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Prepared by: BERREGUI Aissa

Title

Enhancing Spatial Prepositions (in, at, on) Use: A Discourse Perspective

The case of First Year 'Licence' Students of English at KMUO

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Before the jury:

Mr. BENCHEIKH Youcef	President	(KMU Ouargla)
Pr. CHAOUKI Noureddine	Supervisor	(KMU Ouargla)
Mr. BELARBI Noureddine	Examiner	(KMU Ouargla)

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Dedication

To my dear parents…

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Abstract

The main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the extent to which teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among EFL learners. A discourse perspective to grammar is adopted for this purpose. To test the proposed hypothesis, a quasi-experimental design is opted for in addition to an interview with five teachers of grammar. The experiment is composed of a pre-test, a training session, and a post-test. Both tests were administered to twenty (20) first-year students of English at UKMO. The analysis of the findings revealed remarkable improvement in using prepositions of place appropriately. This confirms the effeciency of teaching prepositions of place from a discourse perspective.

Key words: Prepositions of place, context, discourse perspective, grammar.

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EL: English Language

MT: Mother Tongue

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General introduction

1. Research background

English is an international language, which a great number of speakers, all over the world, wish to master (Quirk et al. 1985). Algerian learners make no exception in this regard. Thus, in Algeria, EL teaching and learning has taken a special place in the educational world. However, Algerian learners face a lot of difficulties in mastering some aspects of the English language, namely its grammar which is very complicated. Weaver (1996, p.5) contends that grammar is "*a set of prescriptions or rules for using language*". Teachers of English also face an immense challenge to find an appropriate way to teach grammar because students may know a lot about grammar rules, yet they are not able to use it in natural communication (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Using prepositions appropriately is not an easy task in so far as the English grammar is concerned (Chodorow et al, 2007). A preposition is a joining word used to indicate a relationship between a noun or an object and the rest of the sentence, such as relations of position, time or place (Quirk et al. 1985). Jacob (2005, p.243) states that "*The English language learner usually obtains the problem in prepositions.*" This is due to the fact that prepositions are numerous and polysemous (Lorncz & Gordon, 2012). Polysemy means that a word has multiple meanings (Koffi, 2010). Furthermore, English prepositions of place are hardly recognized in rapid oral speech (Hendricks, 2010). The meanings of prepositions depend on context. Learners cannot determine their meanings easily and become frustrated to use them in an appropriate way (Koffi, 2010).

Generally, prepositions of place are taught and studied in isolation (Azar, 1989). Teachers give general rules followed by some example. In such a case, teachers neglect an

essential aspect of teaching prepositions, such as when a preposition has various meanings which depend on the context it is embedded in (Azar, 1989). It has been noticed that though English has been taught at schools and universities, but students still misuse prepositions when speaking or writing. Put another way, they are not able to choose the right preposition according to context (Tahaineh, 2010).

Since prepositions in general and prepositions of place in particular form a big challenge for EFL learners, it is of high importance that teachers adopt effective instructional methods so as to enhance prepositions use among learners (Ibid, 2012). In this study, a discourse perspective to teaching grammar in context is suggested to enhance prepositions of place use by first year students of English at KMOU. Gee (2011, p.23) posits that "*Discourse analysis is the study of language in use. Better put, it is the study of language at use in the world*". The term context in a discourse perspective to grammar means all the linguistic and non-linguistic factors that affect the communicated message (Ibid, 2011).

2. Statement of the problem

Using prepositions appropriately is not an easy task for EFL learners. Since some EFL teachers do not emphasize the various meanings a preposition may take in different contexts, they give general overview about prepositions rules via isolated sentences (ibid, 2010). Consequently, EFL learners often misuse them when speaking and writing. First Year Bachelor Students of English at Ouargla University do not make any exception. They usually face the problem in using prepositions of place appropriately in different contexts. This, in fact, motivated the present study which is based on teaching prepositions of place in contexts and from a discourse perspective to give students an opportunity to use them appropriately.

3. Objectives of the study

This study aims at

1- Finding out the main errors EFL students have in using prepositions of place.

2- Assessing the way EFL teachers teach prepositions of place.

3- Exploring the main difficulties EFL teachers face in teaching prepositions of place.

4- Investigating the extent to which teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among EFL learners.

4. Research questions

The present study aims at answering four main questions

1- What errors do EFL students have in using prepositions of place?

2- Are prepositions of place taught in a way that enhances language use?

3- What are the main difficulties EFL teachers face in teaching prepositions of place?

4- Does teaching prepositions of place in context improve their use among EFL learners?

5. Reasearch hypotheses

The present study hypothesizes that

1- EFL students make errors when using prepositions of place.

2- EFL teachers do not teach prepositions of place in a way that enhances language use.

3- EFL teachers encounter difficulties in teaching prepositions of place.

4- EFL learners will use prepositions of place appropriately if these are taught in context.

6. Reseach method

This study is conducted on First Year 'Licence' students of English at Ouargla University. The quasi-experimental method was used so as to identify the problems faced by students in using prepositions of place and to investigate the extent to which teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among EFL learners. For this purpose, one group of students was pre-tested, given a training session, and then post-tested.

To collect data, an interview was done with teachers of grammar at the Department of English, KMOU, to elicit general and detailed information about the way prepositions of place are taught and to explore the main difficulties teachers face in teaching them.The pre-test and post-test were designed to measure the improvement the students made after receiving the training session. Finally, conclusions were drawn and suggestions made as well.

7. Limitations of the study

This study is limited to using the prepositions of place *at*, *in* and *on* with one group as a case study.Therefore, the study findings can not be generalized. The results we got may differ with other samples and under different circumstances.

