



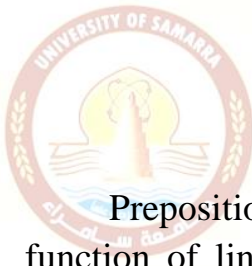
## Pragmatic Competence of EFL University Learners in Using Prepositions

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### ABSTRACT

Prepositions being one of the inevitable parts of speech, having the function of linking two main syntactic elements. More than the other parts of speech they constitute a problematic area in syntax. So their linguistic realization of EFL university learners is extremely difficult to predict as well as their pragmatic realization.

This study consists of five chapters in an attempt to shed light on the basic issues about the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic implications of prepositions. The objectives of this study are to investigate the linguistic misconception of EFL university learners to distinguish between the syntactic and semantic function of prepositions. Measuring the learners' potentiality in using spatial and temporal prepositions. This study intends to reveal the pragmatic misconception of the learners at the production level. Hence test is constructed by the researcher and a sample of (50) learners of the first year at Education College/ Samarra University are subjected to the test. The results explicate that the learners' performance is better in syntax more than that of semantics. Moreover the study indicates that the learners are unable to use the spatial and temporal prepositions adequately. As far as the pragmatic competence concerns the learners' pragmatic failure is reflected apparently in the results.

These results support the hypotheses which are supposed that the learners have a lack in using prepositions and this is due to many factors namely the negative transfer of the first language, the absence of recognizing the mathematical dimensions of prepositions and the negligence of the significance of exposing the learners to the authentic contexts.

تصدر عن كلية التربية / جامعة سامراء



## Section ONE

## INTRODUCTION

**1.1 The Statement of the Problem and its Significance**

Prepositions in general reflect a problematic category in theories of syntax. These syntactic theories classify prepositions according to either lexical or functional features: lexical prepositions contribute to semantic content while functional prepositions determine the syntactic case only.

To be delicate, it is assumed that prepositions are a grammatically distinct class of words. Most central members characteristically express spatial and temporal relations such as the English words (before, in, toward, under) or serve to mark various syntactic functions and semantic roles such as the English words (**for**, **of** and **to**).

The primary function of prepositions is relational. A preposition basically links two syntactic elements to constitute a prepositional phrase, yet the same preposition can show both features and its categorization relies on its use ([en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/ preposition](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/preposition) and [post position](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/post_position)).

So it is difficult to learn to use prepositions correctly in a foreign language. Even advanced learners of English find prepositions difficult in the sense that pragmatic misconception is realized in the utilization of prepositions on the part of the Iraqi learners. The major problems occur on three levels:

**Firstly**, on the syntactic level, in some expressions, English does not have prepositions where in other languages one may be used (Swan, 2007: 425), i.e, in English, prepositions can sometimes be omitted while in other languages prepositions are used to express the same proposition. The native speaker says: "The student failed the exam".

While some Iraqi students may use a preposition following the main verb forming a prepositional phrase \*"The student failed in the exam". Such an example explicates the problem of using the preposition after the verb 'fail' and this misuse is attributed to the interference of the L1 with the foreign language which causes this problem.

**Secondly**, the semantic and pragmatic implication might not be recognized in the same sense as the native speakers do. Let's consider the following examples:

- 1- He is **in** the bus.
- 2- He is **on** the bus.

The Iraqi learners do not realize the meaning of the above-mentioned examples as the native speakers do; that is, sentence (1) implies that the bus is Not in service whereas sentence (2) means that the bus is in service even if it is stopping.

**Thirdly**, most of Iraqi students face difficulty in understanding the correct prepositions of idiomatic expressions of the prepositional phrase. These phrases consist of a verb and preposition, adjective and preposition, a noun and preposition and phrases introduced by prepositions.

- 3- They decided **on** the boat.

For some foreigners as the Iraqi students, the verb and its preposition may form two different sentence elements. Either they constitute one semantic unit of a prepositional verb, i.e., 'decided on ' means 'chose' in the above example or a prepositional phrase such as on the boat in the above example. (Chomsky 1965:101)

## **1.2 The Aims of the Study**

This study aims at:

- 1- Investigating the ability of EFL university learners to distinguish between the syntactic and semantic function of prepositions at the recognition level .
- 2- Measuring the EFL university learners' potentiality in using spatial and temporal prepositions.
- 3- Identifying the learners' ability to use prepositions in international communication.
- 4- Revealing the extent of pragmatic misconception of the EFL university learners at the production level.

## **1.3 The Hypotheses of the Study**

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- Linguistic misconception of using prepositions is attributed to the



negative transfer of L 1

- 2- EFL university learners can use spatial prepositions more adequately than temporal ones.
- 3- The pragmatic misconception is due to the lack of the mathematical dimension recognition.
- 4- The pragmatic misconception of using prepositions is also due to the absence of the semantic implications of prepositions.

#### **1.4 The Value of the Study**

The value of studying prepositions is owing to the frequent occurrence of prepositions in sentences. Statistically, Fang (2000:11) in a corpus of one million English words, one in ten words is a preposition that is why prepositions are considered a problematic and controversial category.

It is hoped that this study will be of pedagogical value for the learners of English. It attempts to help Iraqi/EFL learners improve their English competence by focusing on the confusing area of prepositions.

Prepositions as seen by some grammarians like Jackendoff (1973:345) are considered one of the four major lexical categories along with noun, verb and adjective. Prepositions add a highly important semantic content to a sentence.

#### **1.5 Limits of the Study**

The study is limited to:

- 1- first year, English department, college of Education, Samarra University during the academic year 2012-2013 and
- 2- some spatial and temporal prepositions and particularly the common, frequent and most important prepositions.

#### **1.6 Procedures**

The procedures adopted in this study are based on:

- 1- presenting a theoretical background concerning the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic theories about prepositions,
- 2- making a survey of the previous studies that are conducted on prepositions,
- 3- constructing an achievement test concerning the specific prepositions of place and time to show how learners can use them

- properly in context and applying it to the students of the 1<sup>st</sup> year in the college of Education at Samarra University,
- 4- analyzing the collected data statistically using suitable methods and
  - 5- the results are computed and stated along with the conclusions and recommendations.

## **1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms**

### **1.7.1 Pragmatic competence**

It is defined as the "knowledge of conditions and manners of appropriate using of the language." Chomsky (1980:224). It can also be defined as "the implicit system of rules that contribute to a person's knowledge of a language". This includes a person's ability to create and understand sentences, including sentences they have never been heard before, knowledge of what are and what are not sentences of a particular language, and the ability to recognize ambiguous and deviant sentences. (Richards & Schmidt; 2002: 93-94)

Barron (2003: 108) defines pragmatic competence as "the knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language's linguistic resources".

### **The Operational Definition of Pragmatic Competence**

Pragmatic competence can be defined as the ability of the learners to use language in a contextually appropriate fashion.

