Common Errors Made in Learning English Prepositions While Writing Essays by Iraqi Students

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Abstract

This study examines the most important commonly errors made in learning English prepositions while writing essays by Iraqi students of English as a foreign language. It suggests some solutions to help them recover and overcome their errors. All the students come from non-English speaking background and hardly communicate in English outside school. The study was carried out at preparatory schools in Diwaniya governorate in Iraq. Seventy essays were collected from two secondary schools and analyzed in relation to the theories of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. A detailed classification of the most common errors, their analysis, and the comparison of the total number of inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors are given place in this study. The study aims to find out answers to the following research questions:
1.What are the types of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students?
2.What are the causes/sources of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students?
3.What is the effect of Arabic language interference on learning English language prepositions as used by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq?
4.What should be the appropriate method in teaching English prepositions to Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students?
This study intends to use a qualitative content analysis of the students' written essays in accordance with the Error Analysis approach. For this, the researcher intends to explore and analyze the written productions of the final year students' essays. Thus, the results of the study identify the kinds of prepositional errors Iraqi students commit in writing as well as their sources and causes in Dewaniyah governorate in Iraq.
This study has shed light on the manner in which students internalize the rules of the target language. Such an insight into language learning problems is useful to teachers as it provides information on common troubles confronted in language learning which can be used in the preparation of effective teaching materials.

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is among the four basic skills of language use and the other three include speaking, listening and reading (Huddleston, 2008). It falls under the productive part of mastering a language known as grammar (Ronald & Michael, 2006). The mastering of grammar on the other hand, is an essential part of communication.

Obviously, the central goal of learning how to write in English especially through the use of Iraq's English textbooks is to provide learners of English as a foreign language with good information and proficiency in grammatical constructions (Saravanan, 2015). The English textbooks are also designed with the aim of preparing the learners with effective communication.

Writing is among the basic and essential skills for effective communication. Although, writing is the most complex of all the four types of language skills, yet it remains the essential skill to learn by the learners of English as a foreign language (Saravanan, 2015). For instance, in Iraq, there are various types of writing (e.g., expository and narrative) that Iraqi students being EFL normally learn. Thus, writing plays a significant role in the English learning process of Iraqi students. As a tradition, Iraqi students normally write compositions for every English exam, especially at the end of every semester (Saravanan, 2015). Teachers of English, on the other hand, expect their students to write the compositions accurately. Students should write essays in order to present and summarize or analyse ideas reflectively and effectively. There is a common principle that erroneous speech should be corrected; yet, this is not an easy issue because it depends on several factors such as lack of reinforcement and feedbacks which affect the learning of a foreign language (Al-Bayati, 2013).

Therefore, in order for students to obtain an effective learning of English as a foreign language, teachers should cooperate with their students and identify their difficulties in learning the new language. It is also part of the teachers' role to understand their students' levels and determine what they need in order to gain what is in the textbooks. This challenge can be achieved by qualified English teachers. So, teachers who have distinguished

abilities in teaching the language will attract their student to be serious in learning their foreign language (Abdullah & Ainon, 2002). The researcher assumes that both teachers and learners play an essential role in the learning of foreign language. According to Schumann (1977), Abdullah and Ainon (2002) learners have their views concerning the language they want to learn. This brings about the idea of why learners of English as a foreign language commit errors (Al-Bayati, 2013).

Iraqi secondary school students learn English as an obligatory course in both public and private schools. All curriculums in Iraqi universities also contain courses of English language as required material for all the students. The main purpose of teaching English in Iraqi secondary schools and universities is to enable the students to write and speak fluently. Thus, Iraqi students are required to learn the English language in order to express their ideas clearly, especially when dealing with the outside world (Bu, 2012).

1.2   English in Iraq

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, English was used in the Arab countries during the British colonial era. English has been taught as a foreign language in Iraq and other Arab countries. Teaching English had become the main interest for Arabs and the Iraqi people because of technological and industrial development. Perren (1968) indicated that the huge evolution of economics in the Middle East was accompanied by the essential need for the English language as a medium of education. Even though some attempts have been made to use Arabic in the syllabuses; most of the universities still use the English language as the mean of instruction, especially in the colleges of science, medicine, and engineering (Perren, 1968). In Iraq, many attempts have been activated to incorporate the English curriculum. English is conceived as a main skillfulness for further study and future careers. Lambert and Warner (1968) illustrated that students are instrumentally motivated to acquire English as a means of attaining instrumental goal; furthering a career, reading the material, translation and so forth.

1.3   Why English prepositional Errors in Iraq

Prepositions have an outstanding role in our everyday communication (Bennet, 1975; Rustipa, 2011). It is more obvious in the translation of the preposition and prepositional phrases into our mother tongue from the target language. However, they pose more problems and issues while translating from English to Arabic and most of the times it is difficult to achieve accurate mapping between the two languages by the EFL Arab students (Al Yaari, & Almaflehi, 2013). Similarly, researchers on foreign language learning or acquisition tend to focus more on studies over the learner's errors (Rustipa, 2011) in an attempt to predict the   difficulties students may encounter in the acquisition of a foreign language. However, attention is lacking on the aspect that is posing difficulty in learning English (Rustipa, 2011). The present study specifically focuses on prepositions with the aim of investigating the causes of errors in their use in the essays written by final year secondary school students in Iraq. The rationale is that prepositions are one of the most commonly used functional aspects of language use.

The present study intends to explore the widespread of prepositional errors committed by Iraqi students who learn the English language as a foreign language. This is because the larger effect on the rules of English as a foreign language may not be caused by transferring from the Arabic language. Therefore, an analytic study of errors made by Iraqi learners in using English prepositions will be the central focus of this study. The study is limited to the final year EFL students of secondary schools.