8. Structure of the dissertation

The present work is composed of two parts. A theoretical part and a practical one. The theoretical part includes two chapters: the first one is devoted to prepositions of place. The second one is concerned with the importance of teaching grammar in context. The practical part includes the methodology adopted in the study, the analysis and the interpretation of the findings.

9. Definition of key terms

Discourse analysis: "*… is concerned with language in use in social context and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers*" (Stubbs, 1983, p.1).

Context: it stands for all the textual and the non-textual information that can help in the interpretation of an utterance and its function (Widdowson, 1990).

Context of situation: "*… is a theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located.*" (Thornbury, 1999, p.70).

Grammar: it is defined as, "*The description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language, if grammar rules are too carelessly violated, communication may suffer.*" (Harmer, 2001, p.12).

Preposition: it is defined as a part of speech that can link two or more things or objects. It can relate a noun before the preposition to a noun after it (Quirk et al. 1985). Prepositions can express a relationship of place, time or position.

Preposition of place: it is used to clarify or describe the position or place of something. It usually precedes a noun not a verb. The commonly used prepositions of place are: *in*, *at* and *on* (Ibid, 1985).

Chapter One: Prepositions of Place

Introduction

1.1. Definition of prepositions

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Introduction

This chapter is concerned with prepositions of place, starting with their definition and their main uses moving to the difficulties they pose for EFL learners (the problems in using prepositions along with the sources of errors). Further, this chapter presents some approaches and techniques to teaching prepositions.

1.1. Definition of prepositions

Many linguists and grammarians report that English is a prepositional language. That is to say, prepositions are very important and useful parts of speech in English (Li, 2007.Frank, 1972). Mathews (1997) notes that prepositions are words that generally precede a noun phrase and indicate a syntactic relationship. Put another way, a preposition expresses a relationship between two or more objects (Mark Foley & Diane Hall, 2003).

In this vein, Quirk, et al. (1985, p.657) state that "*a preposition expresses a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement, the other by another part of the sentence*". In other words, a preposition works as a connector and a linking device. Furthermore, prepositions are traditionally divided into three categories: prepositions of place, of direction and of time (lindstromberg, 1998). Additionally, for Andrew (20003), simple prepositions include one word and are commonly used like **at** and **in**, whereas complex prepositions consist of two words or more such as **instead of**. The mostly used prepositions of place are: **in**, **at** and **on** (Seely, 2007).

1.2. Definition of prepositions of place

For Leung (1990, cited in Hasan & Abdullah, 2009), "the *function of spatial prepositions is to locate spatially o*ne *object with reference to another object*" (p.609). For instance, my friend lives **in** Paris, there is a spatial relationship between "my friend" and "Paris" through the use of the preposition **in**. A preposition of place locates a specific place or shows the place or positions of a certain noun.

1.3. The main prepositions of place

According to Hewings (1999, p. 208), we use **at** to talk about a place we think of as a point rather than an area, and about an event where there is a group of people.

- I arrived **at** *New Street Station* at 7.30.

- We were waiting **at** *the far end of the room.*

- There were very few people **at** *Joan' party.*

We use **on** to talk about a position touching a flat surface, or something we think of as a line such as a road or river.

- Is that a spider **on** *the ceiling*?

- She owns a house **on** the *Swam River.*

We use **in** to talk about a position within a larger area, or something within a larger space.

- There has been another big forest fire **in** *California.*

- She looked again **in** *her bag* and, to her relief, there were her keys.

1.4. Potential difficulties with prepositions of place

Celce Murcia and Larsen Freeman (2015) posit that prepositions are troublesome for an EFL learner and are among the most difficult items to master even for EFL teachers themselves. The difficulty is due to many reasons. First, English prepositions are short words that are hardly recognized in rapid speech because they are rarely stressed (Hendricks, 2010). Second, they are given a small space in English grammar books (Lindstromberg, 1996). Third, prepositions are numerous and polysemous.Therefore, even native speakers of English find them challenging because they have different meanings in different contexts (Zughoul, 1979). Fourth, Kreidler (1966) contends that prepositions have abstract and chaotic functions in addition to their idiomatic usage. Thus, they remain a stumbling block for EFL learners and teachers as well. Fifth, prepositions differ from one language to the other. Further, not all prepositions in other languages have exact equivalents in English (Scott & Trucker, 1974).

Last, but not least, English prepositions play complex multi-roles and choosing one preposition is limited by its object (Levin, 1993).

The table below displays how **"at", "in"** and "**on**" are used in some cases.

• My dream is to play **at** Wembley Stadium. • Didn't I see you **in**/**at** the pool yesterday	-seen as a point -either as within the pool itself, or a a building which is a point in town
• He lives **in** Perth. • We stopped **in**/**at** Milan and Pisa in our way to Rome.	-within the city -we use **at** when we see the cities as points on a journey, and **in** when we see them as enclosed areas where we stayed for sometime
• They were a great success **in**/**at** Edinburgh.	-we can use **at** when we use a place name instead of an institution –here, the Edinburgh Festival; **in** suggests the city
• He's **in** Los Angeles on business. • He's **at** Manchester studying linguistics.	-staying or living there - a student at Manchester University
• She works **at** Marks and Spencer. • She works **in** a shoe shop.	-the name of a particular organisation - the kind of place
• I stopped **at** the shop on the way home. • I was **in** the bank when in came Sue. (Notice we say: "T works **on** a farm", but "T works **in** a factory".)	-we use **at** to talk about buildings such as the dentist's, the supermarket, etc. -we use **in** to emphasise that we mean *inside* the building
• I read the paper **in** the taxi on the way. • I'll probably go **on** the bus.	-for travel using taxis or cars -for travel using bus, but we use **in** if we want to emphasise *inside* the bus,etc.

Table 1: Use of *at*, *in* and *on* (Hewings, 1999, p.208).

