

**MISUSE OF ENGLISH PREPOSITION AMONG HAUSA
LEARNERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF NCE 1
STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH FCE
KONTOGORO**

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ABSTRACT

This research evaluates the misuse of English prepositions among Hausa learners of English. English is today's Lingua Franca, and its evolution is driven by the current demands for information and the need for global communication. This research aim to focuses on misuse of English prepositions among Hausa learners of English. A total number of fifty (50) questionnaires were given and received from the NCE 1 students of Department of English Language, FCE Kontogora. The questionnaires were analyzed based on the respondents. Despite the common notion that Hausa affects the use of English prepositions, the study revealed that most of the errors are intralingua errors that originate from the target language, English

Keywords; Preposition, Hausa, Learners, FCE Kontogora

Introduction

English language is a second language to the majority of the learners/users of the language. Most of the learners learn the language grammar among ethnic groups in classroom isolations through exercises that focus on learning the rules. These post great difficulties to the learners/users of the language. Hausa learners of English usually have no problem with deciding where a preposition should be located in an utterance, but the choice of the appropriate preposition in a specific context is the major

problem. Although much emphasis in the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria has focused largely on grammar and vocabulary. The usage of prepositions does not reflect the efforts put in. one major reason for this is the unpredictable nature of the collocation relations that prepositions have with other elements of languages.

However, most Hausa learners/users of English encounter difficulties because English prepositions are not governed by predictable rules. It is often difficult to explain to learners why one preposition rather than another is used in certain context. In addition to this fact many Hausa learners and speaker of English as a second language commit one error or the other. And these errors are mostly committed both in speech and writing. However, many Hausa learners of English tend to deviate in their use of prepositions.

Going by this information, this study attempts to investigate and identify the causes and effects of such misuse of prepositions on effective language communication among NCE 1 students of English department of FCE Kontogora

LITERATURE REVIEW

Preposition

Prepositions are high frequency items belonging to one of the eight word classes into which English lexicon can be divided. They can be defined as relatively closed class that is not prone to quick change. Most of the formal changes in their system are a result of internal word- formative processes and gramaticalization, and not borrowing from external sources. Metcalfe and Astle (2004) describe preposition as a word which expresses the relationship of one word with another, usually (but not always) of a noun, a pronoun or a particle. The placing of a preposition according to them depends to some extent on the type of writing or speech is

to be used. They argue further that it is possible in informal English usage to move the preposition to the end of the sentence. It was also pointed out that a preposition can be used alone, without a noun, pronoun or participle but in all such cases the supporting word is understood. They also opine that 'occasionally a preposition could be used as an adjective as in *up* train, *down* train, *outside* seat,.... etc' Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) state that a preposition expresses a relation between two entities, one being represented by the prepositional complement of the various types of relational meaning, those of place and time are most prominent and easy to identify.

According to them, a prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a prepositional complement, which is characteristically noun phrase. They also emphasized the stress pattern of a preposition. According to them, monosyllabic simple prepositions are normally unstressed, polysyllabic prepositions whether simple or complex are normally stressed. In complex prepositions, the stress falls on the word (adverb, noun, etc) preceding the final preposition. It was also added that prepositions normally unstressed are accented when they are prepositional adverbs. Swan and Walter (2000) also agree that in passive structures, verbal and prepositional groups stay together. They come after infinitives in structure like "she is easy to work with" and "he is interesting to talk to". Rowe and Webb (2000) also state that large classes of preposition are formed by prefixing prepositions to a noun, or to an adjective used substantively. They pointed out further that in relative clauses, and with interrogative pronouns and adverbs, whether independent or conjunctive, the preposition is often placed last e.g. whom do you take me for? Here is the boy whom I speak of e.t.c.

Functions of Preposition

One of the traditional and well known functions of the preposition is indicating relationship between words in a sentence. Prepositions are well known to be connecting words, even though they are quite distinguishable from conjunctions. Opega (2005) notes that there are different kinds of prepositions each with its functions, while asserting that one kind of preposition can perform more than one function. He highlighted the following functions and textual examples:

- i. Prepositions show relative positions of things and persons. E.g. the cat is **on** the table,
- ii. They show direction or movement. These prepositions include *by, in, from, into, on*. E.g. the women are returning **from** the stream
- iii. They express purpose for an action. E.g. Raheem resigned his appointment to take charge **of his** late father's estate,
- iv. Some prepositions indicate distance or extent of space. E.g. The farmer set aside several hectares **for** the cultivation of rice.
- v. Some prepositions indicate antagonism or opposition. E.g. Omale quarreled **with** his neighbor.