1.4   Statement of the Problem

English and Arabic are totally two different languages differing, among other things, in matters of syntax and usage. These differences are likely to cause difficulties for Iraqi students when   learning English, and prepositions are no exceptions to this. Several studies on learning EFL have shown that difficulties accrue in learning English prepositions (e.g., Scott & Tucker, 1974; Gass, 1978; Zughoul, 1997; Jallili & Shojaei, 2012; Almaloul, 2014). Learners in the Arab homeland and other countries face the challenge of using English prepositions both in writing and speaking (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997). In Iraq, few studies attempted to explore the learning of English prepositions, e.g., a study conducted by (Humeid, 2013 and Almaloul, 2014) revealed that most students face difficulty in comprehending and using several prepositions. However, there is lack of attempt to explore the kind of errors normally committed by Iraqi students learning English prepositions.

The present study tries to investigate, both theoretically and practically, the difficulties encountered by Iraqi learners of English in the area of preposition usage. Using prepositions in both languages involves not only points of similarity but also points of difference. The latter are, in fact, the main source of errors committed by Iraqi students in this area. Generally, English language prepositions are quite problematic for EFL learners, especially to Arab students (Al- Hassan, 2012).

The difference in the sentence structure creates problems for Iraqi learners of English. In Iraq, complaints from the public in different towns about miserable results of English final exams of sixth-class students have been usually reported. Also, the ministry of education and Iraqi teachers of English illustrate, on many

occasions, that the final results of English exams are not good. In fact, there are several reasons that lead to such bad results. Many researchers have placed the accusation either on teachers for not being capable of teaching the material satisfactorily or students who do not have a serious desire for learning; or on the system of education which is understood to be helpless. In general, the Iraqi people put the responsibility for the reason that the English language is not widely used among Iraqi people and it is not the language of daily communication at home or during public meetings. It is believed that poor English skills are the main reasons that make Iraqi students unable to do well in schools. Every year, English teachers reports confirm these observations.

Several scholars, e. g. Ahour and Mukundan (2012), attempted to highlight the various types of errors EFL students make while writing. Almaloul (2014), too, examined the errors usually committed by Libyan undergraduate students while using English prepositions. Al Murshidi (2014) surveyed the errors committed by the United Arab Emirate students all of whom are of the undergraduate level. However , to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no record has been found on empirical attempts to explore the types of errors committed in the use of English prepositions during writing or speaking by Iraqi EFL final year secondary schools in Iraq.

Similarly, the researcher was able to come across a number of studies whose focus is on English prepositions and difficulties facing Arab learners/students while translating the Englishprepositions into Arabic or vice versa (e.g., Khalil, 1989; Al-Azzam, 2003; Lam, 2009; Koffi, 2010; Hattab, 2012; Al Yaari, 2013).

Iraqi students may find it is difficult to distinguish between, for example, He did that to me and He did that for me. They may also produce sentences like, *They are afraid from me instead of They are afraid of me, because the Arabic counterpart employs 'min' (from). A study on the analysis of the extent of acquisition of English prepositions in the formal grammar teaching at the secondary school level is lacking in Iraq. Although, Song and Sardegna (2014) has certain similarities with the present study in terms of the participants' selection, in the present study, the final year Iraqis EFL students of the senior secondary school will be selected as participants.

In the light of what has been mentioned above, we may safely say that it is of great importance to conduct a study that could explore the kind of problems Iraqis senior secondary school final year students' face as Arab EFL learners. It is also pertinent to identify the causes of the likely problems and ways to address them. This also prompted the conduct of the present study.

1.5 Research Objectives
The study aims at
1. identifying the various types of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq.
2. determining the causes/sources of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq.
3. highlighting the effect of Arabic language interference in learning English language prepositions as used by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq.
4. examining the methods used by teachers in teaching the Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students the correct use of prepositions.

1.6 Significance of the Study
This research intends to be of great importance to both students and teachers in teaching and learning within Iraq. This is because it may bring to light something new by highlighting the types, causes and sources of difficulties faced by English teachers and students concerning English prepositions.

The researcher finds out that most of the studies did not focus on learning of English prepositions (Al-Hassan, 2012). Syntactic, grammatical errors including prepositional errors' usage were studied through most of the past searches. In Iraq and Arab countries, English prepositions were not given much attention (Tahaineh, 2010).

The author's expectancy is that this research will be helpful for Iraqi English teachers and students who study English as a foreign language. Also, it is useful for learners who produce writing in the English language. It will improve the student's consciousness of interferences between their native language and English language through shedding light on various errors in written work. The researcher hopes that this study may contribute to future error analysis studies searching in Iraq.

1.7 Scope of the Study
This study is focusing on the analysis of the errors made by the Iraqi EFL final year senior secondary school learners' use of English prepositions in Iraq. The research site will consist of only two selected senior secondary schools across the major cities of Iraq. This study will also attempt to identify the various types of prepositional errors committed and to determine the causes/sources of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq. The study will also attempt to determine

the frequency of intralingual errors and interlingual errors as well as highlight the effect of Arabic language interference in learning English language prepositions as used by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq. It will also be part of the scope of the study to examine the level of the relationship between the Iraqi EFL final year secondary school learning proficiency level and the correct use of prepositions as its main goal in Iraq.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Definition and types of Language Transfer
The researcher assumes that there is no agreement on the terms and definitions which are used to describe language transfer because of the lack of agreement among linguists. So, there are different expressions that refer to first language transfer. For example, Selinker (1972) uses the expression 'language mixing' to refer to the first language transfer. Also, Ringbom (1987) uses the expression 'cross-linguistic interference' as a reference to the language transfer. The expression 'the role of the mother tongue' is used to refer to language transfer (Jarvis, 2000).