### **1.7.2 Preposition**

It is "A word which typically comes in front of a noun phrase, for example 'in', 'of', 'on', etc. The noun phrase which follows the preposition can be called a preposition complement. (Leech; 2006:97)

Preposition is "one of the parts of speech and a member of a closed word class that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence. Prepositions can have a variety of meanings:

**Direction** - He's going to the shops.

**Location** - It's in the box.

**Possession** - The government of Italy.

**Time** - He left after the lesson had finished.

(<http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/preposition.htm>)

### **The Operational Definition of Prepositions**



A preposition can be defined as a kind of function word which usually precedes a noun, pronoun or a non finite verb. It is difficult for EFL learners to use it correctly so they need more information and practice in using preposition.

## Section TWO

## THEORETICAL

### BACKGROUND

#### **2.1 Concepts of Prepositions**

Thomas & Martinet (1986: 91), Crystal (2003:368) and Yule (2010:292) agree that prepositions are terms used in the grammatical classification of words, referring to the set of items which normally precede noun phrase (often single nouns, pronouns, or non finite verbs) but the latter must be in the gerund form.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1992:193) and Essberger (2012:5) the name "preposition" (pre + position) means "place before". Prepositions usually come before another word, noun or noun phrase (noun or pronoun) and gerund (verb ing-form)

Biber et al., (2000:74) refer to prepositions as connectors which introduce prepositional phrases. Prepositions are reckoned as devices which can link two noun phrases with other sentence elements.

As far as this research is concerned, the second definition is going to be adopted since it seems clear, convincing and satisfactory.

#### **2.2 The Syntactic Function of Prepositions**

English grammarians such as Quirk and Greenbaum (1992: 18) agree on considering prepositions as one of the parts of speech in both spoken and written language.

Ehrlich and Murphy (1991:119-121) state that a preposition is a word that conveys a meaning of position, direction and time, it serves to link its objects to other related elements, they can show the relationship between objects in space and they can show relationship in time (when an event occurs in relation to another event). So prepositions have many functions and meanings in English.

Prepositions occur before grammatical structures which are called prepositional phrases. A prepositional phrase always begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun as an object of preposition, e.g.,



4- They take a rest **after** the swimming championship.

In this sentence, (after the swimming championship) is the prepositional phrase because it consists of (**after**) preposition + the swimming championship (noun phrase) which functions as the preposition object.

### **2.3 Semantic Function of Prepositions**

Quirk et al., (1987:673) and Patrick (2006: 5) devote a great part of their explanation to the semantic functions of preposition. They mention that prepositions express relation between two entities or sets of entities. The first entity is of external argument while the second one is governed by the preposition; for instance, in 'Rula goes 'to' school' to has two arguments, 'Rula an (external) and school. Rula is an argument shared with the verb 'go' whereas school governed by (**to**). Among the various types of rational meanings are the space and time, the subject of this thesis which looks easier to describe systematically.

Various semantic relations of prepositions (**at, in, on**) are going to be demonstrated which can be treated and conceived in terms of mathematical dimensions.

### **2.4 Semantics and Pragmatics**

Although semantics and pragmatics are independent fields, they rely on each other. So it is difficult to make distinction between them. These terms indicate related and complementary fields of study. Both of them are concerned with the transmission of meaning through language. So drawing the line between the two fields is not easy to demarcate and it is controversial. There is no clear – cut boundary between them. (Saeed; 2000: 17)

People talk in order to express the meaning of their thoughts. So the communication of meaning is the major aim of language. To present a clear idea, Morris (1938, 1955 cited in Saeed, ibid) and Levinson (1997:1) define syntax, semantics and then pragmatics to clarify the relations of signs with objects and interpreters as follows:

**Syntax:** "the formal relation of signs to each other."

**Semantics:** "the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable."

**Pragmatics:** "the relation of signs to interpreters."

On the other hand, Murcia & Freeman (1999:4) cited in Schmitt (2002:23) provide us with means of a pie chart which is divided into equal parts labeled 'form', 'meaning', and 'use'. By this chart the authors aim at providing a middle ground that gives prominence not only to both form and function but to meaning as well. From a communicative perspective they try to convey that grammar is not merely a collection of forms but rather involve the three dimensions of what linguists refer to as morphosyntax, semantics and pragmatics.

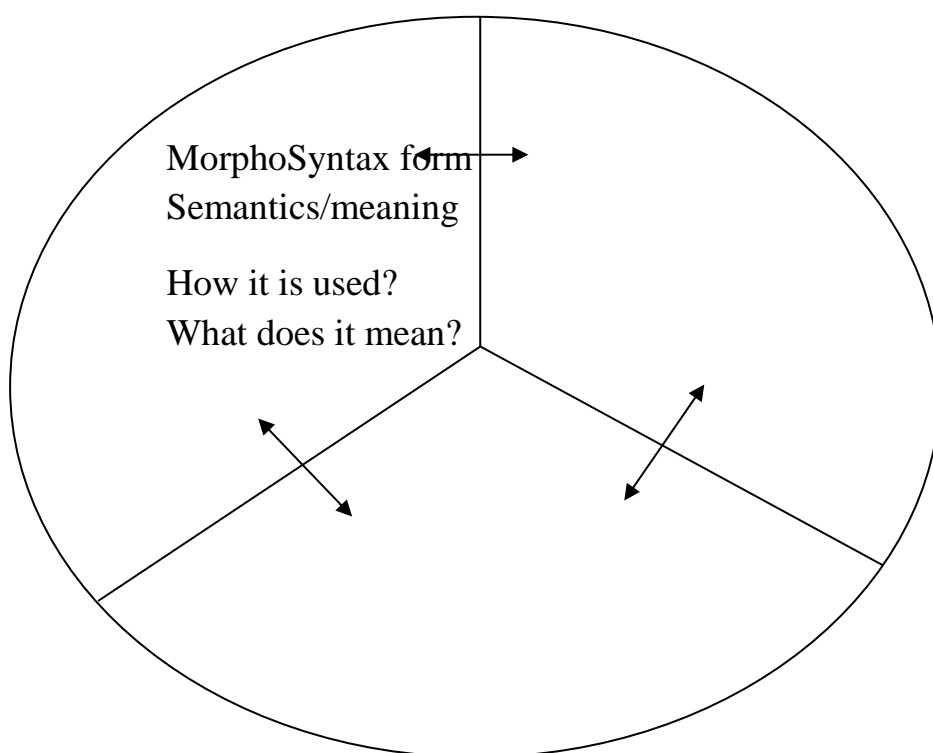


Figure (1) Interconnected dimensions of grammar (Murcia & Freeman) cited in Schmitt (2002: 23)

Hartman and Stork (1972:202), Palmer (1983:111), Blakemore (1987:11), and Crystal (2003:343) elucidate the same notion that 'semantics' is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning communicated through language.

Mey (1993:5) mentions that 'pragmatics' is a science of language seen in relation to its users. That is to say, it is not a science of language in its own right but it is a science of language as it is used by interlocutors, for their own purposes within their limitations.



Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:82) and Thakur (2001:3) agree that 'semantics' considers how the meanings of words in a language connect to each other and how these words acquire their meanings when they take their place in the system of meanings.

Meaning in 'semantics' is defined purely as a property of expressions in a certain language irrespective of particular situations in relation to speakers and hearers. Accordingly, meaning in 'semantics' does not require an analysis of a sentence in a context in terms of implicature, presupposition and speech acts. (Leech; 1983: 5)

While Crystal (2003:301) indicates that 'pragmatics' unlike 'semantics' is related to an investigation of that aspect of meaning derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions but from the way these utterances are used to convey messages and how they are connected to the context in which they are uttered.

Kearns (2000:1) and Saeed (2000:16) point out that 'semantics' deals with the 'literal message' of words and the meaning of the way they are combined, taken together from the core of meaning, or the starting point from which the whole meaning of a particular utterance is constructed.

'Pragmatics', on the other hand, deals with all the ways in which literal meaning must be refined, enriched or extended to arrive at understanding of what a speaker means in uttering a particular expression.

Leech (1983:5) points out that both concepts, i.e., 'semantics' and 'pragmatics' are concerned with meaning, but the difference between them can be traced to two different uses of the verb 'mean'. That is, 'semantics' asks 'what does X mean?' while 'Pragmatics' asks 'what did you mean by X?'. In this sense, 'semantics' deals with meaning as dyadic relation whereas 'Pragmatics' deals with meaning as a triadic relation.

**"The distinction between semantics and Pragmatics has been formulated in a variety of different ways. Lyon (1987), for example, attempted to explain it in terms of the following dichotomies:**

**(i) meaning versus use, (ii) conventional versus non-conventional meaning, (iii)**

truth-conditional                      versus                      on-truth-conditional meaning, (iv) context independence versus context dependence, (v) literal versus non-literal meaning,

**(vi) sentence or (proposition) versus utterance, (vii) rule versus principle, and (viii) competence versus performance"**

Pragmatic competence is viewed by (Johnson and Johnson (1999:249) as an aspect of communicative competence which refers to the ability to communicate appropriately in a particular context of use. Cook and Newson (1996:22) believe that pragmatic competence is the knowledge of how language is related to the situation in which it is used.

Davis and Elder (2006: 50) try to define pragmatic competence as the ability to communicate appropriately in specific contexts of use, it is also an aspect of communicative competence which enables foreign language speakers to use their linguistic resources to convey and interpret meanings in real situations, including those who encounter problems due to gaps in their language. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to

produce and comprehend functional and sociolinguistic aspects of language.

Pragmatic competence includes the speech acts which play a central part in it. The former is the ability to match the meaning of an utterance with its pragmatic force as well as the ability to understand functional aspects of the language. The speech acts refer to culturally related aspects of the language such as politeness and formality. Pragmatic competence is recognized in the realization of speech acts on two linguistic aspects: Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic (Bachman, 1990 and Thomas, 1983) cited in Rose and Kasper (2001:1)

The tradition of speech acts theory and interlanguage pragmatics is the focus of spoken language particularly on the production rather than the comprehension. (Lyons; 1990:171)

Chomsky believes that pragmatic competence is the knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use that has been in connection with other competencies of language in teaching any second or foreign language. (Smith, 1999:38 and Halliday, 2003: 79-80)

**"Most of our misunderstandings of other people  
are not due to any inability to hear them or to  
parse their sentences or to understand their words..  
As for more important sources of difficulty in  
communication is that we so often fail to under -  
stand a speaker's intention".**

(Miller, 1974) cited in (rodas-us-es/..../ Thomas- failure ....Thomas – pragmatic)

The notion of communicative competence belongs to Hymes (1972). Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) have proposed the most influential model of communicative competence which has been proposed by Canale; it comprises four competencies: grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competence.

More recently one of the several reformulations of the components was proposed by Bachman (1990), who adds pragmatic competence. This new component is embodied in the illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. (Brown; 2007: 218-221)

Pragmatic competence is indispensable in face - to - face interactions in a foreign language. Children acquire pragmatic competence from contextualized communicative activities in their native language through interaction with their caretakers. In contrast, most adult foreign language learners lack that type of input. Kasper and Schmidt (1996:160) claim that adult learners require explicit instruction; otherwise, they will experience "difficulty in acquiring appropriate language use patterns, especially in foreign language. (www.latindex.ucr.ac.cr/.../ib-HASBUN.p...(2004)

Pragmatic competence is generally defined as the ability to use language appropriately in a social context. The significance of pragmatic competence has been mentioned in theory and practice from 1980s to 1990s the theoretical models of competence emerged in the field of Bachman 1990 and Palmer 1996. These theoretical models have advanced the field by situating pragmatic and sociolinguistic. They have served as a guiding framework for the empirical studies of pragmatic competence. (Taguchi; 2009:7)

### **2.5.1 Pragmatic Perspectives on Language Use**



This advertisement implies a lot of prepositions used metaphorically.

The advertiser intends racism in this advertisement through the phrase 'black and white ' referring to USA president Obama in the White House with a wide smile and the sign of his hand which refers to the victory, it is also at the chocolate covers smile.

There is a metaphor for advertising the chocolate (black) in vanilla (white), it is the flavor of the week.

The purpose of the advertisement aims at selling the product and sending a message to the audience intended for clarifying racism roots which are interpreted as the black man wins the president chair against the white man. (Cited in Mahmood, 2013:182)

## **2.6 Teaching Prepositions**

Teaching prepositions is one of theory topics to teach English grammar that is teaching grammar is one of the confusing things especially to those who learn English as a second or foreign language.

Prepositions unlike content words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, are functional words and may or may not carry semantic meaning. Part of the challenge may also come from the fact that sometimes we are familiarized to use language subconsciously.

It is assumed that teachers might take into their consideration that students have unique learning styles and teaching prepositions is most effective when their learning preferences are known.

Hence the effective steps to be followed in teaching prepositions are:

### **1- Start with a simple definition.**

- The golden rule is to keep it simple.
- "Do not give technical definitions".
- At the beginning just make sure that they have the basic knowledge about prepositions taken from simple and standard definitions.
- Make sure that prepositions appear in contextualized sentences to convey meaning.

### **2- Enlist Metaphor**

A metaphor is a means of explaining the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar or the abstract in terms of the concrete. For example one can label metaphors as the 'nouns and verbs' 'Helpers'. One can say as nouns and verbs are the central part of sentence prepositions are necessarily demanded to complete the meaning of a sentence. For instance you have the nouns 'bag' and 'table' and the verb 'put'. Now these can form a sentence but preposition can help form the specific sentence you want, whether you want the 'bag' 'on, beside or under' the table for example.

### **3- Use Examples.**

As a matter of fact it is not possible to give the learners all the prepositions of a foreign language. A good example base might be presented by giving as many different example as possible.

### **4- Compare and Contrast.**



It would also be very successful means of exposition to compare prepositions with other function words (i.e., how they are similar and how they are different).

