

دراسة استقصائية حول بعض أحرف الجر الإنجليزية ومعانيها في اللغة العربية

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تاریخ الارسال 2025/8/5 م تاریخ القبول 2025/9/8 م

الملخص باللغة العربية:

هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لدراسة استخدام بعض حروف الجر الإنجليزية ومعانيها في اللغة العربية وهي (of, from, for) . تم دراسة الادب المتعلق بهذه الحروف لمعرفة المزيد حول استخدامها وكذلك تم تجميع عدد كبير من الجمل المشتملة على هذه الحروف وترجمتها الى اللغة العربية واستخراج معاني هذه الحروف المقابلة لها في العربية وتبيين بان هذه الحروف لها خصوصيتها عند الاستخدام وان لها عدد من المعاني والحوروف العربية والتي ينبغي على الطلبة العرب الانتباه لها اثناء دراستهم لها. بالنسبة لحرف الجر (of) اتضح ان له 7 معاني في اللغة العربية وهي : من، على، ب، ل، عن، بدون معنى مقابل، في، بينما نجد الحرف الثاني (from) بثلاث معاني عربية فقط وهي: عن، من، ب . أما بالنسبة لحرف الجر الثالث وهو (for) اشتمل على 10 معاني مقابلة في اللغة العربية وهذا هو العدد الأكبر بين الحروف الثلاثة في البحث وهي: عن، ب، على، من، بدون معنى مقابل، مع، ل، بسبب، بدلا من، منذ. واختتم الباحث الدراسة ببعض التوصيات والمقرنات لتعلم حروف الجر باللغة الإنجليزية والتي تهدف الى مساعدة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العرب على تعلم هذه الحروف ومساعدة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في تدريسها.

An Investigation of the Three English Prepositions (of, from, and for) and Their Meanings in Arabic

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the use of the three English prepositions, *of*, *from*, and *for*, and identify the Arabic meanings of these prepositions. A good number of sentences including the three English

prepositions *of*, *from*, and *for* were investigated and translated into Arabic for the sake of identifying the possible Arabic meanings of each preposition. The study reveals that each of the three English prepositions (of, from, for) has a number of Arabic meanings. The English preposition *of* has a good number of Arabic meanings. It has seven meanings in Arabic which are: (min) (من), (ala) (على), (bi) (ب), li (ل), (an) (عن), no equivalent Arabic meaning (0), and (fi) (في). The second preposition *from* has only three Arabic meanings – (an) (عن), (min) (من), and (bi) (ب), while the preposition *for* has the highest number (10) of Arabic meanings. They are: (an) (عن), (bi) (ب), (ala) (على), (min) (من), no equivalent Arabic meaning (0), (maa) (مع), (li) (ل), (bisabab) (بسبب), (badalan min) (بدلا من), and (munthu) (مند).

The researcher concluded the study with some recommendations and suggestions on learning prepositions in English. These suggestions are aimed to help the Arab learners of English when learning these prepositions. It can also help the teachers of English when they teach prepositions.

1. Introduction

Prepositions are essential parts of any language as they help connect different elements in a sentence and determine their relationship with each other. In English, the preposition is one of the eight parts of speech in grammar. It indicates the relationship of a noun, pronoun, or a noun phrase (a group of words that function collectively as a noun) to another word or phrase in a sentence.

Mastering prepositions and applying them precisely can be an arduous task for those learning the English language. Native English speakers who learn English as their primary language during childhood encounter minimal challenges with prepositions. However, for individuals learning English as a second/ foreign language, grasping prepositions can be exceptionally challenging.

The English language has many prepositions, such as in, on, at, of, for, from, etc., which are used frequently in everyday communication. Prepositions can be tricky for English learners. There is no definite rule or formula for choosing a preposition. In the beginning stage of learning the

language, the students should try to identify a preposition when reading or listening in English and recognize its usage.

A preposition expresses a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, most often showing how the two parts are related in space or time such as on and at in the following two examples: we sat on the bench, they left at three. Most of the common prepositions in English are simple, one-word prepositions. They have no distinctive ending, and do not vary. Several prepositions are multi-word prepositions which consist of more than one word (also called two-word, three words, or compound prepositions). Single-word prepositions include prepositions such as by, for, from, at, in, etc.; while multi-word prepositions include: (two words) such as ahead of, because of, due to, etc., (three words) such as: as far as, by means of, in spite of, etc.

