptable sentence is *"khabaṭa birasihi aljidar"* (Lit translation: He knocked his head against the wall) as (الجدار aljidar: wall) is a static object and cannot be controlled, i.e. the preposition (*al-baa'* الباء) is connected to a static object that does not need indicate action.

One more instance of such insertions is the insertion of a preposition to the subject of a sentence. Al Bayati (2005) demonstrates that such insertion is not appropriate except for some cases in which the preposition is additional, e.g. *"ma ja' min 'ahad"* (Lit translation: Nobody came). Nonetheless, some structures are contrary to the aforementioned ones as: *"kan ḥarişaan 'an yuḥiṭ alḥadith bilkitman"* (Lit translation: He was eager to keep the conversation confidential). Though it is appropriate to say: *"kan ḥarişaan 'an yuḥiṭ alkitman bialḥadith"* (Lit translation: He was eager to keep the conversation confidential), considering that the actual subject of the verb is not (*alḥadith*: الحديث: conversation). If it was so, then the meaning would be affected and the word (al*kitman*: الكتمان: confidentiality) would be what we are keen to hide, and the word (*alḥadith*: الحديث: conversation) would not be confidential.

The last instance is the insertion of a preposition to additional words, since Arabic is characterized by the addition of some words or prepositions for the sake of speech improvement, decoration, or for the sake of rhythm and tone (Al 'Aqad, 2009). This is acceptable if such insertion is for a rhetorical purpose. However, Arabic speakers say "waḍ'a' alqaḍiatu 'alaa bisaṭ adirasa" (Lit translation: He put the case on the study carpet). Nevertheless, it is better to say "waḍe' alqaḍiatu lildirasa" (Lit translation: He put the case for study) as it is attributable to the usage of the preposition ('alaa: على: on) to the additional word (bisaṭ بساط: carpet) does not give a new meaning for the structure. In accordance with Al Samirra'i (1983), such a structure is translated from French, as the French sentence: (Cette cause est mise sur le tapis).

3. Methodology and Procedures

3.1 The sample of the study:

A random sample of (20) working translators were selected from (20) translation offices in

Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Two groups of 10 translators were formed as an experimental group and control group.

3.2 The instrument of the study:

The instrument used in this study was a diagnostic test. Its purpose is to determine the mistakes in the uses of Arabic prepositions committed by translators working at translation offices in the Middle East when they translate texts from English into Arabic. A number of translation professors in a number of Jordanian universities reviewed the test and offered suggestions. Their notes were taken into consideration and required modification was conducted.

The test consists of (50) sentences, every (10) sentences contain prepositions that belong to one type of the incorrect usage of Arabic prepositions by Arabic speakers mentioned earlier. Translators in each office were requested to translate all the sentences, and then points were distributed according to the number of responses required from each office.

The reliability coefficient of the test was measured by testing five translators working at translation offices which were not involved in the study after an interval of 10 days. The test was conducted once again; the correlation coefficient of the test is (0.852) and it has a statistical significance at the level of (0.01). The total points of the test were (50) as the test was divided into (50) sentences; each sentence was scored out of one.

3.3 The remedial program of the study:

The proposed remedial program is based on the incorrect usage of translators when translating prepositions from English into Arabic. Its purpose is to enhance their skills to translate prepositions from English into Arabic correctly.

The program consists of six interviews via Skype, an hour per each interview. The first interview was a preliminary of the program application through preparing the translators, and explaining it as well as the teaching mechanism as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *The chronological order of the remedial program*

Session	Stage
1	Preliminary
2	Replacement of a preposition with a preposition
3	Replacement of a preposition with an adverb
4	Omission of preposition
5	Addition of preposition
6	Misplacement of preposition

The remedial program was reviewed by a number of academic referees specialized in teaching language, it was reviewed in terms of: adequacy, clarity, organization and distribution of

its sessions, its educational purposes, the duration of the program, and the sentences for the translators. The referees recommended some notes concerning the remedial exercises and types of some words and sentences, as a consequence their recommendations were considered and required modification was conducted.

3.5 Statistical analysis:

With the aim of answering the research questions abovementioned, the results of the tests performed by the 20 translators were analysed.

The statistical analysis used in this study was the (t-test), due to there being one independent variable consisting of the remedial program for improving the translation of prepositions by translators working at translation offices, and one dependent variable (The translation of prepositions).

This study is considered one of quasi-experimental studies of two groups including a pre-test and a post-test according to the following pattern: the experimental group which was exposed to the program (O ×O) and the control group which was not exposed to the program (O× O).

The means and standard deviations of the two groups' members in the tests were calculated. To ascertain the statistical significance of differences, the (t-test) was used.

4. Results and Discussion

The study aims at developing a linguistic remedial program to help translators working at translation offices to translate prepositions correctly when translating prepositions from English into Arabic, and it particularly attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Is there an effect of a proposed remedial program to improve the translation of prepositions from English into Arabic by translators working at translation offices?
2. Which of these themes (replacing a preposition with a preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, preposition omission, preposition addition, and preposition misplacement) of the remedial linguistic program will improve the proficiency of the translators in translating prepositions from English into Arabic?

4.1 Results of the first question:

To answer the abovementioned first question, the means and standard deviations obtained from the points of the translators in both the control and experimental groups who submitted the pre-test and the post-test were calculated. A statistical analysis of (t- test) was applied. The results of the first question are presented below in Table (2) and Table (3). Table (2) presents the means and standard deviations of the pre-test for both groups as well as the (t- test) results.