2.2 Theoretical frameworks of the study
The academic structure of this study is the two approaches tied to language transfer, namely Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA).

Language transfer is related to various theoretical opinions in second language acquisition (SLA). Charles Fries and Robert Lado (1957) started thinking about language transfer during the 1940s and 1950s of the previous century within the framework of behaviourism theory. Language transfer took the main position in the behaviourist view of language acquisition because it was considered as the chief source of L2 learners' errors. Behaviourism employed Contrastive Analysis (CA) to predict the occurrence of the learners' errors. Gass and Selinker (2008) state that contrastive analysis is a way of contrasting two languages so as to recognize the errors for the fulfilment of the aim of comparing between what the learner needs to gain and what he does not need to gain in SLA situation. Hence, the main problem that faces the learners of English as a foreign language is the interference of their mother tongue in the use of the new language.

In spite of the common use of CA with its two versions during the 1960s of the 20th century, it has the serious challenge of containing some shortcoming. Odlin (1989) has stated that many difficulties that L2 learners encounter do not always stem from differences between two languages. Many errors that caused by L1-L2 differences are not always predicted by the means of CA. In addition, many of the errors made by L2 learners are not always traceable to L1 transfer. Contrastive Analysis could not find answers to the questions such as, why does L1 transfer take place in one case and does not happen in another? And, why does L1 transfer take place in one language and disappear in another? Gass and Selinker (2008) indicate that CA failed to give a clear reply to such questions. For instance, Duskova (1983) made a search on Czech learners of English language and Russian. This study confirmed that Czech learners of English did not fall back on their L1 when gaining bound morpheme, whereas when acquiring Russian the learners fell back. Thus, the researcher found support to the view that transfer from the first language take place in one case and does not occur in another case.

Researchers interest in the function of L1 transfer go on in using CA approach in spite of the several critiques shown by many studies Ellis (1994). It has been emphasized by Odlin, (1989:28) that "the study of transfer depends greatly on the systematic comparisons of languages provided by contrastive analyses". Sajavaara (1981) argued that CA is under attack because it treated ideas as if they are much simpler than they are. Also, CA depended on the idea that the predictions of L2 errors can be achieved only by comparing similarities and differences of L1 and L2 forms. Sajavaara (1981) debated that rejection of CA is not the solution. The approach should be revised in order to make a comparison between two separate languages. Therefore, it would improve learner's levels, teacher's abilities and researchers to conduct methodical in-depth research to explore the difficulties of syntax which is rarely located in the Arab homeland.

2.3 Contrastive Analysis
In the past, specifically, the period starting from the early 1940s and extending to the 1960s, foreign language teachers had hoped to solve difficulties and issues related to foreign language teaching through scientific procedures by using certain ways obtained from structural linguistics. Describing the syntactic construction of sentences specifically their grammatical types and surface arrangement was the major objective of structural linguists. The significance of Contrastive Analysis for foreign language teaching was stated clearly by Fries (1945) when he confirmed that the efficient items are those that are established on a scientific description of the learned language compared with the equivalent elaboration of the first language of the students.
Lado (1957) underlines the notion that the identical forms will be conveyed and lead to pleasant results in learning the second language. But the forms which are different will make difficulties and problems because they will not work properly in the second language. So, these forms have to be changed..

Contrastive analysis has a strong connection with error analysis. Both try to discover means for helping learners to overcome difficulties through the course of their learning. The contrastive analysis claims that the major obstacle to second language learning is the transfer from the first language system to the learning of a foreign language. A scientific structural analysis of the two languages would give in the classification of linguistic contrasts between them, which, in turn, would enable the linguist to characterize the difficulties which would be encountered by learners and that second language learning basically involves the overcoming of these difficulties.

Therefore, Contrastive analysis and error analysis are chosen by the author for the goal of this study because he thinks that both of them have to be observed as integral in the discussion of students' problems. Based on this concept, the use of one approach will not offer sufficient details of the student's manner in the new language. So, the use of contrastive analysis way will be implemented to supply linguistic details for the recognized errors than a predictive method.

2.4 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
It is important to distinguish between two hypotheses of constructive analysis, i.e., the strong hypothesis and the weak hypothesis. The strongest hypothesis which was claimed by Lado (1957) states that it is possible to predict and describe the linguistic patterns which will cause difficulty in learning by contrasting systematically the language and culture to be learned with the language of the learner. This comparison facilitates or simplifies the difficulties of learning a second language. Lado (1957) clarifies that the similar items with the first language will be easy to understand and the different items will not be easy. The subjectivity of this strong hypothesis has soon been discovered because it is not an easy task to perform a scientific description of two languages. Thus, these hypotheses were replaced by what is called the weak hypothesis. The weak hypothesis of contrastive analysis claims that some of the second language learning problems can be indicated on the ground of linguistic differences between the native and foreign language of the learner.

2.5 Error analysis
The aim of error analysis is to test different errors which are done by learners of the foreign language, therefore; it can be defined as the studying and analysis of errors committed by learners of a foreign language (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Corder (1967) is considered as the first one who protects and supports the necessity of studying errors and mistakes in learners' writing. So, errors that made by learners of the second language are serious and important developing and improving the process of learning. They are essential and because making errors can be noticed as a tool which is used by the learner to learn (Corder, 1967). In addition, errors and mistakes can be perceived as obvious signs which considered as warning signals which provided a guide to the learners' knowledge of foreign language (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Error analysis has two goals, the first is abstract and notional (theoretical) and the second is the use (applied). The first serves to illustrate and state what and how a learner learns when he/she studies a foreign language. The second goal is to enable the learner to learn more effectively by using his knowledge for instructional purposes (Corder, 1974).