Due to the difficulties in using English prepositions, the researcher here intended to explore the use of some common English prepositions (of, from, and for) to know more about the use of these words and identify the Arabic meaning of these prepositions. Choosing these prepositions was due to the importance of these prepositions and their frequent use in English language classes. This study is the second one conducted by the researcher to investigate more about English prepositions and to find out more about the common prepositions and the difficulties encountered by Libyan learners of English. In the first study the three English prepositions were studied and translated into Arabic by the two Authors Aiblu and Abusnaina (2023).

2. Problem of the Study

Grubic (2004) stated that English Prepositions pose more problems and cause many difficulties for the non-native speakers of English than any other part of speech. Hamdallah and Tushyeh (1993) stated that English prepositions are a major problem for Arab EFL learners because they are fewer in Arabic and usage differ. While native speakers of English find it easy to choose the correct preposition when they write or speak, non-native speakers face many difficulties in choosing the correct preposition. For example, many learners of English find it difficult to know when to use 'of' and when to use 'from'. This is probably because of that the two prepositions

have the same Arabic preposition (min) (من), or they may be used in the same position.

The problem of the use of English prepositions for all learners of English becomes clear for all, and it does not need to be proved and investigated again. Many researches have been conducted on these prepositions all over the world and emphasized the existence of the problem. Takahaski (1969) said that "*the correct usage of prepositions is the greatest problem for learners of English*". Grubic (2004) stated that there are nine prepositions including *of, from, and for* and they are somewhat misleading, because of their multiple meanings and functions. Arab learners of English try to memorize one main equivalent for each English preposition. In some cases, one-to-one translation may give the proper English word, while in others it does not give the right word. Zughoul (1979). In our community as Arabs, for example, many authors investigated this problem and explored the use of some similar prepositions such as *in, on, and at*. They stated that the students encountered difficulties in using these prepositions

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. Identify the possible Arabic meanings of the three English prepositions (of, from, and for), and knowing the area of similarity between these prepositions in English and Arabic .
2. Exploring the use of the three English prepositions, and trying to extract certain rules or strategies for teaching these prepositions.
3. Giving useful recommendations to help the students of English use prepositions properly and prevent negative transfer.

4. Sources of Difficulties in Learning English Prepositions

According to Zughoul (1979), students usually face many difficulties when they are learning English prepositions. some of them are considered as general problems for all learners, while others are special to Arab learners. These are as follows:

- a. The first source of difficulties is the number of meaning each preposition has.
- b. One preposition can be used with different words to give different meanings, completely different from original meaning (phrasal verbs), such as *look for, stand for, account for*.

- c. English speakers are unable to offer a logical explanation for the occurrence of such prepositions or a conceptual guide of their usage. Takahashi (1969).
- d. Another source of difficulties is the use of some traditional methods in teaching English. This may encourage the learners to translate in their minds.
- e. The last source of difficulty is the interference from the native language, Arabic.

5. Limitations of the Study

This study has its limitations. It does not discuss phrasal verbs or idiomatic expressions including the tree English prepositions – of, from, and for. It only focuses on the three prepositions and their multiple direct or literal meaning. It was also restricted to some English sources since it is very difficult to check all the sources and cover them. Moreover, the researcher here has tried to get all the possible Arabic meanings of these three prepositions, but this is not an easy process and there might be more meanings for them.

6. Review of Literature

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a preposition as a word that governs, often comes before a noun or pronoun, and expresses a relationship to another word or phrase. The prepositions in general are used to indicate direction, time, place, location, spatial connection, or to introduce an object. Prepositions include, but are not limited to, the words such as "in," "at," "on," "of," and "to." They are more than being single words, they extend to appear in different forms and multi words.

Prepositions are the words that join a noun, pronoun, or the noun phrase and make each sentence complete. However, learning preposition is little tricky and hence, students should be conscious while reading a book or other documents and check the usage of the preposition.

Examples:

To the office, on the table, about myself, in a few minutes, at my place, etc.