Pemn (2002) opines that the principal function of a preposition is to signal the unity of the phrase it introduces e.g. *in turn, after the first try, for a long time*. He also emphasizes that sometimes prepositions tend to be too bulky and may require carefulness for its effective usage. He argues further that preposition may be omitted in rapid speech without insulting the sensibility of the hearer. He also agreed that prepositions may be placed either at the beginning or end of a sentence.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2000), in a related development, prepositional phrases may function as adjunct, disadjunct, conjunct, post modifier in a noun phrase, etc. We also

have omission of the temporal preposition in sentences such as "I will see you Sunday", where the preposition "on" is omitted before a day of the week standing on its own. Another informal type of omission is in initial position preceding a plural noun phrase. He discloses further that a preposition "for" is often omitted in phrases of duration e.g. we stayed there (for) three months.

Types of Preposition

Scholars identify various types of preposition. Opega (2003) opines that, preposition belongs to a 'closed- system' because its members are highly limited words are ever created to increase the membership of the preposition as a part of speech. Prepositions include the smallest words in the English language but they can be the most difficult to use correctly because a simple preposition may convey different meanings. According to him, 'place' and 'time' are the most common classification of prepositions. Simple prepositions of time include "at", "on", "in". These prepositions of time can be categorized into two: those that express 'specific points of time'; and 'a period of time'. The prepositions of place are many, in Opega's assertion, even though he treated only "in" and "at". Agoi states that prepositions are grouped and labeled as simple, participle and phrasal. A simple preposition is a single word serving as a preposition e.g. in, out, off, up, to, etc. according to him, a compound preposition is a preposition made up of two or more words e.g. into, abroad, amidst, around, etc. he also agrees a preposition can end a sentence contrary to the traditional notion that a sentence should not end with a preposition. It was also stated that a prepositional phrase is a group of words which begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, pronoun or noun phrase. It can also serve as an adjective, complement of a verb or complement of an adjective.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

English preposition is one of the most difficult parts of speech. It poses a great deal of difficulty to learners of English, especially the second language learners. The difficulty in preposition usage cut across both simple and complex prepositions. Moreover, there is also problem of (LI) interference especially among Hausa learners of English. Similarly, socio-environmental forces in Hausa land also affects the Hausa learner of English, because in most Hausa states Hausa language becomes the other tongue of some speakers who may not have originally come from the Hausa land (the Igbos, Yorubas and other tribes) and this is largely due to the fact that Hausa has constructed a social structure in which those who use the language enjoy privileges in local transactions, religion, instructions etc. so due to incessant need for everyday communication, a change of new rules of English by Hausa users were apparently resulting in the misuse of the English prepositions, thus affecting the effective use of both written and spoken English among the Hausa learners. To this extend, this work will survey this particular problem of misuse of grammatical prepositions emerging from inadequacies of English language learning.

This research focuses on misuse of prepositions among Hausa learners of English which specifically aims to:

1. Evaluates the extend of Hausa language interference in the use of English preposition among the Hausa learners of English.
2. Assess the differences in the prepositional system of Hausa and prepositional system of English
3. Identify, describes and categories the common errors of English proposition and the determination of such errors among the Hausa learners of English.
4. Provide possible solutions and recommendations,

Research Questions

This research will be guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does Hausa language interferences affect the use of English prepositions among the Hausa learners of English.
2. How prepositional system of Hausa does differs from prepositional system of English.
3. What are the common errors of English prepositions and their sources among Hausa learners of English?

Research Hypothesis

To enable this research to have an effective and efficient survey of the misuse of English prepositions among Hausa learners of English, the following hypothesis will be tested.

1. Hausa language has minimal effect on the misuse of English preposition among Hausa learners of English; Hausa language has maximum influence on the misuse of English prepositions among Hausa learners of English.
2. There is a lot of differences between Hausa prepositional system and English prepositional system.
3. There are very little or no differences between Hausa and English prepositional system
4. The common English prepositional errors found in Hausa learners of English are from negative attitudes, homes and families' socio -environmental sources.
5. The common English prepositional errors found in Hausa learnerstre not from social-environmental and negative attitudes towards the language as well as home and family sources.

METHODOLOGY

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total number of fifty (50) questionnaires were given and received from the NCE 1 students of Department of English

Language, FCE Kontogora. The questionnaires were analyzed based on the respondents, as can be seen below:

Table 1: Gender

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	25	50%
Female	25	50%
Total	50	100%

Table above is on the gender of the respondents. As can be seen, the table reveals that an equal number of questionnaires were distributed to each of the sex. Twenty five (25) questionnaires representing 50% are allocated to each category. This indicates that the research is not gender biased. The same consideration is extended to all the remaining variables.

Table 2: Do you know English Prepositions?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	76%
No	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 above: indicate that 76% representing 38 of the respondents said that they know English prepositions while 24% representing 12 of the respondents who said that they don't know any English prepositions.