2.6 The Importance of Learners' Errors
Corder and Selinker (1974) have confirmed the necessity of searching errors committed by learners of the foreign language. It has been noted by them that the study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process. Thus, treated exercises could be organized and concentrate more attention on the problematic areas. The input is determined by the learner who receives information and what he actually has learned. A linguistic form can be offered by the teacher, but it sometimes is not input. The errors are so significant and serious for the teacher, the researcher, and the learners. They inform the teacher what he/she have to teach. They are a rich source of input and information for the researcher about how the learning progresses. Also, they give a chance to the learners to check and exam their second language assumption (James, 1998). Therefore, the probable origins of errors have to be given distinctive foresight in language education. Methodical analysis and classification of errors is a successful way for avoiding transfer of native language rules to the foreign language usage.

2.7 Types of Errors
Potential inclusive origins may be the causes for many errors, for example, interlingual errors of transfer from the first language, intralingual errors within the new language, the sociolinguistic context of communication, psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies and many other sources. All these sources can be considered types of errors; but for the sake of brevity and precision, errors are classified into:
1. Pre-systematic errors: such type of errors occurs when the learner tries to learn a new language item for the

first time. Different deviant forms are used for the same linguistic item.

2. Systematic errors: These errors are made as a result of forming wrong hypotheses or having inaccurate conceptions about an item in the target language.

3. Post-systematic errors: These results from misuse or misunderstanding of items that deviate from the system of the target language.

Most of the error analysis studies centre on the accurate use of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. These are called errors of accuracy which refer to linguistic competence. Corder (1981) classified errors of appropriateness into:

1) Referential errors: They are represented by using the inapplicable term to refer to some features of the word.

2) Registry errors: the learner commits these errors when he refers to "a naval ship" as "a boat".

3) Sociolinguistic reasons lead to certain kinds of errors. Learners' utterances in communication within the society can show such kind of errors.

4) Textual errors: such errors are committed by learners when they use incorrect structural forms to link between two sentences in a discourse. Hence, the focus of this study will be on the textual form of errors Iraqi secondary students commit while writing English essay tests in Iraq.

2.8 Sources of Errors

According to Brown (1987), distinguishing and identifying origins of errors can be treated and seen as a part of error classification. Errors were likely caused by all probable sources. They are not just the result of the negative L1 transfer. Therefore, EA is innovative with respect to CAH in the meaning or concept that it inspects and checks errors attributable to all potential origins.

Brown (1987) ensures and protects that most familiar sources of errors are: Inter-lingual transfer, intralingual transfer, the context of learning, and different communication strategies the learner use. Also, James (2013) divides errors, according to their origins.

2.9 Meanings of Prepositions

Preposition as a concept is viewed by linguists from various perspectives. In accordance with dictionary point of view, a preposition can be viewed as "a word that is used before a noun, pronoun, or gerund to indicate the word's connection with another…" Examples of preposition according to Cota, Evans, Dion, Kilik and Longman (1995) includes: 'of' as in 'a car is made of metal', and 'by' in 'it was locked by the use of a key'. Wilson and Burk (1980) on their part viewed prepositions as words that "always followed by nouns or pronouns". It was further added that prepositions are "connective words that show the relationship between the nouns following them and one of the basic sentences elements: subject, verb, object, or complement" (Wilson & Burks, 1980, p. 285).

Similarly, a preposition in English is viewed as "a word or expression that combines with a noun or pronoun to form a phrase" (Webster's new English dictionary, 1976, p. 395). Based on these definitions, it implies that English prepositions are part of speech that introduced prepositional phrase and this is exemplified in the following sentence "Ali is reading Arabic fiction in the class". Grammatically, the word 'in' as a preposition introduces the prepositional phrase "in the class". In fact, Iatcu (2011) claimed that most of the English prepositions being used are: on, to, of, for, in, and with. Iatcu (2011) further made a comparison between English and Arabic prepositions and concludes that in Arabic fi (in) is found to be the most commonly used preposition. This thereby implies that the prepositions can best be viewed as "linkers" between both information been described in a sentence and the sentence parts as well. Studies show that prepositions are not limited to meaning expressed by nouns; instead, they go beyond to include the meanings been conveyed by adverbs and adjectives such as wh-questions: how, where, when, why, who among others.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The main aim of reviewing the related literature on error analysis and English prepositions is purposely to find evidence that could assist the researcher in developing a conceptual framework based on the objectives of the study. Again, it is part of the rationale for developing a conceptual framework to align the present study within the context of previous studies in line with the views of other scholars.

The present study largely depends on three core theories to cover the theoretical framework, namely, taxonomy of prepositional errors (Richard 1971 & 1974; Burt 1974), Sources of Prepositional Errors (Brown, 1980; Richard, 1971), Causes of errors (Richard & Sampson, 1974) and the use of English prepositions (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). The theories will guide the researcher to answer the research questions and also achieve its objectives. Taxonomy of prepositional errors is selected to help the researcher in identifying the various types of prepositional errors committed while writing English Essays by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq. Moreover, Sources and causes of errors theories are chosen as the study intends to point out the causes and sources of prepositional errors Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students

commit while writing English Essays in Iraq through teachers' interview. Likewise, the study will use some notions from theories on the usage and functions of English preposition to support the possible discussion over the teaching of the correct use of prepositions methods used by the teachers.

The proposed conceptual framework will be guided by previous studies; this is because scholars nowadays do not view learners' errors as something negative in language learning. However, they hold the notion that by understanding the learners' error, a better way can be revealed to improve their learning skills (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). The scholars accordingly added that with error analysis, teachers can understand and decide on the better materials needed for their students' learning process.