Here, 'to', 'on', 'about', 'in', and 'at' are the prepositions.

6.1 Forms of Prepositions

English prepositions have more than one form, and occur in three different forms. Most of the prepositions in English are simple which are known as one-word prepositions. Some are multi-word prepositions (also called two-word, three-word, or compound prepositions). Simple prepositions are those prepositions which consist of one word such as in, on, at, to, under, by, etc. In English language we have approximately 70 simple prepositions. About half of them have two syllables (under, over, behind, without) or more (underneath, notwithstanding). Compound prepositions consist of two words such as *due to*, *ahead of*, *because of*, or three words such as *in case of*, *with reference to*, *in relation to*, etc. Also, compound prepositions can have more than three words such as *for the purpose of*, *from the point of view*, etc. Grubic (2004).

Our focus here is only on the three English prepositions *of*, *from*, and *for* which are considered as simple prepositions (single words), and we are not concerned with the other forms which occur with, such as *for example*, *for the sake of*, or *from my point of view*.

6.2 Functions of Prepositions

The function of a preposition is to demonstrate the relationship between two words in a sentence, normally between a noun, verb or adjective and a noun (including proper noun), pronoun, or gerund (verb in noun form). For example:

1. I ran into the classroom.
2. The lady beside Peter is his sister.
3. They spoke to him.
4. He is passionate about swimming.
5. I went to Singapore.

A preposition is normally followed by a noun or pronoun and together they form a "prepositional phrase" (about swimming, into the classroom, beside Peter).

In Arabic, a preposition is known as (harf aljarr حرف الجر), and it is made up of a single letter (as bi - بـ) or word (as ala - على) that links two nouns, a verb, and a noun to form a phrase. Prepositions are used before nouns in Arabic, similarly to their use in English, and the word or phrase they introduce is known as the preposition object.

6.3. Uses of Prepositions

We commonly use prepositions to show a relationship in space or time or a logical relationship between two or more people, places or things. Prepositions are most commonly followed by a noun phrase or pronouns, as in the examples below:

Our focus here will be on the use of the three English prepositions *of*, *from*, and *for* and explain how these prepositions collocate with certain words or nouns.

6.3.1 English Preposition *of*

The English preposition "of" is one of the most common and versatile words in English. It usually expresses a relationship between two things such as belonging, part-whole, origin, material, etc. Some of the uses of the preposition *of* are explained below.

We use 's for living things, groups and institutions. For inanimate objects we use 'of'

The book of my friend = My friend's book.

The capital of Libya is Tripoli.

It is also used to indicate something as part of a larger whole as in the examples here, *A piece of cake* and *The first chapter of the book*.

Another common use for the English preposition "of" is to show where something comes from. In the following two examples, *of* is used to express the origin or the source. *A man of a humble origin* and *The people of Tunisia are friendly*.

In addition to these uses, the preposition *of* can also be used to show the following: material (*A ring of gold*), content (*A cup of tea*), cause (*She died of hunger*).

The preposition 'of' is used after certain adjectives, however there is no real pattern and these must be learned as they are met. All the following adjectives are used with "of":

Afraid, ashamed, disrespectful, envious, fond, in favour, jealous, mindful, proud, repentant, respectful, sure, suspicious, scared, terrified, tired, trusting, uncertain, unsure, wary.

Another important point which should be mentioned here is that the preposition 'Of' is also used in certain expressions such as it's (nice/ good/ kind/ generous/ stupid etc.) of (somebody) to do (something). e.g. *It was*

kind of *Mark to help us with the luggage.* A good number of adjectives can be used to form the mentioned structure. The most common adjectives are listed here:

Bad, careless, charming, crazy, crude, cruel, evil, good, hateful, honest, ignorant, irresponsible, kind, mean, nasty, nice, responsible, rude, selfish, sweet, thoughtful, typical, understanding, unkind, thoughtless, unconscionable. (Grubic 2004).

As many other adjectives the preposition *of* is used with certain verbs. Some examples of these verbs are: accuse (somebody) of, dream of, hear of, remind (somebody) of, think of.

