



PREPOSITIONAL ERRORS AND THEIR REMEDIES: A STUDY OVER 50 TEACHERS TEACHING AT BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING LEVEL.

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ABSTRACT



Second Language Learning is altogether a different concept to that of First Language Acquisition. Practitioners of English as Second Language always find it difficult to write and converse in English. Their proficiency always comes in contrast either at linguistic level or socio-linguistic level. In formal education system where students are directly in touch with teachers learning from them, it is very vital that the language that the teachers use in the classroom should be error free. Students' communicative competence is heavily dependent upon the lingual competence of their teachers. Unfortunately, at Engineering institutes, English language is given least importance and is often neglected. Teacher's mastery over English language is found inadequate. This research paper brings to light results received of an experiment targeting the prepositional errors made by teachers teaching at Bachelor of Engineering and suggests remedies.

Keywords: *Prepositions, Writing skill, Remedies.*

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INTRODUCTION

The chief aim of any educational institute is to make the students achieve their pre-planned goals. In achieving so, the role of the teacher is very pivotal. Formal education system is run on two tyres: teachers and students. Students' communicative competence is heavily dependent upon the lingual competence of their teachers. Having been in constant and direct touch with teachers, the learners get direct or indirect influence. Hence, the language that teachers use in any academic institute should meet their standards orally and in academic writing.

In Gujarat, academic institutes which offer education through English as the medium of instruction, have majority of students using English as L2 who find it extremely difficult to cope up with. It has also been stated that teachers many a time find it challenging to practice academic language in the classroom. In order to come out of these difficulties, teachers have to master all the four skills of language. Majority of errors are found in writing skill. Writing, being the most difficult and complex skill demands thorough attention and dedication. However, students and teachers at Engineering Institutes do not give required attention to improving their writing skill. Most of the write ups are found with irrelevant use of prepositions and spellings. On the other hand any writing taking place at any academic institute should not only be error free but should also be making use of academic flavour. In layman's words academic writing can be defined as writing taking place at any academic institutes to inculcate all the standards of academic writing. "Elegant ideas deserve elegant expressions." (Sword 1)

Unfortunately, at engineering institutes, English language is given least importance and is neglected. One of the chief concerns for the present approach in every engineering institute is that teachers too, take language for granted and accepts every write up. Secondly, their own mastery over language is also questionable. Their linguistic competence is questionable. Their deficiency can be moderated and can be taken to level of excellence if appropriate feedback is provided to them over their mistakes. Thus, in the present research study the researchers have strived to seek the basic

prepositional errors committed by 50 teachers teaching at Babaria Institute of Technology, Varnama, Vadodara. Moreover, the paper will also discuss the reasons of committing errors and corrections.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Prepositional errors and their Corrections: A study over 50 teachers teaching at Bachelor of Engineering level.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Linguistic competence can only be achieved with mastery over all the four skills, Viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Among these four, it is the last skill which is most difficult and complicated. It desires to seek individual's attention. Writing as a skill is very vast to be studied. Hence, its various components are to be separated and mastered. The researchers have limited their study to preposition errors and their remedies.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the writing skill of selected samples.
- To study the prepositional errors made by samples of the study.
- To study the nature of prepositional errors made by samples of the study.
- To make corrections to the errors made by samples of the study.
- To bring to light common prepositional errors and provide suitable corrections.

ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

In any writing one is to indulge into two processes: (a) generating ideas and (b) drafting those ideas into the targeted language with accuracy and appropriateness. These processes seriously demand one's being active and dedicated. (Lyons and Heasley 1) "Writing considers cognitive and discourse aspects whereas grammar gets less attention." However, this does not mean that grammar is less important. Grammar is vital because it gives accuracy and appropriateness which lead to meaning. Hence, it is required. It is very apt to state that free writing is less important than the writing which is based on cognitive process and can lead to meaning addressing the topic clearly. Thus, writing is difficult task but it is important to achieve mastery over it.

