



# Overcoming Preposition Errors Among Secondary School Students: An Action Research

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**Abstract:** Effective communication and academic success hinge significantly on preposition proficiency, yet many secondary-level students struggle with preposition accuracy due to English language complexities. This action research explored preposition challenges faced by Class Nine students at CMS High School Kattanam, developing gamified contextual-based learning strategies to address these issues. The intervention used interactive activities, games and contextual exercises to boost participation and reinforce correct usage. The study involved 40 students, with 12 selected for in-depth analysis. Pre- and post-intervention assessments showed significant improvement in preposition proficiency, demonstrating strategy efficacy.

**Index Terms** – Preposition Proficiency, Preposition Errors, Action Research, Contextual and Gamified Learning Strategies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The English language is widely recognized as the most commonly used medium of communication in education, business, technology, and international relations. In many countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language, learners often encounter difficulties in mastering its grammar. Grammar is the backbone of effective communication, providing the framework for conveying meaning and expressing ideas with clarity and precision. Prepositions, in particular, pose a challenge for many English language learners, as their usage can be nuanced and context-dependent. Prepositions are small words, but they carry significant meaning and function in expressing relationships between words in a sentence. Their correct usage is essential to achieve fluency and accuracy in both spoken and written communication. Garner had rightly remarked, “Prepositions are like clothes: you can change them and still be yourself.”(Garner,2003).

Teaching prepositions effectively remains a persistent concern. Unlike other parts of speech, prepositions often do not follow strict or predictable rules. Their meanings may vary depending on context, and many prepositions cannot be translated directly into learners’ native languages. For example, learners may find it confusing to choose between in, on, and at, even when they understand the basic meanings of these words. Errors in preposition use can affect the clarity of communication and can lead to misunderstanding. In many educational contexts, grammar instruction is often rule-focused and teacher centred. This traditional method does not always allow students to actively engage in learning or apply the rules in real life communicative situations. As a result, students often memorize prepositions mechanically without fully understanding their functions. To address this challenge, action research provides a practical framework for teachers to systematically investigate their own teaching practices, identify specific learning problems, implement strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness in improving learners’ language proficiency.

This action research project explores innovative approaches to teaching prepositions, aiming to enhance students' understanding and application of these essential grammatical elements. Mastering prepositions is

crucial for English language learners, as they are ubiquitous in everyday language, appearing in idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, and sentence constructions. However, traditional teaching methods often focus on rote memorization, neglecting the complexities and subtleties of prepositional usage. This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of a contextualized approach to teaching prepositions, leveraging authentic texts, visual aids, and interactive activities to promote deeper understanding and retention.

## II. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need for this study arises from the challenges faced by learners in mastering English prepositions, which are crucial for effective communication. Prepositions are a complex and nuanced aspect of grammar, often posing difficulties for students due to their abstract nature and multiple meanings. By addressing these challenges, the study aims to improve language teaching and learning outcomes, ultimately enhancing students' ability to communicate effectively in English. "Action research is essential for building learning organizations." (Senge, 1990)

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform English language instruction with effective strategies for teaching prepositions. The research can contribute to the development of targeted interventions, enhancing students' understanding and usage of prepositions. "Action research is a way to overcome the gap between theory and practice." (Argyris, 1985). This, in turn, can improve overall language proficiency and communication skills, benefiting learners in academic, professional, and personal contexts. By addressing the challenges of teaching and learning prepositions, this study has the potential to make a positive impact on English language education, ultimately benefiting learners and educators alike. The decision to focus on prepositions in English grammar stems from the observed frequency of errors made by learners in both written and spoken forms. Many students use incorrect prepositions when constructing sentences, often influenced by their first language. For example, learners may say 'discuss about' instead of 'discuss', or 'married with' instead of 'married to'. These common mistakes reveal the complexity of preposition use and highlight the need for more effective teaching methods.

Furthermore, prepositions are essential for expressing time, place, direction, and abstract relationships. Without mastery of prepositions, learners struggle to produce accurate sentences and to understand native English speakers. In addition, standardized tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and national examinations often assess grammar competence, including prepositions. Poor performance in this area can negatively affect students' overall language achievement. The primary significance of this study lies in its immediate, practical application within the classroom setting. Traditional research often remains theoretical, but "Action Research provides an immediate and actionable path forward for solving entrenched issues" (Scriber, 2023). This method allows the educator to address specific, local problems, such as consistent preposition errors among a particular group of students, rather than seeking a universal solution. As Corey noted, action research is "the research a person conducts in order to enable him to achieve his purpose more effectively" (Corey, 1953).

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as following:

1. To identify the common difficulties faced by students in learning prepositions
2. To develop and implement a Plan of action for overcoming the difficulties faced by students in learning Prepositions
3. To enhance the skill of using Prepositions correctly in various linguistic contexts
4. To improve students' ability in identifying the correct Preposition

## IV. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The plan of action will enhance students' understanding of English prepositions, improving their accuracy and confidence in using them correctly.

## V. METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

This study employed an action research approach it involved cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, focusing on innovative teaching strategies. Initially the investigator conducted a pre-test on the topic Preposition among class IX students of CMS HS Kattanam. The test consisted of 25 objective type questions testing their concept knowledge on the topic as well as their ability to distinguish and use Prepositions effectively.