1.5. Problems and errors in using prepositions of place

According to Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005), 29, 23% of the most frequent grammatical errors do occur with prepositions. Additionally, Chodrow, Treteault and Han

(2007, p.05) state that "*prepositions account for a substantial proportion of all grammatical errors by EFL learners*". For Celce Murcia (2001), EFL learners have three main types of errors with prepositions:

a- **Errors of omission:** when a necessary preposition is not used in an obligatory context like *I get up 07:30.*

b- **Errors of commission:** when an extra preposition is added like *I saw at your father.*

c- **Misuse of prepositions:** the use of the wrong preposition which affects the intended meaning like *I live at France.*

In the same vein, Sinclair (1991) argues that using the wrong preposition is the commonly noticed error. Moreover, Fitikides (2002) contends that the problem with prepositions is three fold: Form, meaning and use. Thus, EFL learners confuse their meaning and misuse of prepositions.

1.6. Sources of errors in using prepositions of place

It is a challenging task to determine the exact source of errors due to their vague and complex nature. Koruti and Djelia (2013) consider that errors are made because of the following reasons:

a- **Negative transfer:** errors occur when a learner transforms his mother tongue rules to the target language. This transfer can be negative and is called interlanguage interference because there is no one to one equivalence between MT and English prepositions (Brown, 1987. AL-Bayatti, 2013).

b- **Intralingual transfer:** errors occur because the target language is learned partially. Brown (1987) mentions overgeneralization errors which involve the incorrect application of the target language rules in different contexts. Also, ignorance of rule restriction which means "*applying rules to contexts which they do not apply*" (Richards & Sampson, 1974).

c- Context of learning: These errors are due to the fact that some teachers see that simple prepositions are easy to master. So, they give them little attention and present them poorly or do not mention them at all (Brown, 1987).

1.7. Approaches to teaching prepositions

Various teaching approaches have been proposed to remedy the deficiency in preposition use like the traditional approach, the collocation approach, the prototype approach and the grammar awareness-raising approach.

1.7.1. The traditional approach

This approach depends on explicit grammar presentation and instruction. Students learn prepositions separately (Lam, 2009). In this approach, it is assumed that learners cannot predict or expect prepositions. Students have to learn them function by function (Lam, 2009). However, using this traditional approach results in students with little confidence in their ability to use prepositions appropriately and less retention rates.

Moreover, Lam (2009, P.03) states that " *Trying to remember a list of individual, unrelated uses is hardly conductive to increasing learners 'understanding of how the prepositions are actually used and why the same preposition can express a wide range of meanings*". Hence, it is of paramount importance that English language teachers should look for more explanatory methods to teach prepositions effectively.

1.7.2. The collocation approach

Unlike the traditional approach, under the collocation approach, prepositions are not taught separately, but in "chunks", in words that frequently occur together. Researchers used the terms chunks, formulaic expressions, word co-occurrence and collocation interchangeably.

1.7.3. The prototype approach

This approach claims that though prepositions are polysemous, just one meaning is more dominant or prototypical. Concerning prepositions, the spatial meaning is thought to be the prototype. By way of illustration, the preposition **on** has various meanings, but the dominant definition is "*contact of an object with a line or surface.*" (Lindstromberg, 2001).

The prototype theory claims that the multiple meanings a preposition expresses can be explained by reference to the prototypical meaning. Also, non-prototypical meanings have some kind of relationship with the prototype, sometimes through metaphorical extension (Lindstromberg, 1996).

1.7.4. The grammar awareness-raising approach

Hendricks (2010) confirms that prepositions use can be improved by applying a process of consciousness-raising. In this approach, it is believed that noticing a grammatical aspect is a prerequisite for learning it and the focus of attention is on correct grammatical forms by highlighting them is some way (Ellis, 1997). Moreover, "*consciousness raising instructions require alerting learners to a specific grammatical aspect*" (ibid, 2009, p.244). One way to make students notice prepositions is to collect some sentences including prepositional errors. Then, the teacher divides them among various groups and asks each group to correct their sentences. After they finish correction, the teacher asks the whole class to discuss the sentences and provides feedback about prepositions use, mainly the correct forms (Hendricks, 2010).

1.8. Techniques in teaching prepositions of place

For Andrew (2003, p.50), when teaching prepositions, activities should

  a- Use simple English structure

  b- Use pictures and landmarks

  c- Use body language and gestures

Further, prepositions should not be taught as lexical combinations, but in contexts and situations. In this regard, Koruti and Delija (2013) introduce some helpful activities that can be used by EFL teachers

1- They can use visual aids to explain the usages of a particular preposition as flashcards.

2- They can bring realia to the class like real objects and ask questions to involve students in the process.

3- They can provide students with charts and drawings and especially when teaching prepositions of place.

4- They should teach prepositions in meaningful contexts like time and place.

5- They can assign activities as homework

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to shed light on the main prepositions of place *at, in* and *on*. It tried to define prepositions and show their importance in English grammar. Moreover, it showed the difficulties and problems that a preposition poses for EFL learners and teachers alike. Additionally, we tried to determine sources of errors in using prepositions and introduced some helpful techniques in teaching them. Some approaches to teaching prepositions were reviewed as well. The following chapter will investigate the usefulness of teaching grammar in context.

Chapter Two: Teaching Grammar in Context

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to teaching grammar in context, begining with definition of discourse ananlysis and the concept of context. Then, casting light on discourse-based approach to grammar, how it is applied, its advantages and reasons for teaching grammar in context. Finally, this chapter suggests some ways of approaching grammar exercices in context.

2.1. Definition of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is the study of language in use. It examines the relation between language and its context of use (McCarthy, 1991). In other words, the study of language organization above and beyond the sentence boundaries is the enterprise of discourse analysts (Stubbs, 1983). Further, Brown and Yule (1983, p.1) add that discourse analysis is interested in the context and its influence on language use.

