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Problems encountered by Students when using the English
Prepositions: "at, in, on and between, among"
Case study; Third year Students of English, Constantine

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master degree in
English (Applied Language Studies)

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Dedecation

-I would like to dedicate this work to:

My mother and my father.

My brothers and sisters to whom I wish success in their lives.

MY grand parents and all my relatives.

My best friends : Adel, Tahar, Lakhdar, Mounir, Khaled.

All who made it possible.

Acknowledgement

My thanks must first of all go to my supervisor Belwouahem Riad for whom I am very Grateful for his help and great efforts .I am also grateful to all teachers I have studied With .I would also like to express to express my thanks to my best friends: Brahim Adel, Boukerkeb Tahar, Simoud Lakhdar, abd Maziane Khaled, Melili Sabah For their undeniable help ,and every person who has made a share of help and Overwhelmed me with a piece of advice.

Abstract

Error analysis can be considered as one of the major areas of research in recent years. Grammatical words are one area that attract researchers' attention, since they differ from one language to another and they are meaningful only in the language they belong to. For this reason, these words arise many problems in the course of learning. This research is an attempt to shed light on the reasons that lie behind the failure in using English prepositions by Arab EFL students, in particular the case of: "at" "on" "in" and "between", "among". This research attempts to investigate whether the mother language has a negative influence on the students' performance when using English prepositions in particular the case of "at" "in" "on" and "between" "among". It attempts also to investigate whether the difficulty of the foreign language grammatical rules lead students to encounter difficulties in using English prepositions in particular the case of "at" "in" "on" and "between" "among"

List of abbreviations

E g: example

NL: native language

SL: source language

TL: target language

MT: mother tongue

L1 learner: first language learner

L2 learner: second language learner

FL: foreign language

EFL: English foreign language

NT: negative transfer

VS: versus

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Introduction

1-Statement of the problem

Theorists tend to agree that the ability to use a language is related to the context in which it is used, for example, if you have studied French extensively in college you may be capable of writing essays in French on topics related to literature or philosophy .However, you may find your French insufficient to the demands of changing money, finding a bus to Paris, or registering at your hotel. This does not mean that you do not know anything about French but you are weaker in some language skills than others.

The first language is generally a source of influence and transfer for foreign language Learners, who tend to use their first language better; they apply the first language rules to the second one ;this leads to make mistakes. In addition to that, the difficulty of the target language Grammar is also a source of difficulty for foreign language learners when they use it. Prepositions are one of these difficult areas .In learning English prepositions, Algerian Students understandably try to relate them to Arabic ones and to the Arabic system. So, the main problems for these learners lie firstly on the fact that not every Arabic preposition has a definite equivalent in English and vice versa .Secondly , not every English and Arabic preposition has a definite usage and meaning ;indicating only time or space or following or preceding a certain word .This latter lead them to make errors due to several different causes. Among these causes, there are two main ones; one is caused by interference from other structures in the target language; and the other one is caused by interference from the native language.

2-Aims of the study

During the process of learning English; Algerian students have troubles with the use of prepositions, in particular the case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among'. That seem to function in the same way; one situation can be expressed through the use of all these prepositions to convey the same meaning .Moreover, students think in their first language when dealing with the target language, and generally apply its rules to the target language when using prepositions .

Therefore, this research aims to identify Algerian students' problems in using prepositions in particular the case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among' and to have a close look to the real reasons that affect the student's performance. Thus, the main objective is to investigate the causes of errors in the use of prepositions in particular the case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among' that are frequently made by Algerian Students.

3- Research questions

This piece of research attempts to explore the following questions:

- 1-What are the most common errors in prepositions that are committed by Algerian students ?
- 2-why do students commit these errors?
- 3-Does the influence of the mother language have a negative influence on the students' performance when using prepositions?
- 4-How can those problems be treated?
- 5-Do the student's achievement in a diagnostic test of English prepositions reflect their Knowledge, in English?

4- Hypotheses

1-we hypothesize that the more EFL students are negatively influenced by their mother tongue ,the more they will fail in using English prepositions, in particular the case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among'.

2-We also hypothesize that the more EFL students misuse or ignore the foreign language grammatical rules , the more they will find difficulties in using prepositions in particular the case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among'.