2.11 Taxonomy of Errors
Scholars such as Mukattash (1976) argued that prepositions remain the everlasting problems for EFL students. The basis of their argument is that English prepositions happen to be difficult for any foreign learner of English as the learners normally link such prepositions to their native or first language prepositional system. Similarly, Richard (1971) also described verbs and other parts of speech as the classes of words that play a significant role in possible addition, omission, or selection of a wrong preposition in English, and these necessarily affect the whole meaning of the idea intended by the EFL students.

2.12 Sources of Prepositional Errors
In this study, Richard's (1971) and Brown's (1980) sources of errors theories of language learning will be adopted as in identifying the sources of English prepositional errors committed by Iraqi EFL students at the senior secondary school in Iraq. According to Richard (1971), the sources of learners' errors in language learning include interference, overgeneralisations, performance errors (mistakes), markers of transitional competence, and strategies of communication and teachers' induced errors. On the other hand, Brown (1980) highlighted two main sources: Interlingual transfer and intralingual negative transfer. Brown (1980) further expanded the intralingual negative transfer into six sub-sources: Misuse analysis, the imperfect rule of use, exploiting of redundancy, overlooking or occurrence restrictions, Hypercorrection and overgeneralization. The rationale of adopting the views of the two scholars is that they did not share a similar opinion in many respects, hence their sources may provide great opportunity to explore the sources in-depth.

2.13 Cause of Prepositional Errors
Richard and Sampson's (1974) Causes of errors theory will be adopted in this study as a guide in the attempt to determine the causes of errors Iraqi EFL senior secondary students encounter in the use of English prepositions while writing English compositions. Accordingly, there are seven different types of causes highlighted in Richard and Sampson (1974). These are: Language transfer, intralingual transfer, specific sociolinguistic situation, modality of exposure to the target language, learners' age, and instability of the learners' linguistic system and the inherent difficulty of the particular item being learned.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Research Design
This study intends to use a qualitative content analysis of the students' written compositions in accordance with the Error Analysis approach. This is in line with the view of Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) who maintained that document or content analysis is a research approach been applied to visual or content materials specifically to identify the features of the materials in questions. For this, the researcher intends to explore and analyse the written productions of the final year students' compositions and identify the kind of prepositional errors they commit in their sentences as well as the causes and variations in Dewanyah governorate in Iraq. In fact, it is part of the fundamental aspect of every study to obtain a design based on its objectives. To this effect, Riazi (2016) indicates that a research design refers to how the researchers plan their studies so that they can obtain answers to the stated research questions using systematic approaches. Yin (2011) equally shared a similar view by describing research design as significant and logical blueprints that link research questions, objectives, collected data and the appropriate techniques for the analysis. In this respect, Creswell (2012) also noted that the research design refers to the process followed in the collection, analysis and report making in both quantitative and qualitative research. The present study will employ qualitative approach. The exploration of the content of students' essays written during final year examination will be conducted through content analysis to determine the kinds of prepositional errors they commit and the perceptions of the teachers as to why such errors are made will be made and then data analysis..

3.2 Content Analysis
This study intends to employ a qualitative content analysis of the EFL students' writings based on the error analysis approach. Document or content analysis refers to an approach which is normally applied to written or

visual materials with the aim of exploring certain features of the documents (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006; Ahour & Mukundan, 2012). Hence, the written productions of the EFL students will be collected and analysed sentence by sentence for the manifestation of prepositional errors that may occur. A total of 70 students at final year class from both the two schools will be selected from female and male to participate in the test on essay writing based on the Iraqi Ministry of Education curriculum.

3.3 Interview

In this study, the interview will be regarded as the primary source of data. Hence, the researcher designed open-ended interviews in order to achieve the research objectives 2 and 4 of the present study. These interviews were solely designed for EFL teachers. In the attempt to conduct the interview the researcher will make an appointment with the participants first. Once the interview commences, the researcher will first begin with asking about the demography of the participants. Then, the researcher will equally interview the participants in both formal and informal manner. Open-ended questions will subsequently be asked in an attempt to determine the causes/sources of prepositional errors committed by the Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students while writing English essays and also highlight the effects. The questions will also be targeted towards findings the methods used by teachers in teaching the Iraqi EFL final year secondary school the correct use of prepositions.

Meanwhile, the researcher conducts a pilot study before embarking on the main study in order to enhance the quality of the prospect of successful completion of the main study. This could be done through ascertaining mistakes including logistics, nature of the questions and participant's recruitment that could otherwise influence the study (Thabane, et al., 2010).

3.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

In this study, the researcher intends to use qualitative content analysis to explore research questions 1 and 3. With qualitative content analysis, data will be collected over the errors committed in the English essays written by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students related to the various types of prepositional errors, the frequency of intralingual errors and interlingual errors as well as the effect of Arabic language interference in learning English prepositions in Iraq.

3.5 Research Population

The population of this study consists of English teachers and students who learn English as a foreign language in the south area in Iraq. The intended population for the study's content analysis will involve the English Essays written by 70 Iraqi final years EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq. The participants will be drawn from two senior secondary schools namely the Damascus Secondary School for Girls and Quteiba Secondary School for Boys. Both of the two schools are located at Dewanyah governorate in Iraq. The 70 students will consist of 35 females and 35 males' final year students of 2017-2018 academic sessions. The focus will be on the participants who are learning the English language as one of the subjects that students must pass before they graduate and their age will range between 16 to 18 years old

3.6 Research Instrument

As has been mentioned above, the research is qualitative in nature. The instrument for the data collection and interpretation in this study is the researcher himself. Hence, the researcher intends to conduct the research by being ready to face any challenge he may come across during the data collection, transcription and interpretation with sensitivity to context. Equally, the researcher will analyse the data to be collected by considering the possibility of ambiguity that may occur. This is in line with Merriam (1998) who argued that every researcher conducting qualitative study must be tolerant to ambiguous data, have the context in mind and display good use of language.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data for this study will be analysed systematically in accordance with Creswell (2012) guidelines. The transcripts from the essays written test by 70 EFL Iraqi students and the responses of 4 interviewees will be analysed inductively. To begin, the researcher will analyse the qualitative data based on the background categories including schools, types of participants and the topics being the yardstick for subsequent analysis.