Academic writing is serious and intends to offer specific message. It is audience oriented. In



speaking, intended meaning can be achieved by tone, way of speaking etc. which is not the same case in writing. It requires practice on regular bases. Teachers too if show willingness and keep on writing, sooner or later they will master writing skill which is important.

RESEARCH SETTING, SAMPLING AND PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

Stephan Krashen, a prominent linguist, has very rightly said that language learning takes place in the atmosphere of ease. Such atmosphere can be created by providing conducive environment. In order to gather data for the present research study the researcher selected 50 teachers who teach at Bachelor of Engineering College at Varnama, Vadodara. These teachers are dealing with various subjects like Mechanics of Solid, Calculus, Physics, Management, Computer Science, Structure, Building Planning and Town Planning etc. Not a single teacher

was considered for the present research study who teaches English language. A simple prepositional test was carried out at the institute itself and the data was gathered. Sampling for any research study is done through various strategies. However, for the present research study it was a random sampling.

DATA ANALYSIS

Any research study is to get evaluated at least by any of the two or by both the methods: viz. qualitative or quantitative methods. The present research study has incorporated both: qualitative and quantitative methods to study the errors.

In order to study the errors committed by the samples of the present study it is necessary to classify the content and its errors. The paper consisted questions based on two types of prepositional questions: Preposition of Time and Preposition of Direction or Position.

Preposition of Time, Position or Direction:	At	On	through	Across	During	After
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In order to achieve thorough authenticity and findings, the researchers have used Mean form the Measures of Central Tendency. It is a sum of values set, by the number of respondents. Among all the measures of central tendencies it is the first one i.e. Mean is in vogue in academics.

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Mean scores are achieved just to understand the percentage of respondents committing errors.

THE CALCULATIONS OF EACH PREPOSITIONAL BLANK AND ITS FINDINGS ARE AS UNDER:

1. Most of the time we wonder about our boss. Sometimes he runs in the office _____ office hours.

True answer for the blank should be 'during'. However, 29 respondents have answered it wrongly.

2. Sometimes he runs in the office _____ office hours.

True answer for the blank should be 'after'. However, 39 respondents have answered it wrongly. Apart from this answer there are many other answers which can also be true. However, as the paragraph was linked only 'after' gets fit as the correct answer.

3. When he gets angry he throws utensils _____ the office.

True answer for the blank should be 'across'. However, 46 respondents have answered it wrongly.

4. As gets exhausted he sits _____ the chair.

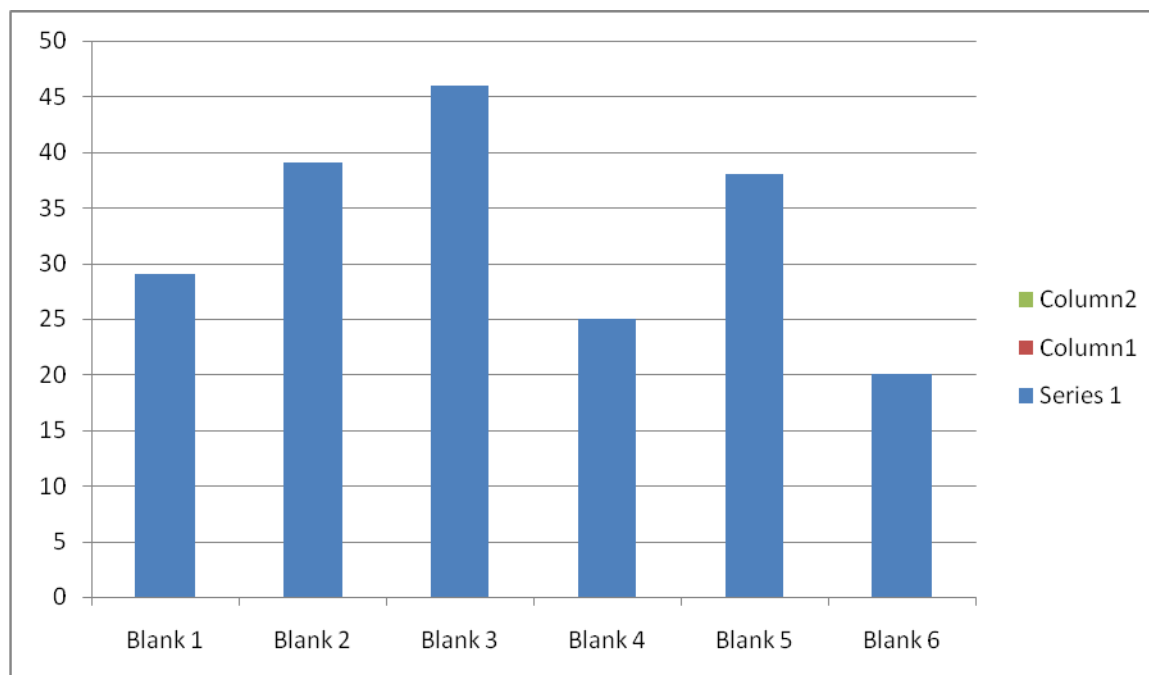
True answer for the blank should be 'on'. To the surprise 25 respondents have stated that he sits in the chair.

