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## TYPICAL ERRORS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS BY ENGLISH SPEAKERS

**Байлер А., Гончар О.М. Типові помилки при вживанні прийменників у вивчаючих англійську мову.**

У статті основну увагу приділено особливостям вживання прийменників у монологічному та діалогічному мовленні українців, які вивчають англійську мову. Виявлені та описані типові помилки, намічені шляхи їх усунення.

**Ключові слова:** прийменник, спілкування, вживання прийменників в англійській та українській мові, типові помилки, значення.

**Байлер А., Гончар Е.Н. Типичные ошибки в употреблении предлогов в речи изучающих английский язык.**

В статье основное внимание уделено особенностям употребления предлогов в монологической и диалогической речи украинцев, изучающих английский язык. Выявлены и описаны типичные ошибки, намечены пути их устранения

**Ключевые слова:** предлог, коммуникация, употребление предлогов в английском и украинском языке, типичные ошибки, значение.

**Byler A., Honchar O. Typical Errors in the Use of Prepositions by English Speakers.**

In the article, the main focus is on the specifics of the usage of prepositions in monologs and dialogs by Ukrainians who are studying English. Typical errors have been identified and described, and ways to correct them outlined.

**Key words:** preposition, communication, English and Ukrainian use prepositions, common errors, meaning.

**Relevance of the Topic.** The world we live in is large, fascinating and beautiful. Much of the beauty in the world comes from its many nationalities and cultures. With the continual advances of modern society, our world has

been steadily growing smaller, bringing these various cultures together more than ever before. Language is an integral and beautiful part of each culture but as people of different cultures live and work, travel and play together more and more, they face a variety of obstacles, communication being one of the greatest. Communicating in a foreign language is a challenge, at best, and a frustration and source of much stress at worst. It is understood that, for any given language, very few non-native speakers will speak perfectly, making no mistakes. Successful communication is certainly possible despite errors made in speaking a language; but making fewer mistakes should be a primary goal in advancing one's language skills and will always improve the level of successful communication. This work will look at some of the more frequent errors speakers of Ukrainian make when speaking English.

The author has worked with students at both the Kryviy Rih State Pedagogical University (Криворізький державний педагогічний університет) and the Ternopil State Pedagogical University (Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет ім. Володимира Гнатюка). Mistakes that were encountered in oral communication with students include: Prepositions, Articles Verb tenses, Sentence structure, Personal pronouns, Pronunciation. All mentioned above underlines the topicality of the research.

**The goal** of the article is to identify typical mistakes in the use of prepositions in the speech of English language students, to characterize them and to outline ways to eliminate them.

**The Main Presentation of the Material.** Webster's New World English Grammar Handbook defines a preposition as: "a word or, in some instances, a word group that relates one sentence element (the *object of the preposition*) to another sentence element. The element that it connects and patterns with is usually a noun and is identified as the object of the preposition." [1, p. 107]

Both English and Ukrainian use prepositions, and in both languages, the preposition is vital in determining meaning. The problem for Ukrainian speakers of English arises in choosing which preposition to use in order to convey intended meaning. (ie "How do I translate this preposition in this instance?") [2, p. 65].

There are forty-five different Ukrainian prepositions; all but three can be translated into at least two different English prepositions. A. D. Sherick and V. F. Starko identify 'впоперек', 'крізь', and 'попереду' as each having only one possible translation, making them relatively easy for Ukrainian speakers to cope with. 'Впоперек' is translated as 'across'; 'Крізь' is 'through'. 'Попереду' is most often used as an adjective but when used as an adverb,