Thematic analysis will be employed during the data analysis and Nvivo 10 software for qualitative data analysis will be used in the process of the analysis. Nvivo 10 software will enable the researcher to store, sort, arrange, manage, transcribe, analysed and prepare the data for a graphical representation of the data (Creswell, 2012). It is also part of the merit of the Nvivo software to harness the analysis process and provide ease for the researcher in handling a large amount of data as well as create different codes and identify their various relationships. With the Nvivo software, the researcher will be able to generate diagrams of emerging results of

the study's findings and prepare the research reports.

In fact, the use of axial coding enables the researcher to categorize the codes correctly in accordance with the either interviewed responses or content of the essays written by the participants. This is in line with Gough and Scott (2000), who claimed that it is of great importance to understand the process of open and axial coding as they provide precision and focus on meanings within the research context among other meaningful issues of interest to the researcher.

3.8 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study on the designed, intended semi-structured interview questions for the teacher participants and the sampled picture composition task exercises for students. This section demonstrates the objectives and the procedures of the pilot study of the intended instruments.

One can view the pilot study as a preliminary experiment designed to collect data before the primary research commences. The rationale is that pilot study provides the researcher with opportunity to test the trustworthiness and quality of the interview designed questions and the pictured composition tasks in order to improve it (Lancaster, Dodd & Williamson, 2004; Peng, 2009). In order words, with the pilot version, the researcher was able to identify the deficiencies in the design of the proposed instrument and make specific improvement where necessary to ensure the clarity and trustworthy data.

### 3.8.1 Findings of the Pilot Study

For the pilot study, the researcher explored different kinds of errors the students make in the selection of the appropriate prepositions in the composition task test. The result obtained from the students' composition tasks revealed the existence of several prepositional errors such as omission, substitution and addition. Again, the results of this pilot study to some extent indicated that the Iraqi students are not unaware of various rules of English prepositions in essay writing. Therefore, the proposed use of picture composition task test in collecting data for the present study can be obtainable and suitable.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 General Findings of the Iraqi EFL Prepositional Errors

The analyzed data with the aid of Nvivo 10 software shown the results derived from the Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students English written essays and teachers' interviews revealed five main themes: the types of English prepositional errors, sources of English prepositional errors, causes of English prepositional errors, Arabic Language interference effect on English prepositional errors, and Appromethods for teaching English prepositions in Iraq. The emerged results represented with models and tables are arranged into themes and sub-themes. Figure 4.1 below presents the model of the Iraqi EFL prepositional Errors. The types of Prepositional errors are presented in the next section.

Figure 4.1 : Main themes of Iraqi EFL Prepositional Errors
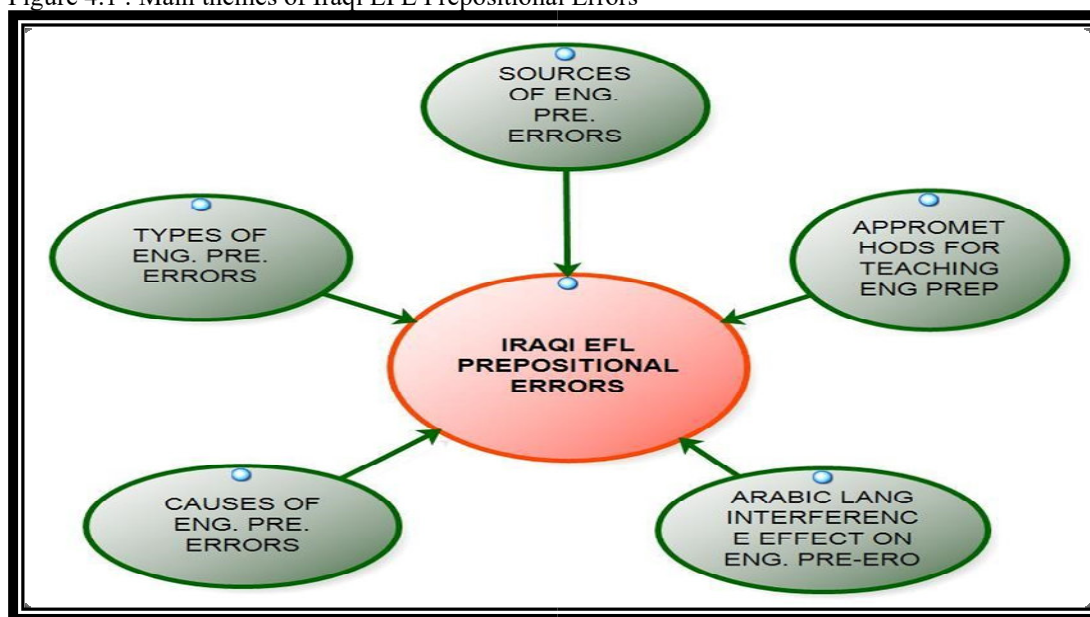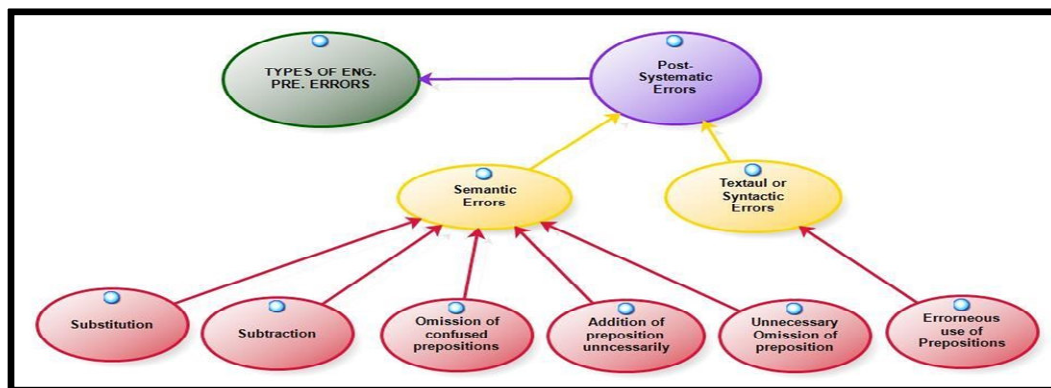