5. During meetings he looks _____ our minds.

True answer for the blank should be 'through'. However, 38 respondents have answered that he looks in our minds.

6. At times he stares _____ windows, fans, tables and chairs.

The correct answer to this question should be 'at'. However, multiple answers are possible here. 'Towards', is also a correct answer. The analysis reports that 20 respondents have answered something else than these two.

**ANALYSIS OF NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS COMMITTING ERRORS IN ALL THE SIX BLANKS IS AS UNDER:****REMEDIES**

“Prepositions may be ubiquitous in the English Language.” (Thatcher 1) Majority of errors are due to the direct influence of mother tongues into English. Most of them have translated the paragraph into their L1 and have tried to answer in L2. Due to this approach errors have happened. L2 users of English have always found it difficult to use their English as L1. However, slowly but on regular base practice can make them achieve the desired. Moreover, English as a language is rich and has endless prepositions. Due to this as well the respondents find it difficult to comprehend which one to use at which place. However, their deficiency can be moderated if they keep the context of the write up in mind while answering. This has been one of the chief constraints that the respondents took each blank as individual. Had they considered every blank as united paragraph they would have answered differently which may have led them towards correct answers.

1. Respondents if are made aware of the bifurcation of prepositions along with their characteristics, errors can be controlled.

2. Respondents are to understand that single preposition can be used for both: to show time and also to show place.
3. The errors committed in blank six are due to their inability to understand the prepositions ‘at and to’. ‘At’ as a preposition is to be used when nothing is in motion whereas ‘to’ as a preposition is to be used when things are in motion.
4. The errors committed in blank five are due to their inability to understand the difference of usages of the prepositions: through and by. Both the prepositions have their roots from old English where the word ‘through’ is actually derived from the word ‘thorough’ which represents something as a whole, as a sole or something which is accomplished whereas the word ‘by’ is again to be used to show something which is in motion. Such as what is the time by your watch?
5. L2 users of English are most of the time unaware of the rules of certain words. Had



they been aware of the rules, some of the errors can be controlled. Such as blank three where the actual answer should be 'across'. As all the respondents have not studied English in detail they are unaware of the fact that the word 'across' is always followed by a noun. Had they been aware of the fact the researchers believe that half of the errors in this blank could have been controlled. Thus, in order to rectify this error it is the sole responsibility of individuals to understand that English is not to be used merely as a medium of instruction in engineering colleges where faults can be entertained but it is to be used with utmost seriousness so that sensible communication take place.

6. Errors in blank first and second are purely because of the simple errors of considering each blank as an individual blank. Had they understood that each blank is contextualized errors could have been controlled.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the findings achieved states that teachers too have to be sensible and have to give proper attention towards English language. Not only teachers but all the L2 users of English should develop the habit of reading especially, intensive reading. Practice makes man perfect.

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