- Give examples and counter examples.
- Show how function words differ from content words and how they are similar
- How they need to work together to form a sentence.

**5-** Discuss the functions.

- Go over the different types of prepositions and briefly explain the use of each.
- Show the use of prepositions in sentences showing their function and discussing the sentence without prepositions.

**6-** Use games.

- Just make sure whatever games are selected to use, they might be appropriated for the kind of students you are teaching.

**7-** Use them in a sentence.

- To be authentic, prepositions are to be applied in actual sentence constructions to see whether messages have been successfully across or not.

It is although teaching prepositions for EFL learners can be complicated at certain times, but following the steps above, as it is believed, will make that task a little easier. (Teaching prepositions, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

### Section Three Methodology

#### 3.1 Population and Sample Selection

Population can be defined as "group of individuals with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals." (Best and Kahn, 2006:13)

To achieve the intended aims of this study, the students of the college of Education / Samarra university who are studying at the department of English for the academic year 2012-2013 represent the population of the study which is (230) students.

The sample can be defined as "a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis." (ibid)

So the sample of the present study consists of (50) students being randomly chosen from the first year of English Department/ College of Education. As shown in table (1)

**Table (1)**  
**The Population and Sample of the Study**

| Stage | No. of Whole population |        |       | No. of Selected sample | Pilot | Percentage % |
|-------|-------------------------|--------|-------|------------------------|-------|--------------|
| First | 230                     |        |       | 50                     | 15    | 21           |
|       | first                   | second | third |                        |       |              |
|       | 84                      | 65     | 81    |                        |       |              |

#### 3.2 Test Construction

The EFL learners are asked to participate in a two-part test (achievement test see Appendix B). The first part which consists of two questions in the form of recognition test containing (30) items specifically





designed to reveal the subjects' abilities to explicate the syntactic and semantic functions of spatial and temporal prepositions.

The second part of the test (see Appendix B) is intended to elicit information about the subjects' abilities to perform the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic implications in their appropriate use of spatial and temporal prepositions. This part consists of two questions containing (30) items as indicated in table (2)

**Table (2)**  
**Specification of Contents, Behaviours, Number of Items and Scores of the Achievement Test**

| NO. of Questions | Contents        | Behaviours   | NO. of Items | Scores |
|------------------|-----------------|--|--------------|--------|
| Q 1:(A)          | Multiple Choice | To fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition of place        | 7 items      | 7      |
| Q 1: (B)         | Multiple Choice | To fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition                 | 8 items      | 8      |
|                  | Contents        | Behaviours   | NO. of Items | Scores |
| Q 2:(A)          | Multiple Choice | To fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition of time         | 8 items      | 8      |
| Q 2: (B)         | Matching        | Match the preposition in list (A) with suitable expression in list (B) | 7 items      | 7      |

| NO. of Questions | Contents | Behaviours | NO. of Items | Scores |
|------------------|----------|------------|--------------|--------|
|------------------|----------|------------|--------------|--------|



|                         |                   |  |                     |               |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--|---------------------|---------------|
| Q 3:(A)                 | Cloze test        | To fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition from the given list   | 8 items             | 8             |
| Q 3: (B)                | Writing sentences | Connect the words to make a sentence including appropriate preposition   | 7 items             | 7             |
| <b>NO. of Questions</b> | <b>Contents</b>   | <b>Behaviours</b>  | <b>NO. of Items</b> | <b>Scores</b> |
| Q 4:(A)                 | Writing sentences | Writing sentences including the appropriate preposition to determine the position of the rabbit according to the picture<br>To fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition | 8 items             | 8             |
|                         | Total             |  | 60 Items            | 60 Marks      |

### 3.3 Validity of the Test

Validity is used in methodology to refer to the degree in which a test or another measuring device is truly measuring what is intended to measure.

Validity is defined in language tests, and in general as the extend to which the results stand for the quality being measured. Content and face validity are the main kinds of validity. (Johnson and Johnson, 1999: 363)

Treiman (2009: 242) defines validity as "the extent to which differences or decisions we make on the basis of test scores are meaningful, appropriate, and useful.

#### 3.3.1 Face Validity

Harris (1969: 7) defines face validity as "the way the test looks to the examinees, test administrator, educators and the like." While Richards and Schmidt (2002: 178) retain the meaning of face validity in the answer of this question "Does the test measures what it is supposed to measure?"



For this study, to know whether the items of the test are suitable to evaluate the performance and calculate the problems of the university students in using prepositions, the test has been exposed to a \* jury of experts in teaching English as foreign language. It is necessary to note that the test is judged valid by all the jurors.

### **3.3.2 Content Validity**

According to Brown (1996: 231-249) content validity contains any strategies that focus on the content of the test. His attempt is to demonstrate the content validity; testers investigate the extent to which a test is a representative sample of the content of whatever aims or specifications the test is originally constructed to measure.

In the same vein, (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 352) present the definition of content validity as the extent to which the test accurately presents the domain of knowledge, skills or ability that it was constructed to measure.

### **3.4 Reliability of the Test**

Reliability is regarded as one of the most significant features of test. Madsen (1983:179); Mehrens and Leman (1991: 249-262) agree on the assumption that the reliable test produces basically the same results on different occasions if the conditions remain the same.

Bachman and Palmer (1996: 19) define reliability as "the quality of test scores which refers to the consistency of measures across different test forms, rates and other characteristics of the measurement context."

The test has been administrated to a sample of (15) students of the first year .

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\* The jury members are:-

- 1- Prof. Nahida T. Majeed, (Ph.D) / College of Education, Tikrit University.
- 2- Asst. Prof. Ahmed M. Salah Al-Juboury, (Ph.D) / College of Education, Tikrit University.
- 3- Asst. Prof. Amra Ibraheem Sultan, / College of Education, Tikrit University.
- 4- Asst. Prof. Madiha Saifaddin, (Ph.D) / college of Education for Women, Tikrit University.
- 5- Asst. Prof. Esbah S. Abdullah, (Ph.D) / College of Education, Samarra/ Tikrit University.
- 6- Asst. Prof. Mohammad Badeea' (Ph.D) / College of Education, Tikrit University.
- 7- Asst. Prof. Ali Talib (Ph. D)/ College of Education for Women, Tikrit University.
- 8- Asst. Prof. Abdullah H. Musa (Ph. D) / College of Education for Women / Tikrit University.
- 9- Asst. Prof. Shoaib S. Fahady (Ph.D) / College of Education , Mosul University.
- 10- Asst. Prof. Hussein H. Mohammad, (M.A)/ College of Education, Tikrit University.

One way is used to compute the coefficient correlation of reliability; the Cronbach Alphas Formula has been used to find out the coefficient correlation which is (0.83).

### **3.5 Items Analysis**

According to Linden and Glas (2010: 181-182) item analysis refers to the way of collecting, summarizing and utilizing the results obtained through the performance of students in order to make an objective and comprehensive assessment on the quality of the items. The main information to be obtained about individual items is item difficulty and item discrimination.