Types of Prepositional Errors

Figure 2 : Theme sub-theme, minor themes and emerging themes on types of English Prepositional Errors
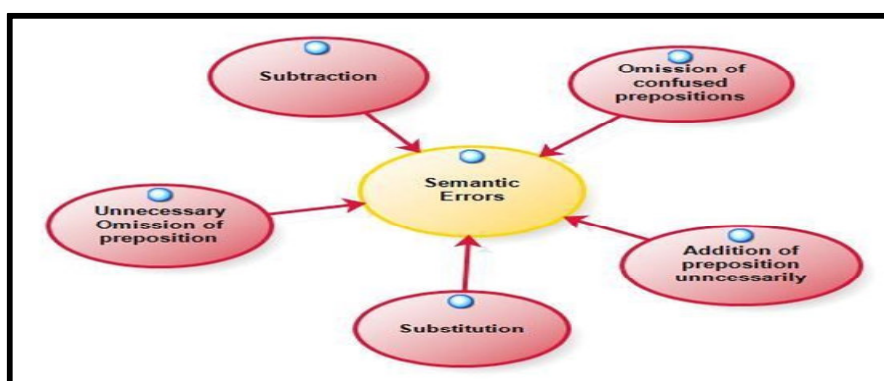

Figure 4.3. types of semantic errors

Finally, this section has been concerned with the identification of the various types of prepositional errors committed by Iraqi EFL students while writing English at senior secondary school in Iraq. The result revealed that the English prepositional errors Iraqi EFL students commit fall under post-systematic errors (sub-theme) having committing both semantic and textual/syntactic errors (minor themes).

It presented five different types (emerging themes) of semantic errors and one type (emerging theme) of textual/syntactic error. The result also revealed the existence of seven different causes of prepositional errors (sub-theme and emerging themes) and five major sources with five sub-themes of English prepositional errors committed by Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students. The result also explained the various effects of Arabic language interference in learning English language prepositions by Iraqi final year EFL senior secondary school students in Iraq. Also, it concludes discussion of various appromethods for teaching English prepositions to Iraqi EFL learners based on the interviewed responses/results of the EFL teachers in Iraq.

5. DISCUSSION, RECOMMEDATION AND CONCLUSION
5.1 Discussion
This section provides discussions based on the findings guided by the objectives of the study. The data collected from the essay written by 70 final year Iraqi EFL students from both Damascus and Quiteiba Senior Secondary Schools on English language have enable the identification of various types of prepositional errors normally committed by the Iraqi EFL students, determined their sources and causes of the errors. On the other hand, with the aid of the interview sessions with six professional English teachers, 3 each from the two aforementioned schools the study is able to highlight the effect of Arabic language interference in learning English language prepositions and examined the appropriate methods used by teachers in teaching the Iraqi EFL senior secondary school students the correct use of prepositions.

5.2 Theoretical Contribution
With the current interest on Arabs linguists, educationists and applied linguists on study of English grammar and

the desire of the academia to tackle issues of Arabic interference (mother tongue influence) in learning English language for EFL learners, this study contributes in no small measure to the basic concepts of types of English prepositional Errors, sources of prepositional errors, causes of prepositional errors, and the appropriate methods for teaching the English prepositions to the Iraqi Arabs EFL secondary school students. To this fact, as the study adapted and adopted the theories of English prepositional errors, causes and sources. Systematically, the concept of the types of English prepositional errors contributes to the body of knowledge in the presentation of post-systematic error having both semantic and textual errors as the major types of English prepositional errors used by Iraqi EFL students. On one hand, the semantic error is further conceptualized into substitutions, subtractions, omission of confused prepositions, addition of prepositions unnecessarily, unnecessary omission of prepositions in their English essay writings. on the other, erroneous use of prepositions falls under the textual errors. The erroneous use of prepositions is further conceptualized into ten different confused word classes as prepositions. Therefore, the present study provides theoretical contributions by presenting the study of the types of English prepositions theory into the Iraqi EFL secondary school writing context.

In addition, this study contributes to the conceptual basis of the sources of English prepositional errors by identifying the causes and sources of English prepositional errors of Iraqi EFL secondary schools' students. This study contributed in distinguishing the causes from the sources of the Iraqi EFL students English prepositional errors. The study conceptualised the causes into grammatical and stylistic elements, language transfer, specific sociolinguistic situation, wrong application of target language, intralingual interference, modality of exposure to the Target Language (TL) and Implementation Errors. On the other hand, this study adapted and adopted the sources of English prepositional errors into interlingual transfer, communicative strategies the learners use, context of learning, intralingual transfer and the lack of positive re-enforcement. In fact, the interlingual transfer is conceptualized into interference, over generalization and teachers' induced errors, while

Imperfect rule used and overlooking or occurrence restrictions falls under the Intralingual transfer during English writings. Hence, this study contributes greatly in developing and confirming the causes and sources of English prepositional errors theory into these pleats.