> The analysis of discourse, is necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such,
>
> it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the
>
> purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.
>
> (Brown and Yule, 1983, p.1)

2.2. The concept of context in discourse analysis

According to Baghat (2002), understanding the real meanings of words or sentences does not enable a reader or a listener to grasp the meaning of language in use and interpret it in an appropriate way unless he/she relates it to its context. The meaning of words and sentences is decided by the surrounding conditions and text environment. Widdowson (1973) posits that context is the environment within which language is used. It can be linguistic or exta-

linguistic. First, through the linguistic context, the analyst examines the linguistic items surrounding the utterance under study to understand the meaning, depending on the intra-textual relationships that link them. It is generally referred to as "co-text". Carter (1993) describes co-text and show hows linguistic items hang together within it:

> The internal environment of the text is also an established context, although not
>
> such obvious one.   All textual features whether at   word, clause, or   between
>
> sentence level are part of an environment: any word relates to those words which
>
> surrounds it both in the immediate vicinity and in other parts of the text. Even
>
> whole texts are governed by their textual environment. (Carter, 1993, p.14).

Second, the context of situation refers to the broader social situation in which language is used. The analyst goes beyond the linguistic boundaries to interpret a given discourse (Nunan, 1993). Robins (1979) explains:

> By setting up the context of situation, the observer or analyst undertakes to state
>
> the relationship of utterances to the situation or environment in which they are
>
> said or could be said. In a context of situation the utterance or the successive
>
> sentences in it are brought into multiple relations with the relevant components
>
> of the environment. (p.25)

The external environment is analyzed and categorized by many linguists, a good description is found in Nunan (1993). He mentions:

a- The nature of communicative event like lecture, conversation, or a joke.

b- The topic.

c- The event purpose.

d- The setting in terms of location, time and physical aspects.

e- The relation between participants.

f- The schematic knowledge and assumptions.

2.3. A discourse-oriented approach to grammar

A discourse-oriented approach to grammar requires more focus on context broader than the sentence and emphasizes the function and use of grammatical forms in context (Celce-Murcia, 2002). In this respect, Hughes and McCarthy (1998) stress the point that *"discourse grammars are more process-oriented and are interested in any individual interactional factor that may influence moment-by-moment choices in context."* (p.264). Therefore, grammar is best presented through context-embedded discourse rather than isolated sentences (Ibid, 2002).

2.4. How to teach grammar through discourse

Unlike traditional grammar, teaching grammar in context employs examples taken from real contexts. Grammar in use depends on authentic materials in which speakers and writers use language for communication in varied contexts. So, grammar should be taught within writing or speaking tasks. In this regard, Halliday (1985) supports tasks that show the relation between grammatical points and the contexts in which they occur outside the classroom. Celce-Murcia (1990) sets some steps to teach grammar through discourse:

1- Choose appropriate grammatical items in meaningful context for your learners.

2- Grammatical functions should be presented in discourse not in isolated sentences.

3- Make your students negotiate the relationship between form, meaning and use.

4- Encourage your students to practise grammar in their own productions.

5- Give feedback and discuss students' productions.

According to Celce-Murcia (1990), reading comprehension is a good technique that makes students aware of the relationship between form and meaning. Additionally, an effective way to teach grammar is through dialogues be they short or long. "*The use of dialogues in grammar teaching is useful because the use of dialogues is used in the real word: people use language primarily to talk to each other*". (Thornbury, 1999, p.76). Also, pictures can serve as a visible situational context (Ibid, 1999).

2.5. Advantages of teaching grammar in context

Recently, it has been shown that a discourse-based approach helps in improving grammar instructions as it has many advantages. Riddell (2003, p.46) contends that the advantage of this approach is that *"students are exposed to the target language in an authentic or near authentic setting, they see or hear the target language before having to focus on it"*. In the same vein, McCarthy and Carter (1994), Celce-Murcia (1997) state that a contextualized grammar enables students to understand the grammatical functions deeply and students will be aware of the various grammatical choices within a given context. Further, learning the working of grammatical systems and how they are used in authentic discourse is beneficial for students. Also, learning grammar through discourse makes students aware of the appropriate use of language in addition to learning the correct usage of the grammatical rules. Moreover, the use of some grammatical aspects like prepositions can only be explained in context and a discourse-based approach.

Furthermore, learners can acquire the context-based uses of language quickly if they receive effective learning instructions and the suitable learning environment (Cummins, 1979).

2.6. Reasons for teaching grammar in context

One of the bad outcomes of traditional grammar lies in students' failure in applying the rules appropriately in communication. They are not able to use the grammar rules in speech and writing (Long & Doughty, 2009). In this connection, Nunan (1998) puts it that if grammar is not explored in context, learners will find difficulties to see the different functions one language form can perform. In reality, *"even though, learners know a rule, their performance may be inaccurate, or different or both*." (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p.07).

According to Harmer (1991), students should be made aware of how native speakers use language and this could be done through presenting language in context. In a similar line, Thornbury (1999) argues that language is context-sensitive. In other words, when the context lacks, the intended meaning of isolated words will not be recovered easily. Another argument is put by Swain and Lapkin (1989, p.153), *"We have learned that grammar should not be taught in isolation from content, neither should content be taught without regard to the language involved*". So, the idea that sentences can be analysed regardless of the context is at stake (Brown & Yule, 1983).

2.7. Ways of approaching grammar exercises in context

According to Celce-Murcia (2002), language learning and teaching textbooks are based on texts of different sizes to give more understanding and practice of language use within useful interactive contexts. This in turn has changed the nature of activities undertaken in language teaching and shifted the teachers' attention towards the way grammar exercices are approached.