#### **3.5.1 Difficulty Level (DL)**

Linden and Glas (2010: 170) call it "item facility" as a statistical device intended to examine the percentage of students who answer a given item correctly. The total scores of the students who correctly answer the test items at the upper and the lower groups are divided by the total number of the both groups. The following formula determines the Difficulty Level (DL):

$$DL = \frac{Hc + Lc}{N}$$

Hc = Number of high correct answers

Lc = Number of Low correct answers

N = Total number of students in both groups

(Bloom,

1971:181)

The percentage of accurate difficult level should be between (0.20 – 0.80). If the difficulty level of any item is under (0.20), it should be neglected because that means it is very difficult, and if the difficulty level of any item is over (0.80), also it should be neglected because that means that the item is very easy.

The item difficulty value of this study ranges between (0.32-0.76), so such range is acceptable in terms of Remmers et al's, (1965: 266) measurements.

#### **3.5.2 Discrimination Power (DP)**

Linden and Glas (2010: 182) refer to item discrimination as one of the statistics techniques utilized in item analysis in discriminating the



high and low test takers. The following formula determines the discrimination power:

$$DP = \frac{Ru + RL}{1/2 T}$$

Ru = Represents the number of students in the higher group who obtain the high score.

RL = Represents the number of students in the lower group who obtain the right score.

1/2 T = The total number of the students in the item analysis.

As Eble (1972: 399) and Brown (1981: 104) state that the accurate percentage of discrimination power of each item should be (0.30) and above, in order to be acceptable. While, if the item discriminatory power is less than (0.30) the item is weak and it needs to be modified or changed.

In the present study the discrimination power ranges between (0.34 – 0.73). So the test is considered appropriate as shown in table (3).

**Table (3)**

**Difficulty Level (DL) and Discrimination Power (DP) of the Test Items at Recognition and Production Levels .**

| Recognition Level | No. of Items | DL   | DP   |
|-------------------|--------------|------|------|
| Q1-A              | 1            | 0.50 | 0.51 |
|                   | 2            | 0.41 | 0.44 |
|                   | 3            | 0.49 | 0.44 |
|                   | 4            | 0.63 | 0.54 |
|                   | 5            | 0.38 | 0.41 |
|                   | 6            | 0.57 | 0.46 |
|                   | 7            | 0.33 | 0.37 |
| Q1-B              | 1            | 0.70 | 0.51 |
|                   | 2            | 0.52 | 0.61 |
|                   | 3            | 0.46 | 0.44 |
|                   | 4            | 0.66 | 0.49 |
|                   | 5            | 0.61 | 0.73 |



|                   | 6            | 0.43 | 0.46 |
|-------------------|--------------|------|------|
|                   | 7            | 0.41 | 0.59 |
|                   | 8            | 0.37 | 0.34 |
| Recognition Level | No. of Items | DL   | DP   |
| Q2-A              | 1            | 0.59 | 0.59 |
|                   | 2            | 0.45 | 0.46 |
|                   | 3            | 0.71 | 0.54 |
|                   | 4            | 0.56 | 0.44 |
|                   | 5            | 0.76 | 0.45 |
|                   | 6            | 0.67 | 0.46 |
|                   | 7            | 0.46 | 0.49 |
|                   | 8            | 0.37 | 0.44 |
| Q2-B              | 1            | 0.48 | 0.61 |
|                   | 2            | 0.65 | 0.61 |
|                   | 3            | 0.51 | 0.46 |
|                   | 4            | 0.38 | 0.51 |
|                   | 5            | 0.38 | 0.66 |
|                   | 6            | 0.45 | 0.61 |
|                   | 7            | 0.46 | 0.49 |

| Production Level | No. of Items | DL   | DP    |
|------------------|--------------|------|-------|
| Q3-A             | 1            | 0.33 | 01.51 |
|                  | 2            | 0.54 | 0.54  |
|                  | 3            | 0.60 | 0.61  |
|                  | 4            | 0.41 | 0.54  |
|                  | 5            | 0.32 | 0.44  |
|                  | 6            | 0.48 | 0.46  |
|                  | 7            | 0.46 | 0.39  |
|                  | 8            | 0.46 | 0.51  |
| Q3-B             | 1            | 0.51 | 0.54  |
|                  | 2            | 0.66 | 0.59  |
|                  | 3            | 0.41 | 0.44  |
|                  | 4            | 0.38 | 0.41  |
|                  | 5            | 0.69 | 0.51  |
|                  | 6            | 0.46 | 0.44  |



|                         |                     |           |           |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
|                         | 7                   | 0.61      | 0.73      |
| <b>Production Level</b> | <b>No. of Items</b> | <b>DL</b> | <b>DP</b> |
| Q4-A                    | 1                   | 0.37      | 0.34      |
|                         | 2                   | 0.71      | 0.54      |
|                         | 3                   | 0.56      | 0.44      |
|                         | 4                   | 0.67      | 0.46      |
|                         | 5                   | 0.46      | 0.41      |
|                         | 6                   | 0.37      | 0.44      |
|                         | 7                   | 0.65      | 0.61      |
|                         | 8                   | 0.38      | 0.51      |
| Q4-B                    | 1                   | 0.41      | 0.49      |
|                         | 2                   | 0.33      | 0.51      |
|                         | 3                   | 0.60      | 0.61      |
|                         | 4                   | 0.32      | 0.44      |
|                         | 5                   | 0.46      | 0.39      |
|                         | 6                   | 0.51      | 0.54      |
|                         | 7                   | 0.76      | 0.44      |



## Section FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

### **4.1 Analysis of Data Related to the First Aim.**

The 1<sup>st</sup> aim of the present study is to investigate the ability of EFL university learners to identify the linguistic competence misconception, i.e., the syntactic and semantic misuse of prepositions. It also intends to verify the first hypothesis namely:

- Linguistic competence misconception in using prepositions is attributed to the negative transfer of L1.

After administrating the test on a sample of the first year students and analyzing their responses, it has been found that the mean score of the sample in linguistic competence at the recognition level is (13.12) and the standard deviation is (3.72). The computed t-value (3.61) is higher than the tabulated t-value (2.00). This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores and the theoretical mean in favour of the latter as shown in table (4)

**Table (4)**

#### **Learners' achievements at the recognition Level**

| Mean Scores | S.D | Theoretical<br>Mean | T –Test           |                    | Level of<br>Significance |
|-------------|-----|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|             |     |                     | Computed –T Value | Tabulated –T Value |                          |



|       |      |    |      |      |      |
|-------|------|----|------|------|------|
| 13.12 | 3.72 | 15 | 3.61 | 2.00 | 0.05 |
|-------|------|----|------|------|------|

Depending on the results of the foreign learners' performance, they have a problem in using preposition syntactically and semantically, and this is due to the negative transfer of the L1 as illustrated in the hypothesis. That is why learners encounter many difficulties. They resort the usage of English prepositions to their standard Arabic prepositional system, i.e. foreign language learners depend on their native language, as it is a source of their prior knowledge. The decision making of transferable items and structures is taken on the basis of learners' perception of similarities and differences between their native language and the target one.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Data Related to the Second Aim**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> aim is to measure the EFL university learners' potentiality in using spatial and temporal prepositions.