5-Methodology

To find the reasons why students have problems in using prepositions in particular the Case of 'at', 'in', 'on' and 'between', 'among', a grammatical test is administrated to, where the Prepositional use in English is checked. The subject of the study is a randomly selected sample of third year students at the English department, University of Mentouri, Constantine. These third year students are selected ,because they have normally reached a proficiency level and master the English language and are, hence, capable of answering the test.

1-Chapter one

Prepositions and transfer

Introduction

It is divided into two sections. It deals with the basic concepts of this study which are: prepositions and transfer. The first section of this chapter includes the different concepts of prepositions; prepositions used as idioms; prepositions which express relationships in space and in time; problems with prepositions; and eventually the different relations that can be expressed by the use of prepositions: at, in, on, and between, among. Section two is devoted to the definition of transfer as a concept; factors which lead to transfer; types of transfer and a contrastive comparison between English and Arabic prepositions.

1-1-Prepositions

1-1-1 Definition

Many English words are prepositions which serve to connect its object with the rest of a sentence. That is to say, a preposition indicates the relationship of the idea expressed in the prepositional phrase to the ideas expressed in the rest of the sentence.

According to Allosop (1986:105) “prepositions are words which show the relationship between the things, people or events”. Allosop in this quotation, states that preposition can express relationships in space and in time and in any other relations as: purpose, possessions, and result. Rieux (1975) mentions that prepositions have the same purpose as case, in which, they indicate the relationships that exist between things. Lienfrink’s definition (1973:46). indicates that prepositions are “a tenseless set of relationships involving verbs and nouns”

In addition to that, Celce (1999) considers English prepositions as free morphemes unlike the other languages where they are bound inflectional morphemes. Thus, the reason

that prepositions have the name they do is that they precede nouns unlike other languages like Japanese which has postpositions that follow nouns, and this does not mean that English prepositions must always come before nouns. It is possible for a preposition to come after nouns. Furthermore, Strang (1974) claims that English prepositions are morphemically, either simple like: against, at despite, on and in or complex which consist of two or more words that function as single prepositions such as: because of, out of, in front of. In the same way Bennet (1975) says ‘the term “morpheme is inappropriate since several of the items are polymorphemic, for example; inside”, in front of; nor, a word is any more appropriate, since some of the identities consist of more than one word, for example: in front of” (p4). Bennet in his quotation states the form of prepositions which can be distinguished by their form, function, and meaning. They can be simple or complex as well. Simple prepositions such as: in, on, at are “closed class”, that is to say, we cannot discover new word prepositions, whereas, complex prepositions, such as: “in spite of” are “open class” because we can perhaps invent new combinations. (Close, 1981: 148)

Rutherford (2003) states that the use of prepositions makes semantic relations more clarified and easier to be understood.

Kennedy (2003) points that prepositions represent 8% of the used words in spoken language and 12% of the used words in writing.

1-1-2 The Co-Occurrence of Prepositions

1- Prepositions + Noun / Pronoun

where prepositions are followed by a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase

E.g.: followed by a noun: sit on the chair

Followed by a pronoun: the dog sat under it

Followed by a noun phrase: why do you always do the opposite of what I tell you to do
(Allosop, 1986: 106)

Sometimes noun phrases can be followed by prepositions e.g.: objection to.

Awareness of.

Belief in.

Noun phrases can be preceded and followed by prepositions

E.g. with respect to

At adds with

In return for

(Celce and Diane, 1999:403)

2. Prepositions + Ing Verb Form

e.g.: The dog responded by doing exactly the opposite

I am not good at typing (Allosop, 1986:122)

There was no point in waiting any longer, so we went (Murphy,1994:122)

3. Verb + preposition

The following table shows that some verbs are frequently followed by particular prepositions:

	About	After	For	Of	On	With
Agree	/				/	/
Argue	/		/			/
Ask	/	/	/	/		
Care	/		/			
Inquire	/	/				
Know	/			/		
Learn	/			/		
Talk	/			/		

Table:1 (Verbs followed by particular prepositions Hewings, 2005: 184)

4. Adj + Preposition:

e.g.: to be dependent on

To be free from/ of

To be afraid of

To be sorry for

To be content with (Celce and Diane, 1999:4)

1-1-3 Prepositions Used in Idioms

In the following examples taken from Achit (2008:333-4) we will see idioms containing prepositional phrases. These idioms are mostly used in North America and the meaning of each idiom will be mentioned after the colon.

At: at the mercy of: without defense against.