its English translation is ‘ahead of’. Other prepositions, however, offer many more choices and it can therefore be difficult for a native Ukrainian speaker to choose precisely which English preposition he needs to use. A. D. Sherick and V. F. Starko identify ‘в/у’ (‘at’, ‘in’, ‘into’ and ‘on’ being most common), ‘від’ (most often ‘from’; less frequent translations include ‘against’, ‘for’, ‘of’), ‘до’ (‘for’ and ‘to’ are most common), ‘з’ (‘із/зі’) (‘with’ is most common but ‘at’, ‘on’ and ‘to’ are not infrequent), ‘за’ (‘after’, ‘at’, ‘behind’ and ‘for’ are the most frequent translations; may also be ‘by’, ‘for’, ‘on’, ‘past’, ‘with’), ‘на’ (‘at’, ‘for’, ‘in’, ‘on’ and ‘to’ are the most common translations), ‘під’ (most often ‘under’; other translations include ‘about’, ‘at’, ‘near’), and ‘по’ (most often translated as ‘about’, ‘around’, ‘by’, ‘on’, ‘over’ or ‘through’) as each having more than ten different translations, with ‘за’ having twenty-five possible variations, ‘з’ (‘із/зі’) having twenty-four, ‘в/у’ having nineteen, ‘до’ having eighteen, ‘на’ having eighteen, ‘по’ having sixteen, ‘від’ having fourteen, and ‘під’ having twelve. The more options a non-native speaker has from which to choose, the greater the chances are that he will make a mistake. We will look at common mistakes made when choosing which English preposition to use for ‘в/у’, ‘до’, ‘з’ (‘із/зі’), ‘за’, and ‘на’.

### ‘З’ (‘із/зі’)

‘З’ (‘із/зі’) is used with the instrumental and genitive cases and is expressed in English as ‘with’, ‘at’, ‘on’, ‘to’, ‘for’, ‘of’, and ‘alongside (of)’ (instrumental case); ‘for’, ‘from’, ‘of’, ‘out of’, ‘about’, ‘among’, ‘at’, ‘by’, ‘down’, ‘in’, ‘off’, ‘on’, ‘since’, ‘through’, ‘to’, and ‘with’ (genitive); in some instances, no preposition is needed in the corresponding English sentence. Most errors involving ‘з’ (‘із/зі’) in the instrumental case are committed when the word ‘with’ is used instead of one of the other options. The accusative case usage doesn’t seem to present as much difficulty. [3, p. 28]

- *Чому ви їдете з такою малою швидкістю?* ‘Why are you traveling **at** such a low speed?’ is the correct way to say this but the temptation is to say, ‘Why are you traveling **with** such a low speed?’

- *Ми привітали його з одруженням.* A very common error among Ukrainian speakers of English is, ‘We congratulated him **with** his marriage’; the correct way is: ‘We congratulated him **on** his marriage’.

- *Іван хоче розлучитися з своєю дружиною.* ‘Ivan wants to divorce **with** his wife’ is common but incorrect; ‘Ivan wants to divorce his wife’ is correct (no preposition is needed in English).

- *Я не хочу одружитися з нею.* As above, the English uses no preposition here: ‘I do not want to marry her’; it is frequently expressed as, ‘I do not want to get married **with** her’.

### За

The Ukrainian preposition ‘за’ is most often used in the instrumental, accusative, and genitive cases. It can be translated as ‘after’, ‘at’, ‘behind’, ‘by’, ‘for’, ‘on’, ‘past’, ‘with’, ‘around’, ‘beyond’, ‘down’, ‘out of’, and ‘round’ (instrumental case); ‘for’, ‘behind’, ‘at’, ‘by’, ‘in’, ‘over’, ‘past’, ‘to’, and ‘within’ (accusative case); ‘under’, and ‘in’ (genitive). It is the only preposition that can be used with the nominative case. [3, p. 36]

The nominative case usage is very specific: *Що він за людина?* This is often mistakenly worded ‘*What is he for a person?*’ The correct English expression is ‘*What kind of person is he?*’ The tendency is to do a direct translation which is simply incorrect.

Other common uses of ‘за’ leading to errors:

- *Я бігала за маленьким братом, аж поки не спіймав його.* The temptation is to say ‘*I ran behind my brother until I caught him*’: this is a grammatically correct sentence, but the actual meaning is unclear. The correct sentence is, ‘*I ran after my brother until I caught him*’.