In the light of the results of the sample which is subjected to the achievement test in both spatial and temporal prepositions under the umbrella of linguistic competence at the recognition level, the statistical results show significant differences in the EFL university learners' achievement in spatial prepositions and temporal ones in favour of spatial prepositions. Table (5) indicates that the mean score of spatial prepositions is (4.26) and the S.D (0.57). The computed t- value (13.33) is higher than the tabulated t- value (2.00) which confirms the hypothesis:

- The EFL university learners' inability to use spatial and temporal prepositions adequately especially the temporal ones.

**Table (5)**  
**Learners' Achievement in Spatial prepositions**

| Mean Scores | S.D  | Theoretical Mean | T- Test           |                    | Level of Significance |
|-------------|------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
|             |      |                  | Computed -T Value | Tabulated -T Value |                       |
| 4.26        | 0.57 | 3.5              | 13.33             | 2.00               | 0.05                  |

It becomes clearly through the EFL University learners' achievement there is a big problem in using prepositions appropriately and this is owing to their insufficient input which leads to errors in the output. So the grammatical errors may be irritating and impede communication, but at least, as rules, they are apparent in the surface structure. So that the hearer is aware that an error has occurred. The grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, and this what the present study attempted to reveal that the Iraqi learners are exposed to many difficulties in using spatial and temporal prepositions appropriately.

#### **4.3 Analysis of Data Related to the Third and Fourth Aims.**

To analyse the data which is related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> aims namely:

- Identifying the learners' ability of using prepositions in communication. interactional
- Revealing the extent of pragmatic misconceptions of the EFL university learners at the production level.

Consequently, to achieve the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> hypotheses of this especially: study

- The pragmatic misconception is due to the lack of the realization of the mathematical dimensions. of
- The pragmatic misconception of using prepositions by EFL university learners is owing to the absence of the linguistic implications of prepositions particularly the semantic ones.

The learners' performance at the production level shows that the mean scores is (12.71) and the S.D (3.91). The computed t-value (5.25) is higher than the tabulated t-value (2.00). So we can consider their performance is weak and these are what the hypotheses try to indicate as shown in table (6).

**Table (6)**  
**Learners' Achievement at the Production Level**

| Mean Scores | S.D | Theoretical<br>Mean | T-Test            |                    | Level of<br>Significance |
|-------------|-----|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|             |     |                     | Computed –T Value | Tabulated –T Value |                          |



|       |      |    |      |      |      |
|-------|------|----|------|------|------|
| 12.71 | 3.91 | 15 | 5.25 | 2.00 | 0.05 |
|-------|------|----|------|------|------|

To sum up the weakness of the EFL university learners' performance at the production level, we must illustrate the points of weakness as follows:

- The EFL learners might recognize the dimensions of prepositions, for example the preposition (**in**) entails three dimensions length, width and height as a volume, whereas the preposition (**on**) necessitate surface of two dimensions length and width. The role of the teachers is to concentrate on this difference in the interactional communication to the learners, who must recognize them as the native speakers do.
- The inadequacies and the misconception of EFL learners are attributed to the lack of pragmatic recognition of prepositions and to the little opportunities of exposition to the contexts that imply the appropriate use of prepositions pragmatically. Linguistically, pragmatics is a complementary discipline to semantics as explained in chapter two.
- English, as one of the human means of communication plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. The main function of language is communication, and pragmatic competence is a significant component of communicative competence. Pragmatic failure belongs to foreign learners' lack of pragmatic knowledge and understanding of the culture of the target language. In order to improve their pragmatic and communicative competence, more introductions to pragmatic knowledge and cultural information should be incorporated into English teaching. Cross-cultural communication entails speakers' sufficient mastery of the linguistic knowledge of the target language and their pragmatic competence.

## Section FIVE

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Conclusions

Going by the analysis done so far and the data discussion presented in chapter four of this study, some conclusions are summarized below: The uses of prepositions represent a difficult area for EFL learners in general and learners at Samarra University in particular to deal with. They fail to use prepositions grammatically and pragmatically and this is owing to their theoretical ignorance which leads to weak performance as indicated in the following points:

- 1- Preposition is a word or phrase placed typically before a substantive and indicating the relation of the substantive as 'at', 'by', etc . So prepositions often play the crucial role of a mediator between two main elements of the sentence as embodied in the following syntactic phrases:  
N-P-N  
V-P-N  
Adj-P-N
- 2- The learners' inability to use prepositions appropriately is due to the fact that most prepositions have more than one meaning.
- 3- Different prepositions may have similar uses at the same time.
- 4- Many nouns, verbs and adjectives are normally used with certain prepositions. Often the correct preposition cannot be guessed and one has



to learn the expressions as a whole, the more idiomatic the more troublesome.

5- All the levels of language phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics are not sufficient to convey the meaning of prepositions without the authentic situations which convey the pragmatic implications. Thus, the intentionality of the speaker represented in all aspects of the language particularly that of prepositions is performed in the interrelatedness of all language levels. Without context or authentic situations the process of learning will be incomplete and insufficient and this will lead to unsuccessful learning as shown in the learners' achievement at the recognition and production level.

6- The absence of the appropriate use in authentic situations leads to pragmatic misconception.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

On the basis of the results and findings of this study, certain recommendations can be made aiming at assisting the EFL teachers to improve and develop the levels of recognition and production of learners' speech.

-Following the steps which are mentioned in Ch.2 about the successful for teaching preposition. steps

- Pragmatic competence is viewed as one of the component of competence. It reflects the basic elements, language communicative acts. It is the study of performance rather than function and speech competence. So from the pedagogical point of view, much more focus is needed because it is the way the speakers express their intentionality.

- Although pragmatics may be the new kid on the block in the field of foreign language pedagogy, a crucial concern needs to be addressed: how to teach pragmatics. The results of the present investigation suggest that perhaps the activities and materials used in our classrooms do not provide learners with enough pragmatic input for target L like grammatical and pragmatic judgments. Therefore a more proactive approach must be taken into consideration.

- Pragmatics can be viewed as an interdisciplinary study of language and language use. Pragmaticians claim that it is difficult to know whether



pragmatic failure results from L 1 transfer or from other sources unless the teacher or researcher knows the strategies of both the L1 and L2 or may be because many EFL teachers have learnt English as a foreign knowledge and skills fully. Therefore, their ability to provide appropriate learning experience may also be limited. Consequently, they should be well prepared to teach pragmatic rules of English.