6.3.2 English Preposition *from*

The English preposition 'from' is used to indicate where something originates 'from'.

e.g. *Takashi is from Tokyo. This music is from the soundtrack of 'Gone with the wind.*

'From' is also used with 'to' and 'until' to show the beginning and ending point of an action in time.

e.g. *I work from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm every day.*

e.g. *We will be in Paris from Monday until Thursday.*

The English preposition 'from' is also used with certain verbs like:

borrow from, disappear from, discourage from, prevent from.

Unlike the preposition *of* which is used after many verbs and adjectives, the preposition *from* is used with small number of verbs and adjectives.

6.3.3 English Preposition *for*

The preposition *For* is used to indicate the reason or because of as in the example, *I am really happy for you.*

It is also used to indicate the duration or time as in this example – *I attended the session for one year only.*

For can be used to specify the use of something such as in the example *she is preparing for her final exam.*

As many other prepositions, the preposition *for* is used after certain nouns to connect it with another noun, as in the following examples:

A cheque for (a sum of money): e.g. *They sent me a cheque for \$100.*

A demand for / a need for:

e.g. *The film closed down because there wasn't enough demand for its product.*

e.g. *There's no excuse for behaviour like that. There's no need for it.*

A reason for: e.g. *The train was late but nobody knew the reason for the delay.*

The English preposition *for* is also used after many adjectives with different Arabic meanings. Here is a list of some adjectives which are used with the English preposition *for*:

"sorry, famous, and responsible, eager, concern, grateful, prepared, ready". The following are some examples showing the use of the mentioned adjectives with *of*:

- *I am sorry for shouting at you yesterday.*
- *I feel sorry for George. He has a lot of problem.*
- *The Italian city of Florence is famous for its art treasures.*

It is possible for the preposition *for* to be used after some verbs such as *care for, ask for, wait for, search for, leave for, etc.*

7. Methodology of the Study

This study depends on the data collected from different sources such as grammar books and websites. The sentences including the three English prepositions *of, from, and for* were translated into Arabic and revised by an Arabic specialist (Dr. Abdelhakeem Badi-Head of the Arabic Department, Faculty of Arts, Misrata University) to avoid any mistakes in the Arabic meaning. Then the results were arranged and introduced in four tables. The first three table include the possible Arabic meanings of every preposition, then all the prepositions having the same Arabic meaning were collected and arranged in the fourth table.

Table (1): Possible Arabic Meanings of *of*

The first table includes the possible Arabic meanings translated from the English preposition *of* in different sentences. Every Arabic meaning is written in the table next to its English sentence. The English preposition is not always expressed in Arabic by a preposition, its equivalent may be a different part of speech.

	English sentence	Arabic meaning
1	I'm tired <u>of</u> waiting	لقد سئمت من الانتظار
2	I'm sure you are capable <u>of</u> passing the examination.	انا متأكد من انك قادر على اجتياز الامتحان
3	I wasn't aware <u>of</u> that.	لم اكن على علم بذلك
4	I had a map <u>of</u> the town	كان عندي خريطة للمدينة
5	The advantage <u>of</u> living alone is that you can do what you like.	مizza - العيش بمفردك هو انه يمكنك ان تفعل ما تريده
6	Stay away <u>of</u> trouble	ابعد عن المتاعب.
7	The best student <u>of</u> the class received a prize.	الطالب الأفضل في الفصل استلم الجائزة

As shown in table 1, the English preposition *of* has seven different Arabic meanings which are: (*min*) (من), (*ala*) (على), (*bi*) (ب), (*li*) (ل), no Arabic equivalent preposition (0), (*an*) (عن) and (*fi*) (في). In the first sentence, we can see that the English preposition *of* comes after the adjective *tired* to give the Arabic meaning (*min*). The Arabic meaning (*min*) comes first among the other Arabic meanings included in table 1 (i.e. it appears with a bigger number than the other five Arabic meanings). As mentioned previously, this preposition can be used after adjectives, after verbs, and before nouns. The position of this preposition does not have any relation with the Arabic meaning . For example, we can see the same Arabic meaning (*min*) in different positions in the following phrases:

1. consist of, (after the verb)
2. tired of, afraid of, (after adjectives)

The other Arabic meanings of the English preposition *of* (*ala*, *bi*, *li*, and *an*) exist with different number in the English sentences, usually after verbs and adjectives. Sentence number 7 shows that the preposition *of* may be translated and corresponds to the Arabic preposition *fi* (في). This structure (sentence 7) is less common and sounds more formal and it is used here to suggest belonging and possession.