Another significant contribution theoretically, is that the appromethods for teaching English prepositions to Iraqi EFL learners has been incorporated and situated into the framework of this study. Thus, this study provides noble contributions by conceptualizing and implementing the study of English prepositional errors to a more consolidating format by maintaining the structural analysis of the linguistic situations. The findings of this study, systematically contributes to suit other intended researches on EFL/ESL students across the globe, specifically the ones that could be relatively similar with the current study over the English writings as identified in the Iraqi secondary schools' contexts. Therefore, this study contributes immensely in putting into practice, theoretical basis of English prepositional errors into the Iraqi EFL learning context.

5.3 Practical Contributions
Practically, this study will contribute immensely to various types of people not only Iraqis but also across the globe in grasping and appreciating the numerous types of English prepositional errors, the causes, sources and the appropriate methods which are uniquely for teaching English prepositions to Iraqi EFL secondary school students. The findings of this study may provide ideas on how Iraqi EFL secondary school students commits various kind of errors with regards to English prepositions as they write. In addition, no doubt both the EFL teachers and students of Iraqi nationality will stand the opportunity to have a practical idea of the types of errors normally committed by students, the sources and causes of these errors and the suitable proposed methods capable of resolving these errors. on the part of the teachers, understanding the types of English prepositions, they will have the idea of the kind of approach the may apply to their students against such errors. similarly, when the students become acquainted with the peculiar nature of the English prepositional errors normally committed by their counterparts, they may take cautions in their learning and practicing processes of writings.

With the contemporary glaring interest of the middle eastern people, especially Arabs who learn and use English as a foreign language, the outcome of this study without doubt has practical contribution for the educationist, stakeholders and policy makers to understand the various types and subtypes of English prepositional errors tended to commit by the students. They also stand to clearly noticed the causes and sources of the errors as well as the possible appropriate methods capable of curtailing the further commission of the errors.

With regards to the policy makers and educationists, having understood the nature, causes and sources of the English prepositional errors, Iraqi EFL secondary school students commit. They may decide to adopt the appromethods recommended by this study. The educationists may equally produce better teaching and learning materials suitable to improve the learning atmosphere of the secondary schools of the country.

5.4 The Implications of the Study
Exploring the Iraqi EFL final year secondary schools' students' English prepositional errors while writing essays

rightly provides us with the ability to analyse their written texts which in turn explained their proficiency and adeptness levels. Therefore, the great notion of this study found the pedagogical implications of Iraqi EFL students English prepositional errors as depicted in the results been analyzed.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Studies

To start with, this study centred on English prepositional errors committed by Iraqi EFL senior secondary schools' students while writing English essays in Iraq. Hence, the researcher was able to capture only the types, sources, causes of the EFL students' prepositional errors as well as the appropriate methods that could be used to improve their learning of English essay writings. hence, the findings of this study are limited towards prepositional (i.e., functional word) errors made by Iraqi EFL students in English essay writings. Future studies could be undertaken on the errors made while writing English essays by Iraqi EFL students on other aspects of English part of speech such as nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs among others.

Similarly, in order to fill the vacuum of this study's limitations, it is recommended that similar study should be conducted in future but the focus should be emphasised on higher institutions of Iraqi EFL students.

Again, as the design of this study is qualitative in nature focusing on the content analysis of the write-ups of the students. Part of the results were merely presented in simple nominal forms. Future study should be conducted quantitatively to examine the Iraqi EFL secondary schools' mean scores (numeric and percentages) using rubrics about the discourse patterns in the use of English prepositions while writing essays.

The present study is restricted to writing skills focussing on essay writings of the Iraqi EFL students. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to cover other language skills such as speaking and listening. Consequently, this study recommends that future studies should consider replicating the present study using any of the above skills of either the same strategy or other different strategies and subjects.

5.6 Conclusions

With all the attempts by the Iraqi IME to enhance the English learning skills of Iraqi EFL students, yet, the EFL students at the secondary schools' level seem to perform relatively low and shown lack of mastery of the use of English prepositions in the processes of English essay writings. The Iraqi EFL senior secondary schools' students commit post-systematic and textual errors of English prepositions in their essay writings. This conclude that they tend to be incapable of using some of the English prepositions correctly which in turn suggest lacks English writing skills correctly. Based on this study, it is observed that the Iraqi EFL secondary school students do not nurture the habit of practice so as to promote their perfect use of English prepositions in writings.

The study also discussed and established the existence of seven kind of causes of English prepositional errors alongside five major sources of the errors (i.e., language transfer, specific sociolinguistic situation, wrong application of target language, grammatical, stylistic elements, intralingual interference, modality of exposure to the TL and Implementation Errors). The study also revealed that the sources of English prepositional errors (i.e., communication strategies, context of learning, lack of positive reinforcement, interlingual transfer or error MT and intralingual transfer) and which were further sub-sourced and discussed into five (i.e., teachers induce errors, overgeneralization, and interference) as part of interlingual transfer while (overlooking or occurrence restriction and imperfect rule used by teachers) were found and discussed as part of intralingual transfer used by the EFL students in the use of English prepositions. Notwithstanding, the study, especially in this chapter discusses the various opinions on the most appropriate methods (Appromethods) suitable for teaching Iraqi EFL students English prepositions. The chapter also provides recommendations for future studies and a conclusion.

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