Whitesmoke (2011) introduces some helpful techniques to approach grammar exercices in context. First, vary the type of grammar exercices depending on textbooks and

websites in order to get the maximum grammar skills. Second, read the instructions carefully and ensure which language structure is to be used in a particular exercice within its context. Third, in gap-filling exercices, read complete sentences till the end, discover the context and then address the studied grammatical point. Fourth, in completing long paragraphs with missing words, read five lines to understand the context.This will help you with grammar completions. Fifth, try to contextualize grammar exercices in full texts which include the traget language structure. Sixth, practise newly learned structures in speech and writing. Seventh, grammar exercices must be associated with vocabulary to be enjoyable. Eighteth, introduce grammar gradually from simple to more difficult and ensure you review and recycle previously learned grammar structures in related context. Nineth, Create a table for checking and reviewing of grammar exercices. Last, but not least, emphasize and identify grammar structures in reading tasks to allow learners to see why a paticular structure is more appropriate in a given context.

Conclusion

This chapter tried to show the importance of teaching grammar in context. It showed the relevance of context to analyse discourse. Further, it explained the discourse approach to grammar and its benefits. Additionally, some arguments for the uselfulness of this approach in improving language use were presented. Also, some ways to approaching grammar exercices in context were introduced. Lastly, it was found that teaching grammar in context is useful and grammatical conventions will be used more effectively if they are learned in context.

Section Two: The practical part

Chapter Three: Data Collection and Analysis

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Conclusion

Introduction

This practical part is concerned with the analysis and the interpretation of the findings obtained through the means of research for the sake of confirming or refuting the suggested hypothes: EFL learners will b use prepositions of place appropriately if these are taught in context.

3.1. The sample

The study was conducted at the Department of English, UKMO, during the academic year 2017/2018. A group of twenty (20) students of first-year 'licence' and five (5) teachers of grammar at the same Department took part in this study. The students were selected at random from both genders: males and females.

3.2. The method

To conduct this study, a quasi-experimental method was opted for since it allowed us to observe the changes and the difference in the students' performance in using prepositions of place when taught from a discourse perspective. An experiment was conducted on first- year students of English through a pre-test, a training session, and a post-test. In addition, an interview was designed to collect data.

3.3. Instruments of research

The present study was mainly based on two instruments: An experiment and an interview. The experiment consisted of two tests and a training session which were assigned to twenty (20) students, followed by the comparison of the two tests. We used the interview to gather data.

An experiment and an interview were opted for to make the two means of research complement each other and to increase the possibility of obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, enhancing the validity of this research.

3.4. The teachers' interview

The interview was conducted with five teachers of grammar at the Department of English, UKMO. The teachers were asked to answer 20 open-ended questions pertaining to the topic under study in order to elicit specific and detailed information. Then, the collected data from the interview were analyzed and findings discussed. The interview supplied an in-depth understanding.

3.4.1. Analysis of the interview

Q1: Do you find difficulties in teaching grammar?

All the interviewed teachers confessed that they face difficulties in teaching grammar like the large number of students and the insufficient time allotted to grammar sessions.

Q2: How do you teach grammar?

Generally, teachers present grammar lessons differently. The methods followed by the teachers are: The traditional method (presentation, practice, and produce), communicative language teaching, competency-based approach and the grammar translation method.

Q3: Do you think that grammar should be taught on its own, integrated or both? Why?

The responses from the teachers are divided into two views. Two teachers are for integrating grammar with other skills like writing, reading or listening. However, three teachers believe that grammar should be taught separately because some grammar rules require emphasis and concentration.

Q4: Can you give an example of how to integrate grammar with other skills?

According to the teachers, grammar can be integrated with listening through gap-filling tasks or it can be explored during reading expression activities. One teacher supports integrating grammar in oral presentation, mainly dialogues and role plays. Another teacher said that grammar is better interated with written expression module.

Q5: Do you think that teaching grammar in isolation enhances language use in natural communication?

On the whole, teachers agreed that teaching grammar in isolation can only improve accuracy and does not enable learners to use language appropriately in real life situations.

Q6: Do you believe that memorization is a good technique to master the rules of grammar?

Teachers showed two standpoints. Two of them see that memorization is part of the learning process and through practice grammar rules can be learned. The other three teachers are against this idea.

Q7: Do your students prefer explicit presentation of the grammar points?

The same response was given by all the teachers. They confirmed that their students prefer explicit presentation of the grammar points.

Q8: Do you focus on form, meaning or both?

All the participants share the same idea that the emphasis should be on both form and meaning at the same time.

Q9: Do you contextualize the grammar points before introducing them?

Four teachers revealed that most of the time they do not contextualize the grammar items. Another teacher added that contextualization is not necessary.

Q10: Do you use authentic materials in teaching grammar?

Most of the teachers said that they do not use authentic materials. Only one teacher prefers to use the data show presentations.

Q11: Do you give importance to prepositions when teaching grammar?

On the whole, teachers answered that they intervene to correct errors of prepositions. Just one teacher said that prepositions are not important.

Q12: Do you think that prepositions of place should be taught in whole texts or through isolated sentences?

Two teachers see that prepositions of place should be taught in whole texts, whereas the other teachers argue for teaching them in isolated sentences with the help of some pictures.

Q13: Which approach do you adopt in teaching prepositions of place?

The responses to this question are diverse. Two teachers adopt the traditional approach to teach prepositions. The other two teachers teach prepositions in collocations. One teacher uses task-based activities.

Q14: Do you think that prepositions of place are difficult for EFL learners?

All the teachers asserted that prepositions of place are difficult for EFL learners and even for them as EFL teachers because prepositions are numerous, polysemous and the MT

prepositional system is different from that of English.

Q15: What are the main difficulties you face in teaching prepositions of place?

