

Acquisition of prepositions by Tanzanian efl learners

A case study of University of Dar es Salaam

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This is a descriptive case study which specifically examined the preposition acquisition differences and factors for those differences among Tanzanian EFL Learners. The study focused on locative and temporal prepositions which are found under three categories; must be used, obligatory deleted and optional prepositions. The study was guided by Interlanguage Theory by Larry Selinker. Systematic sample of sixty (60) University of Dar es Salaam undergraduate students was involved in the study. The study was limited to EFL learners in higher learning institutions. The data were collected through questionnaire, preposition testing knowledge and documentary review. The data were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. The findings revealed that the three preposition categories are acquired at different proficiency levels in which must be used prepositions are the first ones followed by obligatory deleted prepositions and finally optional prepositions. The reason for such difference was attributed to some of Selinker's interlanguage strategies whereby learners generalize all prepositions to be must be used ones as it is in Kiswahili (their near native language) and transfer Kiswahili prepositions' rules into English preposition use. Furthermore, English medium students and mature entrants with English language experience were more advanced in acquisition of prepositions than their non-English medium counterparts due to their more English exposure when compared with non-English medium students. Also, the acquisition proficiency of second year students was higher than first year students. It is recommended that, the coming studies should focus on other types of prepositions and involve different respondents.