Table 3: Do understanding of English prepositions pose difficulty to you?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	80%
No	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 above, displays that 80% representing 40 of the respondents says that, they don't have difficulty in understanding English prepositions while 20% representing 10 of the respondents agreed that they have difficulty in understanding English prepositions.

Table 4: If "yes" what cause this problem?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of background from initial stage	10	20%
Inadequate English teachers from secondary school	10	20%
Lack of concentration in class	30	60%
Total	50	100%

Table 4 above, describes that 60% representing 30 of the respondents says that "Lack of concentration in the class" is their problem while 20% representing 10 of the respondents agreed

that "Inadequate English teachers from the secondary school" is their problem and finally 20% representing 10 of the respondents believes that "Lack of background from the initial stage" is their problem.

Table 5: Are you always concerned about English prepositions?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Always concerned	30	60%
I don't care	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Table 5 above shows that 60% representing 30 of the respondents says that they are always concerned about English prepositions as well as their divisions, while 40% representing 20 of the respondents says that they don't care about prepositions.

Table 6: Do prepositions in your native language pronounced like English ones?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
All	8	16%
Most	10	20%
Many	16	32%
None	16	32%
Total	50	100%

Table 6 above, shows that 32% representing 16 of the respondents agreed that "many" prepositions from their native languages behave like English prepositions while 32%

representing 16 of the respondents agreed that "none" of the prepositions from their native languages behave like English prepositions. Similarly, 20% representing 10 of the respondents says most of the prepositions behave like English sounds and finally 16% representing 8 of the respondents believes that all of their native language prepositions have similar properties with the English prepositions.

Table 7: Do on, at, for and of, occur in your native language?

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	36%
No	32	64%
Total	50	100%

Table 7 above, shows that 64% representing 32 of the respondents says that on, at, for and of, did not occur in their native language while 36% representing 18 of the respondents says that there are on, at, for and of, in their native languages.

Table 8: Appropriately underline the preposition in the following sentences:

i. Man of the people

ii. Sit on the floor

iii. Good for your participation

iv. Will you be at school

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Man of the people	15	30%
Sit on the floor	12	24%
Good for your participation	10	20%
Will you be at school	13	26%
Total	50	100%

Table 8 above shows that, 30% representing 15 of the respondents tick 'of' as their correct preposition 24% representing 12 of the respondents tick 'on' as their correct preposition, also 20% representing 10 of the respondents that tick 'for' as their correct preposition while the remaining 26% representing 13 of the respondents tick 'at' as their correct preposition.

Table 9: Briefly explain preposition of English language.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Students that Wrote correctly.	36	72%
Students that Wrote wrongly.	14	28%
Total	50	100%

The table 9 above, shows that 72% representing 36 of the respondents wrote something correctly about both "prefix" and "suffix" while 28% representing 14 of the respondents wrote wrongly on both "prefix" and "suffix".

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Despite the common notion that Hausa affects the use of English prepositions, this study revealed that most of the errors are intralingua errors that originate from the target language, English.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented findings and discussion on misuse of English prepositions among NCE 1 Hausa learners of English in FCE Kontogora, Nigeria. From the findings, it can be concluded that the respondents had positive attitudes towards their mother tongue - Hausa as the respondents' choice of their language at home and school was one of the causes of their less proficiency in English. This is because the feeling people have towards a language will dictate their preference regarding the choice. Another cause of the students' errors were due to interference of mother tongue. This is because certain verbs in Hausa language do not inflect for number and gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the study, the following recommendations may be important. Since most of the errors were as a result of mother tongue interference, the respondents should be encouraged to learn both forms and structures of the native speakers' English. This is because a piece of an utterance is considered correct based on the native speakers' assessment. English plays an important role in virtually every aspect of Nigerian students. Therefore, students of all levels of education should develop a positive attitude towards English. Practice makes perfect; students should develop the habit of speaking English both within and

outside the classroom. When errors are repeatedly committed, they tend to constitute speakers' idiosyncrasies. Teachers are advised to spend adequate time with their students and make teaching interactive and learners' based instead of teachers' oriented.

Furthermore, having drawn a conclusion that most Hausa speakers of English as a second language commit errors in the use of English prepositions as a result of disparity between English and Hausa prepositions, we therefore recommend as follows:

- i. Students should be encouraged to read current text books, in English grammar,
- ii. Writing should be given more emphasis in the school curriculum.
- iii. English departments in collaboration with English teachers and lecturers should be organizing essay competitions for students in order to improve their English language skills.
- iv. Mother-tongues influence can be overcome through constant practice of such areas of student's weakness as prepositions,
- v. Adequate time should be dedicated so that students can practice these prepositions better during class lessons.

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