The shared point among the teachers is that the difficulty is due to the complexities attendant upon prepositions of place and their polysemous nature.

Q17: Do your students misuse prepositions of place?

All the answers were positive with "yes". One teacher adds that the most common error is using *at* instead of *in* or vice versa.

Q18: What type of errors do they make in using prepositions of place?

According to the teachers, errors of selection are the most common when using prepositions of place. In other words, students use *at* instead of *on* or they use *in* instead of *at*.

Q19: In your opinion, what are the most probable sources of such errors?

Generally, teachers believe that the source of students' errors in using prepositions of place is the negative transfer from MTor the complexity of English.

Q20: What types of activities do you think are useful in teaching prepositions of place?

The teachers suggested the following activities, but they argued that it is impossible to do them in their classes because these activities are time consuming and require small number of students.

1- Matching prepositions of place with the correct picture.
2- Using some games including prepositions of place.
3- Asking students to role play prepositions of place in dialogues and situations.
4- Asking students to use prepositions of place in descriptive texts.

3.4.2. Findings and discussion

The main aim of discussing the teachers' responses to the interview is to obtain reliable data to back up our interpretation. Teachers face many difficulties in teaching grammar. This demotivates them to teach grammar in the best way possible. In addition, teachers adopt different methods to present the grammar lessons. This indicates that they teach as they were taught during their studies.

Results also show that students like explicit grammar rules. Therefore, their teachers prefer to teach grammar on its own although they believe that isolated grammar presentations can enhance accuracy at the expense of fluency. In fact, teachers are aware of how to integrate grammar within other skills like writing and reading, but they do not contextualize it and rarely bring authentic materials to their classes due to time limits and classrooms size. The results also reveal that though teachers focus on form and meaning when teaching grammar, they see that memorization is of great help to grasp the rules.

In response to questions 13 and 14, the teachers present prepositions through isolated sentences adopting the traditional and collocation methods which are based on teaching prepositions via examples or in chunks like phrasal verbs. These methods do not ensure the appropriate use of prepositions of place outside the classroom because prepositions are polysemous, large in number and there are not clear rules governing their use as stated in answers to questions 15 and 16.

As far as the use of prepositions of place is concerned, teachers confirmed that their students misuse them. That is to say, errors of selection, addition and omission are very common among students when using prepositions of place. The sources of these errors are the negative transfer from the MT and the complexity of English.

Finally, the teachers agreed that teaching prepositions of place in situations or in contexts is very useful and suggested some activities like teaching prepositions through pictures, dialogues, games, role plays or in descriptive texts.

3.5. The experiment

The experiment was conducted through three steps a pre-test, a training session, and a post-test.

3.5.1. Description of the experiment

The experiment was carried out by means of a training session and two tests. Twenty (20) first- year LMD students of English at UKMO were given a pre-test. Its aim was to test the students' level in using prepositions of place during the second semester. In the pre-test, students were asked to fill in the gaps using the prepositions of place: *in, at, on*. They were limited by time, but the participants finished the task on time.

After analyzing and interpreting the pre-test results, a lesson plan was designed on the different uses of prepositions of place focusing on the main ones: *in, at* and *on* in different contexts. Then, the lecture was introduced and explained to the students. The prepared lesson was based on the proposed approach (discourse analysis approach). The main aim of such an approach is to make students aware of the contextual clues inside the text or outside it and their importance in understanding and negotiating the various meanings a preposition can express in different contexts. Hence, improving its use among students.

The lecture took one hour. Students were asked about their knowledge of prepositions of place to activate their background knowledge. Then, they had to listen to a dialogue and pick up the different prepositions of place they hear to see prepositions in contexts longer than that of the sentence level.

After that, students were given a dialogue in handouts with missing prepositions to complete; the prepositions of place: *in, at, on* were provided by the teacher. Upon completion of this task, students were asked to play the dialogue to involve them to do something with the language.

Next, the teacher provided them with some pictures and motivated them ask and answer about the location of the items in the pictures. They performed this task using contextual clues provided through the pictures.

Finally, some rules about the use of prepositions of place were deduced and students were asked to locate some items in the classroom or describe the locations of utensils in their kitchens so as to use the grammar points learnt (using prepositions of place: *in, at* and *on*).

After the lecture, the same students were given the post-test which was the same as the pre-test in order to measure the development made by students in using prepositions of place. The time was restricted, but most of the students respected the time allotted.

3.5.2. Procedures

The analysis of the scores in this study went through three stages: gathering, identifying and describing data. In the identification stage, the analysis was done on the basis of interpreting and correcting both tests. Whilst in the description stage, the comparison between the students' scores in both tests assisted in the analysis of data.

After implementing the lesson plan in the classroom and applying data based on a discourse approach to grammar which entails teaching prepositions in context and through situations, it was observed that the students' performances were different when comparing the two tests.

3.5.3. The analysis of the pre-test results

Participants	Appropriate use of prepositions	Inappropriate use of prepositions %
1	3	30%
2	4	40%
3	3	30%
4	3	30%
5	4	40%
6	4	40%
7	5	50%
8	5	50%
9	3	30%
10	4	40%
11	4	40%
12	3	30%
13	6	60%
14	5	50%
15	4	40%
16	6	60%
17	5	50%
18	3	30%
19	3	30%
20	3	30%
Mean	**4,5**	**45%**

Table 2: Scores of the Pre-test

From the results on table (2) above, we find that the average number of appropritely used prepositions of place is 4, 5 out of 10. This represents a percentage of 45%. We also notice that participants answers range from three (3) correct answers of using prepositions of place to six (6) correct ones. In terms of percentage, they are between 30% and 60%

Also, the percentages of the pre-test results can be divided into four sets. The first set (six students) achieved 40% of correctly used prepositions of place. The second one (four students) got 50%. The third set (two students) had 60%. Finally, the largest group (eight students) scored 30%.