Finally, the last point which should be mentioned here is that there is no equivalent Arabic preposition in the case of possession and some other cases such as sentence 5 (the advantage of living alone). For example, in the following phrases there is no equivalent preposition in Arabic when we translate them into Arabic.

1. *the cover of the book* غطاء الكتاب

2. *the pictures of the town* صور المدينة

 3. *the map of the town* خريطة المدينة

In this case, we see that the preposition *of* is used between nouns to indicate the relationship between them.

Table (2): Possible Arabic Meanings of *from*

	English	Arabic
1	The film was different <u>from</u> what I'd expected.	الفيلم كان مختلف <u>عن</u> توقعاتي.
2	Sun block protects the skin <u>from</u> the sun.	واقي الشمس يحمي الجلد <u>من</u> الشمس.
3	He died <u>from</u> starvation.	لقد مات <u>بسبب</u> <u>(من)</u> الجوع.

Table 2 shows that the English preposition *from* has three Arabic meanings only. These words are (*an*) (عن), (*min*) (من), and (*bi*) (ب). As many other English prepositions, the English preposition *from* is used after certain adjectives, after verbs, and before nouns. The first meaning (*an*) (عن) comes after the adjective *from* and it can also appear in many other positions. The English preposition *from* in the second sentence was translated into the Arabic preposition (*min*) (من), while the last sentence has two Arabic meanings, *min* (من) or (*bisabab*) (بسبب) which give the cause of the death. The small number of Arabic meanings for this English preposition *from* makes it easier to learn than the other two prepositions – *of* and *for*.

Table (3): Possible Arabic meanings of *for*

	English	Arabic
1	Who was responsible <u>for</u> all that noise last night?	من كان مسؤولا <u>عن</u> كل هذا الضجيج الليلة الماضية.
2	He is known <u>for</u> his discipline.	هو معروف <u>بالانضباط</u> .
3	I am scared <u>for</u> you.	انا خائف <u>عليك</u> .
4	I sent an email to the company asking them <u>for</u> more information about the job.	لقد أرسلت بريدا الكترونيا الى الشركة اطلب <u>منهم</u> المزيد من المعلومات حول الوظيفة.
5	Don't wait <u>for</u> me.	لا <u>(-)</u> تنتظري.
6	Are you <u>for</u> or against this idea?	هل انت <u>مع</u> هذه الفكرة او <u>ضد</u> ها.
7	This gift is <u>for</u> you.	هذه الهدية <u>للك</u> .
8	She was punished <u>for</u> being late.	عوقبت لأنها تأخرت/ <u>بسبب</u> تأخرها.
9	I spoke <u>for</u> my friend.	تحدثت <u>بدلا من</u> <u>/نيابة</u> عن صديقي.
10	She has lived here <u>for</u> six years.	تعيش هنا <u>منذ</u> / <u>لمدة</u> ست سنوات.

The third table includes ten different Arabic meanings which are translated from the English preposition *for*. These words are (*an*) (عن), (*bi*) (بـ), (*ala*) (على), (*min*) (من), (*no preposition*) (0), (*maa*) (مع), (*li*) (لـ), (*bisabab*) (بسبـ), (*badalan min*) (بدلا من), and (*munthu*) (منـ). Like the other two verbs these Arabic words were translated from the English preposition *for* in different positions – after verbs, after adjectives and after nouns/ pronouns. This large number of translated Arabic meanings makes more problems for the students when learning such preposition.

The big number of the Arabic meanings for the three English prepositions (esp. the preposition *for*) and the shared meanings makes the process of teaching and learning such prepositions more difficult. e.g. the preposition for with 10 Arabic meanings can be a challenge to the Arab learners when learning English prepositions.