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Table 2. *Means and standard deviations for both groups and the (t- test) results*

Group	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	(t) Value	Degree of freedom	Significance Level
Control	10	11	3.4	0.652	38	0.518
Experimental	10	10.3	3.3			

The results of the (t-test) in Table (2) show that there are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).The significance level is (0.518), whereas the (t) value is (0.652). This is also supported by the apparent convergence between the means of the translators' performance in both experimental and control groups, as the mean of the experimental group in the pre-test is (10.3), whereas the mean of the control group in the pre-test is (11).

Table (3) represents the means and standard deviations of the post-test for both groups and the result of the (t- test).

Table 3. *Means and standard deviations of the post-test for both groups and the (t-test results*

Group	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	(t) Value	Degree of freedom	Significance Level
Control	10	11	3.4	13.58-	38	0.00
Experimental	10	24.6	2.9			

As indicated in Table (3), the results of the (t-test) show that there are statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). The significance level is (0.00) and the (t) value is (13.58), which has a statistical significant at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). This implies that the linguistic remedial program has a remarkable impact on improving the translation of prepositions by the translators of the experimental group. This was endorsed by the apparent differences between the means of translators' performance in both the experimental and control groups, which were in the favor of the experimental group, as the means of the pre-test of this group is (10.3), then it increases in the post-test to become (24.6). Conversely, the means of the pre-test and post-test for the control group are (11), as shown in the means of Table (2) and Table (3).

4.2. Results of the second question:
In order to answer the second question, the number of the correct translations in the pre-test and the post-test of the control and experimental groups according to the themes of the linguistic remedial program: replacing a preposition with a preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, preposition omission, preposition addition and preposition misplacement. Those means and standard deviations are presented in Table (4).

Table 4. *Number of correct answers in the pre-test and post-test of both groups according to the themes of the linguistic remedial program*

Themes of the remedial program	No. of correct answers in the pre-test/ control group	No. of correct answers in the pre-test/ experimental group	No. of correct answers in the post-test/ control group	No. of correct answers in the post-test/ experimental group
Replacing a preposition with a preposition	20	18	20	41
Replacing a preposition with an adverb	21	20	21	39
Preposition omission	31	29	31	46
Preposition addition	23	22	23	55
Preposition misplacement	15	14	15	65
Total	110	103	110	246

It is notable from Table (4) that the number of correct answers of the themes of the linguistic remedial program for the control group in the pre-test and the post-test is the same, which is (110). However, the number of correct answers of the experimental group pre-test is (103), and it increases to (246) in the post-test, this increase is attributed to the linguistic remedial program.

Additionally, the number of correct answers which increased in a remarkable way shows the positive impact of the linguistic remedial program themes. However, this impact varies in accordance with the themes of the program as the differences between the number of correct answers of the experimental group pre-test and the post-test indicate reveal. The linguistic remedial program is more efficient in the treatment of preposition misplacement errors since the experimental group correct answers increased by (51), followed by the preposition addition with (33) correct answers. Then replacing a preposition with an another preposition enhanced by (23) correct answers, after that replacing a preposition with an adverb came next by (19) correct answers, and finally preposition omission came last by (17) correct answers.

4.3 Discussion of the Results of Study Questions:
4.3.1 Discussion of first question results:It is perceptible that the results of the (t-test) do not denote any statistically significant differences at the level of the significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the

means for both the experimental and control groups in the pre-test. Whilst they reveal statistically significant differences at the level of the significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the means for both the experimental and control groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group members who translated the prepositions according to the linguistic remedial program. Such statistically significant differences were accounted for the enhancement of translators' performance in the post-test. This indicates that the linguistic remedial program was effectual in improving the ability of the experimental group to translate prepositions correctly, which implies that the purpose of the program has been achieved and the errors of preposition translation, for which the remedial program was designed, have been reduced.

4.3.2 Discussion of second question results:
In light of the abovementioned results, the number of control group correct answers in the pre-test and post-test showed that there was no improvement in the translators' performance compared to the experimental group which showed a noticeable improvement. Furthermore, the results showed the efficiency of the remedial program in the treatment of preposition translation errors concerning the included themes as follows: preposition misplacement, preposition addition, replacing a preposition with another preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, and finally preposition omission.

5. Conclusion
Based on the findings, the two questions of the study were answered. First, is there an effect of a proposed remedial program to improve the translation of prepositions from English into Arabic by translators working at translation offices? There is a positive effect of this program on improving their translation of prepositions from English into Arabic. It seemed that translators in both groups misused the Arabic prepositions before being exposed to the program. On the other hand, the experimental group translators could find adequate equivalents for such prepositions in the post-test after being exposed to the remedial program. Such a result intensified the clear differences between the means of translators' performance in both the experimental and control groups, which were in favor of the experimental group.

Second, which of these themes (replacing a preposition with a preposition, replacing a preposition with an adverb, preposition omission, preposition addition, and preposition misplacement) of the remedial linguistic program will improve the proficiency of the translators in translating prepositions from English into Arabic? In the light of the results, the program is more efficient in (preposition misplacement), then (preposition addition), followed by (replacing a preposition with another preposition), next (replacing a preposition with an adverb), and finally (preposition omission).

It can be concluded that the translators mistranslated the prepositions form English into Arabic before they were exposed to the remedial linguistic program. This can be attributed to the ignorance about the appropriate use of the prepositions, the lack of knowledge about the multiple usages of the prepositions, in addition to the inability to give the right equivalent (Almaloul, 2014; Al Yaari, 2013; Terdjat, 2012).

It is expected that the study will encourage researchers who are concerned with this field to conduct further relevant studies. In addition, it reveals the significance of translators to acquire abilities to use the prepositions correctly in Arabic.

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