At that rate: under those circumstances.

At the wheel: in control.

Between: read between the lines: deduce a meaning that is not actually expressed.

Beyond: beyond help: unable to be helped.

Beyond a joke: too annoying to be amusing.

Beyond reproach: perfect, blameless.

By: by courtesy of: with the help or permission of

Perform by ear: perform (music) by listening to the sound without referring to written music.

By word of mouth: orally.

For: run for office: compete for an elected position

For the sake of: for the benefit of, for the purpose of

Food for thought: something which makes one think

From: from all sides: from all directions.

From head to foot: (of a person) completely.

From a scratch: from the beginning.

In: be in charge of: have responsibility for.

In a daze unable to think clearly, confused.

In league with: (of a person) joined together with (usually with a dishonest purpose).

Inside: inside out: with the inner side. Out: thoroughly

Into: go into riding: ride oneself.

Get into a rut: get into a fixed and interesting way of life.

Get into trouble: get into a difficult situation; do something blame or punishment.

Of: next of kin: nearest relative or relatives.

Of one's own free will: voluntarily; by choice

Rule of thumb: a simple way to calculate with what procedure to follow, based on extensive experience rather than theoretical considerations.

On: be on all fours: (of a person) be on hands and knees.

On condition that: only if; provided that.

On no account: absolutely not.

Out of: out of the blue: unexpectedly

Out of fashion: not fashionable

Out of line with: in disagreement with

To: see eye to eye with: agree entirely with.

Made to measure: exactly suitable.

Up to date: current, modern.

Under: under the circumstances: because this is true.

Under the impression that: having the idea that

Under fire: being shot at, being criticized

Up: having something up one's sleeve: have a secret: idea or plan in reserve.

With: with impurity: without risk of injury or punishment.

Tarred with the same brush: having the same fault.

Take with a pinch of salt: not believe completely.

Within: within hints: to a certain extent; not too much

Within living memory: with the memory of people now alive.

Without: go without saying: be obvious.

1-1-4 Semantic Characteristics of Preposition

Many researchers attempted to give a clear sight about the way in which English indicates spacial and temporal relationships.

1-1-4-1 Prepositions which Express Relationships in Space

Generally, locating an object in space involves two or more entities.e.g. “Stephanie is in the room “(Celce and Diane (1999).). In this example, the two entities are Stephanie and the

room. Taylor (1993) states that the relationship between these entities is inherently 'asymmetrical'. For this reason, the first entity has been considered as a figure, whereas the second one is considered as a background.

1-1-4-1-1 The Most Important Prepositions which Express Relationship in space

This is a list of the most important prepositions that express relationship in space, supported by some diagrams and examples taken from Allosop (1986:107).

Above	across	against	along	among	around
At	behind	below	beneath	beside	between
Beyond	by	down	from	in	in front of
Inside	into	near	next to	off	on
Onto	opposite	out of	outside	over	past
Round	through	to	towards	under	up
Underneath.					

- At, in, to (wards), (away), from, by, (a) round, up and down.