Table (4): Shared Arabic Meaning of Prepositions

	English	Arabic
1	I'm tired <u>of</u> waiting.	انا متعب <u>من</u> الانتظار.
2	Sun block protects the skin <u>from</u> the sun.	واقي الجلد يحمي الجلد <u>من</u> الشمس.
3	You can ask them <u>for</u> more information.	بإمكانك ان تطلب <u>منهم</u> معلومات أكثر.
4	I wasn't aware <u>of</u> that.	لم أكن على علم <u>بذلك</u> .
5	He died <u>from</u> starvation.	لقد مات <u>بالجوع</u> .
6	He is known <u>for</u> his discipline.	هو معروف <u>بالانضباط</u> .
7	You are capable <u>of</u> passing the exam.	انت قادر <u>على</u> اجتياز الامتحان.
8	I am scared <u>for</u> you.	انا خائف <u>عليك</u> .
9	He is responsible for all that noise.	هو مسؤولا <u>عن</u> كل ذلك الضجيج.
10	The film was different from that film.	هذا الفلم مختلف <u>عن</u> ذلك الفلم.
11	Stay away of trouble.	ابعد <u>عن</u> المتاعب.
12	The advantage of living alone is interesting.	مizza (-) العيش بمفردك ممتع.
13	Don't wait for me.	لا تنتظر (-) نـ.

The problem of prepositions is not only that the preposition has more than one meaning when it is translated into Arabic, but also, we can see that some English prepositions can have the same Arabic preposition meanings

as shown in table (4) above. The table includes some examples about how some English prepositions share the same Arabic meanings. The three English prepositions – of, from, for - in the first three sentences in the table have the same Arabic prepositions (*min*) (من). Also, the next three sentences (4, 5, 6) were translated into the same Arabic preposition (*bi*) (بـ). Moreover, the sentences 7, 8, and 9 can be translated to give the same Arabic meaning (*an*) (عن). The last two sentences are different from the previous ones in which the two prepositions (*of* and *for*) do not have an Arabic meaning.

8. Conclusion

After investigating and translating many sentences (collected from different English sources) including the three English prepositions *of*, *from*, and *for*, the author has drawn some findings and results about these prepositions. Each of the three preposition has a number of different Arabic meanings. The two English preposition *of* and *for* have a good number of Arabic meanings, while the preposition *from* has fewer Arab meanings, only three. The Arabic words which are extracted from the translation of these English prepositions are (*min*) (من), (*an*) (عن), (*ala*) (على), (*bi*) (بـ), (*li*) (لـ), no equivalent Arabic meaning (0), and (*maa*) (مع), (*li/liajl*) (لـ/لاجل), (*bisabab*) (بسبب), (*badalan min*) (بدلا من), and (*munthu*) (منذ). Moreover, the three English prepositions shared similar Arabic prepositions such as (*min*) (من), (*an*) (عن), (*ala*) (على). i.e. The Arabic preposition (*min*) can be translated into three English prepositions *of*, *from*, and *for* as mentioned in table four.

The author hopes that this study would stimulate other linguists and translators to undertake similar steps to handle the problem of using the English prepositions and offer reasonable solutions and proposals.

8.1 Recommendations and Suggestions

The researcher here intended to present some recommendations and suggestions on learning the three English prepositions to assist English learners in mastering the correct use of prepositions and avoiding errors caused by negative transfer. These are as follows:

1. The students should know that the prepositions seldom have a one-to-one correspondence between English and Arabic. An Arabic preposition may be translated by several English prepositions while

an English usage may have several Arabic translations. Scott and Tucker (1974).

2. The students should know that English prepositions can follow a nominal, a verbal, or adjectival. It will be more useful if the students are provided with a list of related adjectives and verbs.
3. Common mistakes of prepositions which are made by the students should be discussed in the class. This can be done in groups or in the whole class.
4. Some English prepositions do not have an equivalent meaning in Arabic, so the students' attention should be attracted to this point when they learn English prepositions.
5. Students' attention should be attracted to the meaning of phrasal verbs (verb + preposition) and they should be able to distinguish between phrasal verbs (indirect meaning) and the other verbs when they are followed by prepositions (direct meaning).
6. Finally, explaining the meaning in Arabic with examples can be useful and helpful to the Arab students when they learn English prepositions.

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