- *Хлопець проводить весь свій час за комп’ютером.* ‘*The boy spends all his time behind the computer*’ is a common choice by Ukrainian English speakers but it should be, ‘*The boy spends all his time at the computer*’.

- *За нашими стандартами, Ігор є спеціалістом найвищого класу.* The correct way to express this is, ‘*By our standards, Ihor is a top-notch specialist*’. Because ‘за’ most often means ‘behind’ or ‘after’, a common mistake is to say, ‘*After our standards, Ihor is a top-notch specialist*’.

- *Наш будинок відразу за рогом.* Again, because ‘за’ often becomes ‘behind’ or ‘after’, this is often mistakenly expressed as ‘*Our house is behind/after the corner*’; the correct sentence is, ‘*Our house is just around the corner*’.

- *Я сподіваюся побачити вас за тиждень.* Of the accusative instances of the preposition ‘за’, this usage causes some difficulty, with the tendency being to say, ‘*I hope to see you for a week*’. The correct translation is ‘*I hope to see you in a week*’.

### В/у’

Looking at ‘в/у’, we see that it can be translated as ‘at’, ‘in’, ‘into’, ‘on’, ‘from’, ‘inside’, ‘of’, ‘to’, ‘with’, ‘within’, ‘about’, ‘after’, ‘among’, ‘for’, ‘out of’, ‘through’, ‘under’ or ‘up’. In many instances, the preposition is omitted in the corresponding English sentence. [3, p. 7]

- *Він купив молоко у своєї тітки.* The correct English sentence is ‘*He bought milk from his aunt*’. Frequently, Ukrainian speakers of English will say ‘*He bought milk at his aunt*’. This indicates a location and that seems logical in this sentence but in English, we do not use that construction.

• *Чи ви справді думаете, що він винен **у** вбивстві?* This sentence should read, ‘Do you really think he is guilty **of** murder?’ Instead, it is often ‘Do you really think he is guilty **in** murder?’ This is likely a result of the most common translation of ‘в/у’ being ‘in’.

• *Чи ви вже були **в** Америці?* This seems quite straightforward, but confusion arises because ‘в’ seems to indicate a spatial relationship of something inside something else. The correct English sentence is ‘Have you ever been **to** America?’ but in many instances, the tendency is to say, ‘Have you already been **in** America?’ While not technically incorrect, a native English speaker would not phrase it this way.

• *Коли він працював в Одесі, то жив **у** тітці.* As in the first example given, this construction is not really used in English and therefore, the native Ukrainian speaker will often make the mistake of saying ‘When he worked in Odesa, he lived **at** his aunt’. The easiest way to correctly say this is, ‘When he worked in Odesa, he lived **with** his aunt’. (As in the first example, ‘with’ most often corresponds to the Ukrainian ‘з’ (‘із/зі’) and therefore, in this sentence, it is not even considered as an option). To use the word ‘at’, thereby using the construction favored by Ukrainian speakers, we must use the possessive form of ‘aunt’: ‘When he worked in Odesa, he lived **at** his aunt’s place/house’.

• *У стінах цього будинку така поведінка не приймається.* ‘Within the walls of this house, we don’t accept such behavior’ is the correct way of wording this sentence. ‘**Within** the walls of’ is an expression indicating the space within a building or room. The error often made in this instance is to say, ‘**In** the walls of this house, we don’t accept such behavior’ but using ‘in’ in this sentence indicates being literally inside the walls and is incorrect.

• *Ми не сумніваємося **у** вашій чесності.* In this sentence, no preposition is needed in English. It is often expressed as, ‘We don’t doubt **in** your honesty’; the clearer and more correct way is to say, ‘We don’t doubt your honesty’.