Subsequently, the researcher implemented innovative lesson plans that incorporated games and interactive activities to teach prepositions. The teaching strategies included visual aids, contextual learning, and taskbased activities, designed to engage students and promote active learning. After the intervention, a post-test was conducted using the same questions to evaluate students' progress and assess the effectiveness of the teaching strategies. The results showed significant improvement in students' understanding and usage of prepositions, indicating the success of the innovative approaches.

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and identify areas for further improvement. The study demonstrated that innovative teaching approaches, such as learning through games, can significantly enhance student learning outcomes in English grammar.

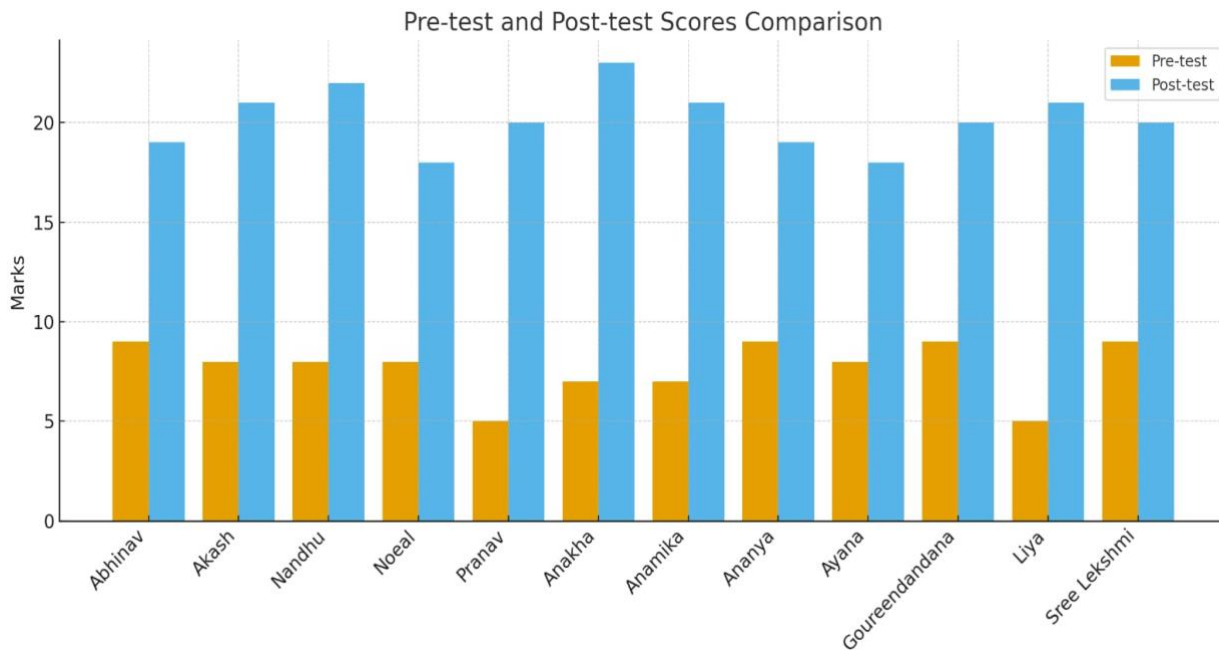
## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The investigator noted that students struggled with using prepositions correctly, especially in identifying and applying them appropriately. A Pre-Test was conducted to identify the main problem areas. After implementing a targeted Action Plan to address preposition errors, a Post-Test was given. The results from the Pre-Test and Post-Test were compared to assess the action plan's effectiveness and pinpoint areas needing more work.

**Table 1: Comparison of Percentage of Pre-Test and Post-Test**

Sl. No.	Name	Percentage of Pre-test scores	Percentage Post-test scores
1.	Abhinav	36%	76%
2.	Akash	32%	84%
3.	Nandhu	32%	88%
4.	Noeal	32%	72%
5.	Pranav	20%	80%
6.	Anakha R	28%	92%
7.	Anamika	28%	84%
8.	Ananya	36%	76%
9.	Ayana	32%	72%
10.	Goureenandana	36%	80%
11.	Liya	20%	84%
12.	Sreelekshmi S	36%	80%

A comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test scores, as shown in Table 1, revealed a notable enhancement in students' mastery of prepositions. The data indicated that every student achieved higher scores, with many exhibiting gains of more than 60 percentage points. This suggests that the intervention strategy effectively improved students' ability to apply prepositions accurately. To sustain and further boost this progress, additional practice and regular review are recommended.

**Figure 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test scores**

A bar diagram was constructed as part of this study to represent the scores of the pre test and post-test. The names of the 12 selected students are displayed on the y-axis, while the marks they scored in both assessments are shown on the x-axis. Each student is represented by two bars, illustrating their performance levels in the post-test and pre-test. The orange bars represent the marks scored in the post-test, while the blue bars depict the scores in the pre-test. This bar diagram effectively highlights the progress made by the students in learning and understanding Prepositions.

## VII. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Identifying preposition challenges helps teachers design better lessons.
2. Preposition proficiency boosts reading and writing skills.
3. Preposition-focused interventions increase student confidence in English.
4. Research insights can inform preposition teaching materials.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study underscores the effectiveness of targeted interventions in improving students' mastery of prepositions. By identifying and addressing specific challenges, the action plan enhanced students' ability to use prepositions accurately, boosting their overall language proficiency and confidence. The findings highlight the value of action research in driving meaningful improvements in language learning.

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