3.5.4. Interpretation

The results gained from the pre-test indicate that students misuse prepositions of place in different contexts. As shown on table (2) above, the largest group of participants scored 30 %. In other words, students could use correctly three (3) prepositions of place out of ten (10). This is because one preposition has many functions in different contexts and this fact is not emphasized by their teacher of grammar. They were taught through traditional methods which present prepositions of place in isolated sentences out of context. Also the influence of the mother tongue was remarkable. Students translate from their mother tongue (Arabic) and transfer to the target language (English).

3.5.5. The analysis of the post-test results

Participants	Appropriate use of prepositions	Inapproprite use of prepositions %
1	8	80%
2	8	80%
3	9	90%
4	7	70%
5	8	80%
6	9	90%
7	9	90%
8	10	100%
9	10	100%
10	8	80%
11	7	70%
12	7	70%
13	9	90%
14	10	100%
15	10	100%
16	9	90%
17	10	100%
18	9	90%
19	9	90%
20	8	80%
Mean	**8,7**	**78%**

Table 3: Scores of the Post-test

In the post-test, a remarkable change in participant's scores was noticed globally and individually. Table (3) above shows that the mean of correct answers reached 8, 7 which represents a percentage of 87%. Further, we observe that the participants' answers vary from seven (7) correct answers to ten (10) correct ones. Put another way, they are between 70% and 100%.

Also, we can divide the participants into four groups. The first (seven participants) scored 90%. The second group (five participants) got 80%. Whilst the third one (three participants) achieved 70%. Finally, the fourth group (five participants) scored 100%.

3.5.6. Interpretation

After the students were taught prepositions of place in context, a post-test was assigned. Table (3) shows students' scores in the post-test. We notice that the scores changed greatly where most of the students scored between 90% and 100% of correct answers. That is to say, students managed to use correctly nine (9) to ten (10) prepositions of place out of 10. This is due in part to the positive effects of the training session where students were motivated and enjoyed learning prepositions of place in contexts and situations since they were involved and were active participants. Also, they could see and use the prepositions of place in various contexts which helped them to approach the post-test more effeciently.

3.5.7. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test

Table (4) below shows the difference in scores and mean between the results of the two tests. Students in the post-test got a higher mean than in the pre-test. The mean in the pre-test is 4, 5, whereas in the post-test it is 8, 7. In other words, a remarkable improvement at varying degrees was noticed. We can deduce that students made a progress compared with their performance before implementing the proposed approach. They learnt how to appropriately

use prepositions of place in different contexts. This indicates that the training session was beneficial and efficient in that it helped the participants in using the prepositions of place in an appropriate way and be aware of the context and its role in approaching any grammar activity or any use of language. Table (4) below shows the pre-test and the post-test means:

	Score	Mean
Pre-test	90	4,5
Post-test	174	8,7

Table 4: Scores of the Pre-test and Post-test

Table (5) below shows the percentages of the mostly misused and well used prepositions of place (at, in, on) in the pre-test and the post-test .

Prepositions of place	Pre-test results		Post-test results	
	Well used	**Misused**	**Well used**	**Misued**
At	25%	75%	77,33%	22,66%
On	58,33%	41,66%	85%	15%
In	43,05%	56,94%	88,88%	11,11%

Table 5: Percentages of the misused and well used prepositions of place in the pre-test and the post-test

From the results on table (5) above, we notice that the percentages of the mostly misused prepositions of place in the pre-test are: *at* (75%) followed by *in* (56, 94%), then *on* (41, 66%). However, we notice an improvement in the post-test results due to the positive effects of the training session.

In the post-test, the percentages of the misused prepositions pf place are: *at* (22, 66%) followed by *on* (15%), then *in* (11, 11%).

Conclusion

This practical part was carried out to confirm the hypothesis that EFL learners will use prepositions of place appropriately if these are taught in context. In order to prove such a hypothesis, an interview, a pre-test and a post-test were administered to the sample under study. The findings of the study were based on the analysis of the teachers' responses to the interview questions and the scores of the two tests. Finally, the results proved that teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among first year LMD students of English at UKMO. So, the hypothesis put forward is confirmed.

General conclusion

In this present study, we aimed to investigate the extent to which teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among EFL learners. For this purpose, we started by doing a literature review followed by an experimental work and an interview in the application section. The first part is concerned with collecting some theoretical data about the topic under study. In this part, two main chapters were included. In the first chapter, we tried to cast light on prepositions of place, starting with their definition and their main uses, moving to the difficulties they pose for EFL learners and teachers alike. Further, some errors in using prepositions of place and their sources were discussed. Also, some approaches and techniques to teaching prepositions of place were introduced at the end of this chapter. The second chapter is devoted to teaching grammar in context, beginning with definition of discourse analysis and the concept of context. Then, sheding light on a discourse – based approach to grammar, how it is applied, its advantages, and reasons for teaching grammar in context. Finally, this chapter suggests some ways of approaching a grammar activity in context.

The second part of the study deals with gathering some practical data about the application of this theoretical model to our chosen sample of first- year students of English at UKMO and obtaining valuable comments from their teachers concerning the suggested approach. This practical part is concerned with the analysis and the interpretation of the findings obtained through the means of research for the sake of confirming or refuting the proposed hypothesis. The results obtained through the experiment confirmed to a great extent the hypothesis which stated that EFL learners will be able to use prepositions of place appropriately if these are taught in context. Put another way, after teaching prepositions of place through a discourse-based approach to grammar that takes into consideration the broader context of use, most of the participants succeeded to use them appropriately within

different situations and showed positive attitudes. This was apparent when comparing between the pre-test and the post-test scores where the average rate of development was nearly 40%. This level of enhancement differs from one student to another because of the mixed ability sample.