• *Ми маємо потребу **у** вашій допомозі.* Again, no preposition is needed here. The tendency is to do a direct translation, ‘We have a need **in** your help’. The correct English sentence is very short and clear, ‘We need your help’.

• *Вони люблять грати **в** шахи.* The correct English expression is, ‘They like to play chess’ (no preposition). A common mistake is to say, ‘They like to play **at** chess’. This error is important because it conveys a completely different meaning (‘They like to pretend to play chess’) than the speaker intends.

### ‘До’

‘До’ most often means ‘for’ or ‘to’; it can also mean ‘at’, ‘before’, ‘by’, ‘into’, ‘on’, ‘towards(s)’, ‘after’, ‘against’, ‘alongside’, ‘down to’, ‘in’, ‘till’, ‘through’, ‘up to’, and ‘with’. In many instances, there is no preposition needed where ‘до’ is used. [3, p. 22]

• *Любов до своєї країни спонукала його піти в армію.* ‘Love **for** his country moved him to join the army’ is the correct expression; it is often instead expressed in this way, ‘Love **to** his country moved him to join the army’.

• *У нього була борода до пояса.* ‘He had a beard **down to** his waist’ is correct. Less clear but often used is, ‘He had a beard **to** his waist’.

• *Його здібності до фізики були очевидні від самого початку.* Here again, the tendency is to use ‘to’: ‘His abilities **to** physics were evident from the very beginning’. The correct statement, though, is, ‘His abilities **in** physics were evident from the very beginning’.

• *Я хотів би підійти до шефа поговорити про аванс.* When saying this in English, no preposition is needed, ‘I would like to approach my boss for an advance on my salary’. Often in this case, ‘to’ is mistakenly used: ‘I would like to approach **to** my boss for an advance on my salary’.

### ‘На’

‘На’ has English counterparts ‘at’, ‘for’, ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘to’, ‘by’, ‘into’, ‘toward(s)’, ‘with’, ‘against’, ‘of’, ‘off’, ‘out of’, ‘per’, ‘under’, ‘up’, and ‘upon’; in many cases, no preposition is needed in English for ‘на’. The most common error encountered with ‘на’ is to use ‘on’. [3, p. 46]

• *Минулого тижня вона була на зустрічі в жіночому клубі.* The correct way to say this is, ‘Last week she was **at** a women’s club meeting’. This thought is often expressed as, ‘Last week she was **on** a meeting at a women’s club’.

• *Вона любить працювати на кухні.* While it is correct to say, ‘She loves to work **in** the kitchen’, it will often be heard as, ‘She loves to work **on** the kitchen’.

• *Всі робітники вийшли на вулицю.* Many times, this will be expressed as, ‘All the workers went **on** the street’ instead of the correct, ‘All the workmen went out **into** the street’.

• *Вона хвора на рак.* Communicating about disease often presents problems. The correct English expression is, ‘She is sick **with** cancer’; it is sometimes heard as, ‘She is sick **on** cancer’.

• *Ви маєте право претендувати на спадок, що ваш дядько залишив.* In this instance, the English needs no preposition where ‘на’ is used, ‘You have the right to claim the inheritance left by your uncle’; however the

temptation is to express it as, ‘*You have the right to claim **on** the inheritance left by your uncle*’.

**Conclusions.** Thus, the use of prepositions can present quite a challenge. Sometimes using an incorrect preposition will give a person away as a non-native speaker (‘*When he worked in Odesa, he lived **at** his aunt*’ instead of ‘*When he worked in Odesa, he lived **with** his aunt*’); sometimes the meaning is less clear because of the wrong word (‘*He had a beard **to** his waist*’ instead of ‘*He had a beard **down to** his waist*’); sometimes a wrong meaning altogether is conveyed (‘*They like to play **at** chess*’ instead of ‘*They like to play chess*’). Reading English texts, listening to mass media and songs, and conversation with native English speakers are various ways to better understand how to properly use prepositions. And, of course, a willingness to be corrected is always vital when communicating in a foreign language.

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