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**The Version of the Test Given to the Students**

**Recognition Level ( part A )**



Q: 1/A: Describe Suzie's living room. Complete the sentences with a Suitable preposition (7Marks)



On , under , next to , in front of , behind

- 1- The cat is.....the sofa.....Suzie.
- 2- The DVD player is.....the television.
- 3- There's a photo.....the mirror.
- 4- There aren't any pictures..... the walls.
- 5- There's a lamp.....the sofa
- 6- There are some magazines.....the rug.....the sofa.

**Q:1/B:CHOOSE THE CORRECT PREPOSITION BETWEEN BRACKETS.**  
(8 Marks)

- 1- What a mess! there are paper all..... The floors.  
(over, above)
- 2- The ancient Castle is Located ..... The Sea Level.  
(over, above)
- 3- the cover of darkness, we crept up and took the  
enemy by surprise. (under, below)
- 4- The miners went down to three hundred feet.....  
the sea level. (under, below)
- 5- The classic music was broadcast.....Australia.  
(Across, through)
- 6- He pushed his way .....the crowd of people to get to  
her. (Across, through)
- 7-Zimbabwe is situated..... Zambia to the north,  
Mozambique to the east, Botswana to the west and south Africa  
to the south. (between, among)
- 8-I found this..... the things you left in the living room.  
(between, among)

**Q2- A:- Fill in the gaps with the suitable preposition** (8 marks)

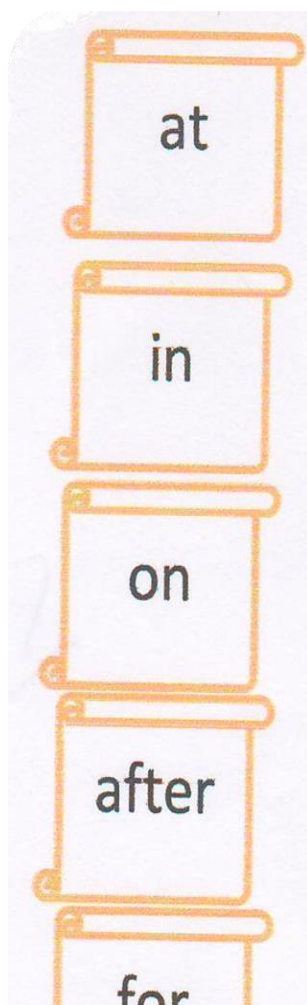
- 1- ..... Travelling, remember to take your Passport with you.  
a. When      b. on      c.by      d. before
- 2- ..... seeing the cat, the mouse ran off.



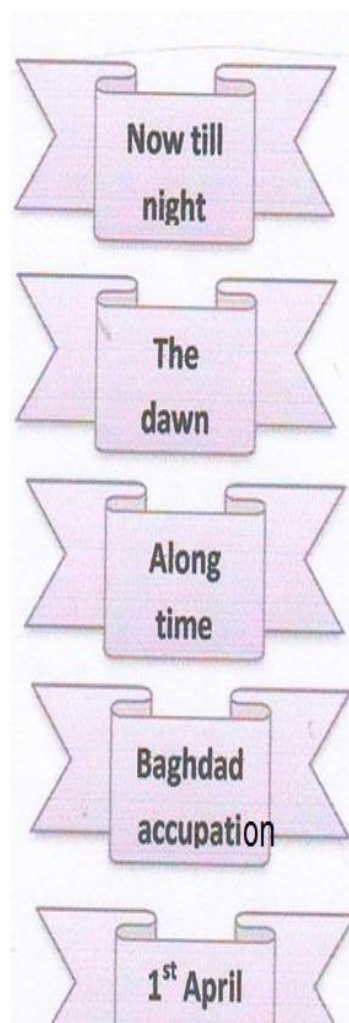
- a. When      b.at      c.by      d.in
- 3- ..... cold shower I felt much better.
- a. Before      b. after      c.by      d. while
- 4- ..... reaching the age of 70 he decided to retire.
- a. On      b. when      c. after      d.by
- 5-..... September the leaves begin to change color.
- a. On      b. at      c. during      d. after
- 6- I've been waiting for you.....over an hour.
- a. Since      b. of      c.at      d. for
- 7- ..... Last Christmas, we have not seen a lot of snow.
- a. Since      b. for      c. of      d. on
- 8- We'll have to work..... nightfall to finish this job.
- a. When      b. at      c. while      d. till