To sum up, we believe that this study casts light on one important approach to teaching grammar in context. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to adopt this approach in ELT and give it due attention since it is proved to be useful in raising the EFL learners' awereness of the appropriate language use and make them rely on context when producing any piece of discourse or negotiating meanings.

Summary of the major findings

The results of the interview showed that EFL teachers encounter difficulties in teaching prepositions because they are numerous, polysemous and there are not clear rules governing their use. Moreover, EFL teachers present prepositions through examples out of context and ask their students for memorization of rules. This does not enhance language use outside the classroom.

The results of the experiment showed that students misuse prepositions of place. The mostly misused prepositions of place are: *at* followed by *in*, then *on*. However, after teaching them from a discourse perspective that takes into account the broader context of use, most of the participants were able to use the prepositions of place appropriately within different situations and gave positive attitudes since the average rate of development was nearly 40%.

Pedagogical implications

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are made.

First, teachers should identify their students' problems in using prepositions and look for solutions to tackle them.

Second, prepositions should not be taught as lexical combinations, but in meaningful contexts and situations like time and place.

Third, teachers should teach prepositions through authentic situations so as to allow their students to see language in use and thus be competent to communicate effectively.

Fourth, the use of audiovisuals can assist learners to better understand the frequently confused prepositions.

Finally, grammar should be incorporated into the four language skills and should be taught in context and in a meaningful way.

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Appendices

Teachers' Interview

Q1: Do you find difficulties in teaching grammar?

Q2: How do you teach grammar?

Q3: Do you think that grammar should be taught on its own, integrated or both? Why?

Q4: Can you give an example of how to integrate grammar with other skills?

Q5: Do you think that teaching grammar in isolation enhances language use in natural communication?

Q6: Do you believe that memorization is a good technique to master the rules of grammar?

Q7: Do your students prefer explicit presentation of the grammar points?

Q8: Do you focus on form, meaning or both?

Q9: Do you contextualize the grammar points before introducing them?

Q10: Do you use authentic materials in teaching grammar?

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Q12: Do you think that prepositions of place should be taught in whole texts or through isolated sentences?

Q13: Which approach do you adopt in teaching prepositions of place?

Q14: Do you think that prepositions of place are difficult for EFL learners?

Q15: What are the main difficulties you face in teaching prepositions of place?

Q17: Do your students misuse prepositions of place?

Q18: What type of errors do they make in using prepositions of place?

Q19: In your opinion, what are the most probable sources of such errors?

Q20: What types of activities do you think are useful in teaching prepositions of place?

The pre-test and post-test

Insert *in/at/on* to fill the gaps.

1. What do you have ....your bag?

2. "Is the post office near here?"   "Yes, turn left…….the traffic light."

3. It is difficult to carry a lof things ……….a bicycle.

4. There is a man ……..the roof. What is he donig?

5. I looked at the list of names. My name was ……..the bottom.

6. My sister lives…….Prague.

7. I think I heared the doorbell. There is somebody ………the door.

8. There is a mirror………the wall………….the living room.

9. There is a gas station ………the end of the block.

Adopted from (Raymond, M & William, R.S, 2011, p.215)

Abstract

The main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the extent to which teaching prepositions of place in context enhances their use among EFL learners. A discourse perspective to grammar is adopted for this purpose. To test the proposed hypothesis, a quasi-experimental design is opted for in addition to an interview with five teachers of grammar. The experiment is composed of a pre-test, a training session, and a post-test. Both tests were administered to twenty (20) first-year students of English at UKMO. The analysis of the findings revealed remarkable improvement in using prepositions of place appropriately. This confirms the effeciency of teaching prepositions of place from a discourse perspective.

Key words: Prepositions of place, context, discourse perspective, grammar.

Sommaire

L'objectif principal de cette thése est d'étudier dans quelle mesure l'enseignement des prépositions de lieu dans un contexte améliore leur ultilisation parmi les apprenants EFL. Une perspective de discours à la grammaire est adopteé a cette fin. Pour tester l'hypothèse proposée, un plan quasi-experiméntal est choisi en plus d'un entretien avec cinq enseignants de grammaire. L'expérience est composée d'un pré-test, d'une séance d'entrainement et d'un post-test. Les deux tests ont été administrés à vingt (20) étudiants de première année d'anglais à l'ULMO. L'analyse des résultants a révélé une amélioration remarquable dans l'ultilisation à appropriée des prépositions de lieu. Cela confirme l'efficacité de l'enseignement des prépositions de lieu d'un point de vue discursive.

Mots clés: Prépositions de lieu, contexte, perspective discursive, grammaire.

ملخص الدراسة

يهدف بحثنا إلى تقصي مدى ما يمكن الوصول إليه من تحسين في استعمال حروف *الجر المكانية* عند متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية عند تبني منهج التدريس السياقي متبنيين في ذلك مقاربة تحليل الخطاب في النحو . و لتأكيد فرضية البحث تم الاعتماد على تصميم نصف تجريبي بالإضافة إلى مقابلات تم إجراؤها مع بعض أساتذة النحو الانجليزي. تحوي التجربة اختبارا قبليا و محاضرة و اختبارا اخر بعدي تم توجيهها لنحو 20 طالبا من طلبة السنة الأولى ليسانس بقسم الانجليزية بجامعة قاصدي مرباح. و لقد كشفت نتائج البحث عن تحسن ملحوظ في استعمال حروف الجر. و هو ما يؤكد فعالية تدريس حروف الجر المكانية باستعمال مقاربة *تحليل الخطاب* .

الكلمات المفتاحية : حروف الجر المكانية ، السياق،تحليل الخطاب ،النحو.