**Q2- B:- Match list A with list B (7 marks)**

**List A**



**List B**





### PRODUCTION LEVEL ( part B )

**Q3-A:-** Fill in the gaps in this paragraph with the suitable prepositions  
( in, on, with, for, around ) ( 8 marks)

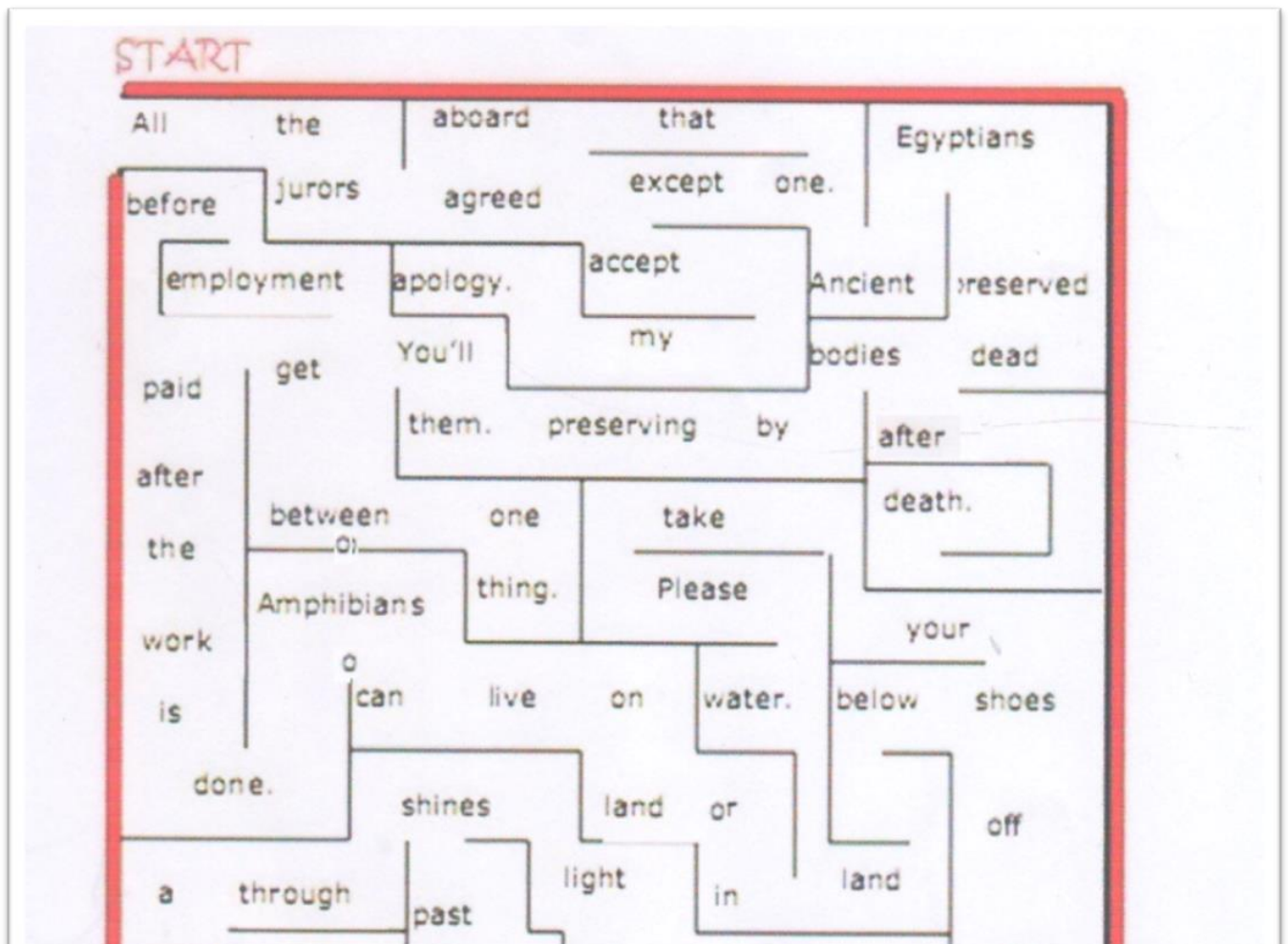


.....1980 Christina was born..... December 18 New  
york. Christina first appears.....television ..... star Search a



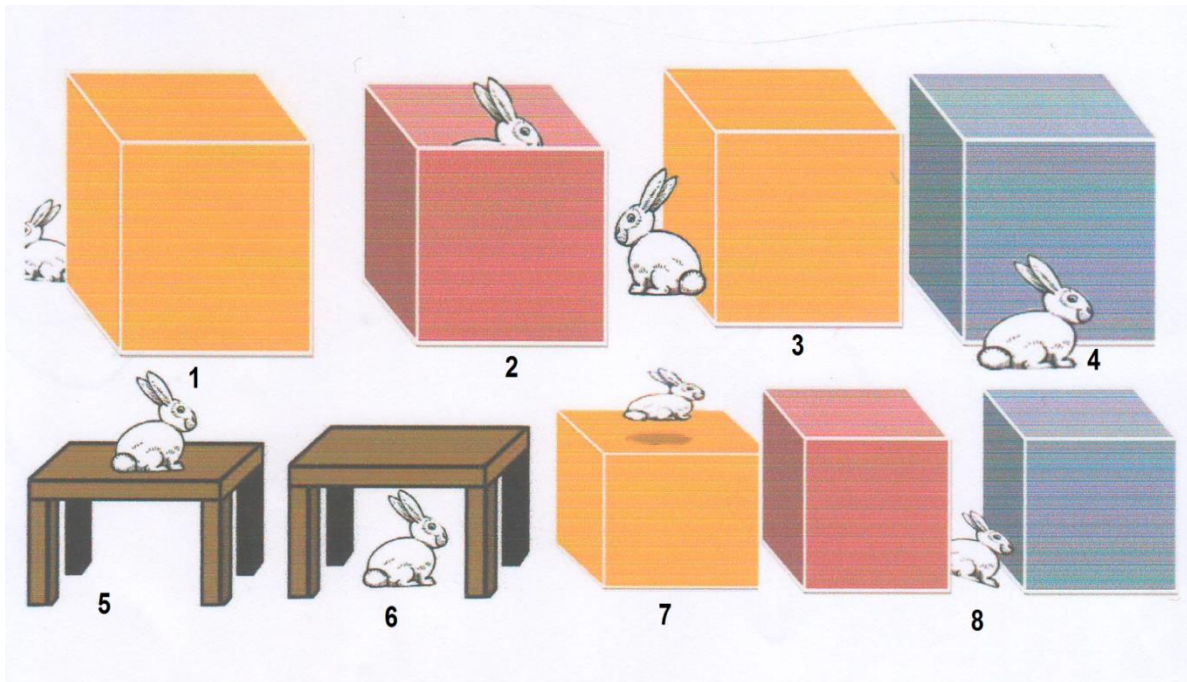
televisionTalent show. Christina is on TV in Disney's new Mickey Mouse Club..... Britney spears. Christina records "All I Wanna Do" with keizo Nakanishi, a Japanese pop star. She travels.....Japan. Christina sings a song.....The Disney Movie Mulan. Christina has her First Big hit - "Genie in a Bottle".

**Q3- B:-** *Connect the words in each sentence to get at least seven sentences including suitable preposition to find your way from the beginning of the maze to the end (7 marks)*





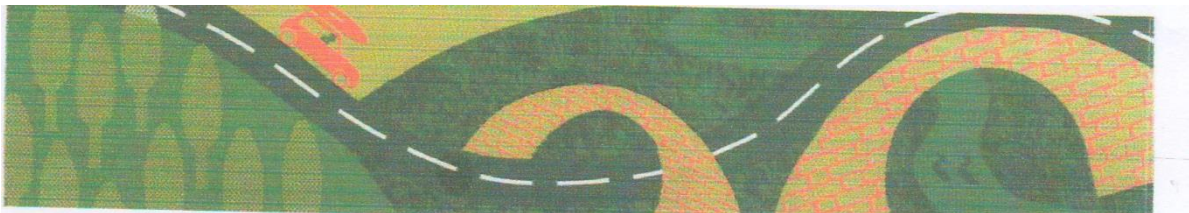
**Q4- A:-** According to the following pictures try to write sentences including the appropriate preposition to determine the position of the rabbit in each picture. (8 marks)





***Q4- B:- Complete the text with the prepositions. (7 Marks)***

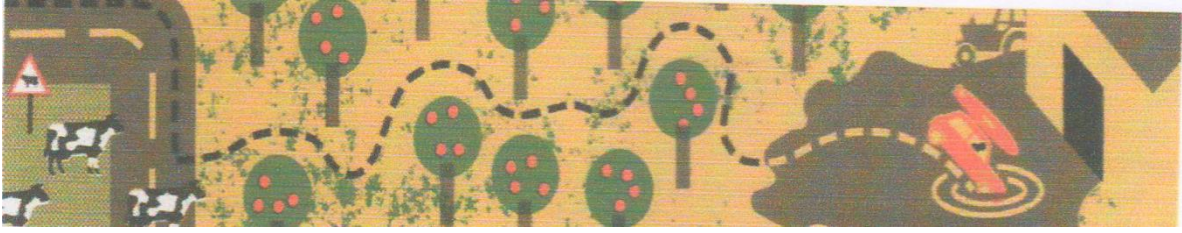
*Along , down , round , over , past , under , up*



***Joel drove.....the hill,.....the first bridge, and.....the second bridge.***



***Then he drove                      the road by the river,..... the                      pub,  
and..... the hill.***



*Next he drove.....the corner, off the road, through some apple trees ,and into lot of mud!*