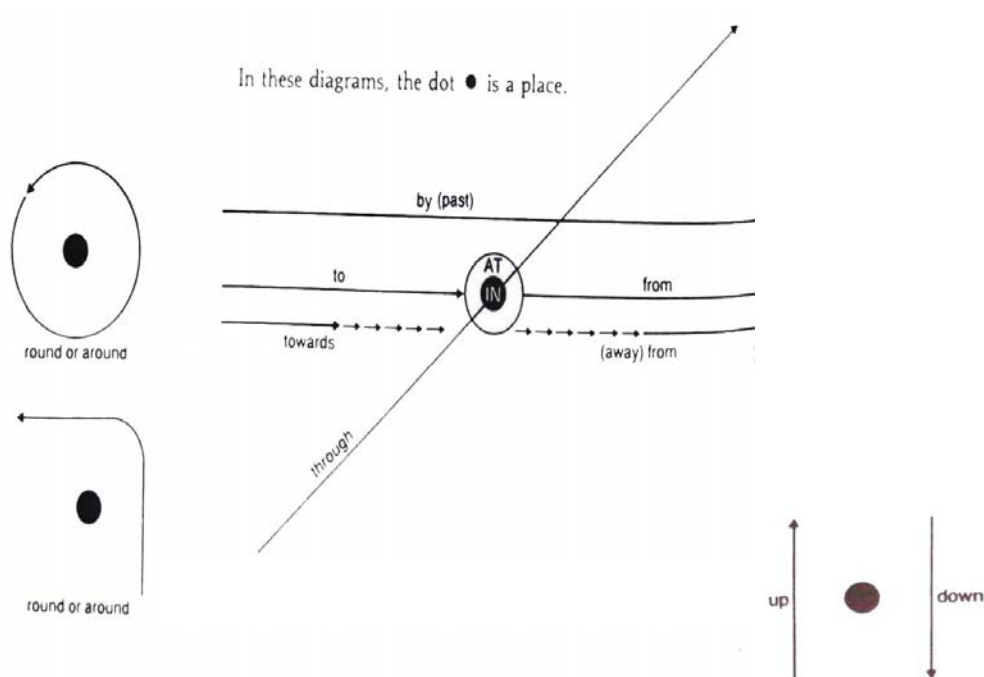


Figure 1 (Allosop, 1986: 107)

In different situations, prepositions can be used with verbs which indicate either movement or rest.

Movement

- Move away from the fire.
- He pointed up the road.
- The dog runs down the road.
- They went round the corner.

Rest

- She lives away from the house.
- Stay up the ladder.
- My house is just down the road.
- Meet me round the corner.

-In (to), inside, out of, outside, behind, in front of

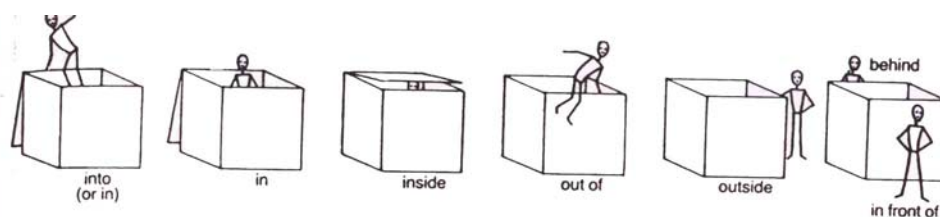


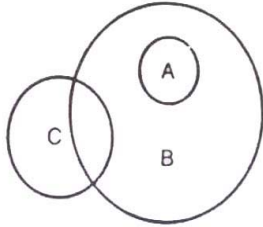
Figure 2 (Allosop, 1986: 109)

Both 'in' and 'inside' can be used for movement or rest.

'into' indicates only movement.

Examples:

- 'A' in 'B': Don't put all your eggs in one basket (proverb).



- 'A' into 'B': We drove into Spain : from one country to another).

- We drove in Spain (.: when we were in Spain, we travelled by car).

Figure 3 (Allosop, 1986: 109)

- A' inside 'B': circle 'A' is inside circle 'B', whereas; circle 'C' is partly inside and partly outside circle 'B'.

-Above and Below, Over and Under

Each pair of these prepositions share a common meaning and in some situations you can use one of the two. The distinction between the two is that over and under bears a vertical relationship.

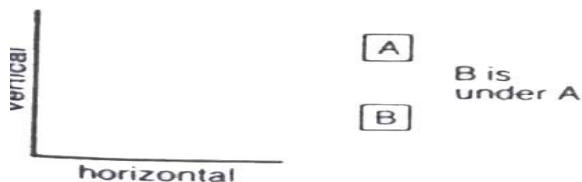


Figure 4 (Allosop, 1986: 109)

“Above” and “below” state that the relative position of the two things when one is higher or lower than another.



Figure 5 (Allosop, 1986: 110)

On, Onto, Off, Across

These prepositions indicate movement or rest in relation to a surface.

The preposition ‘onto’ can be used like ‘into’ to make it obvious that the movement is from one place to another.

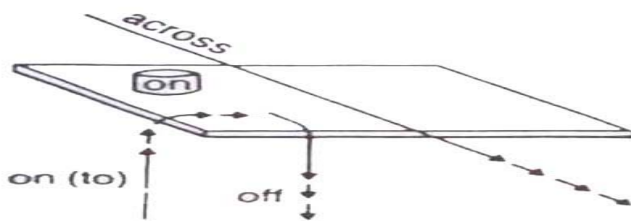


Figure 6 (Allosop, 1986: 110)

1-1-4-2 Prepositions which express relationships in time

Many prepositions like: at, on, in, to, from, about, for can be used to describe both place and time. According to Quirk et al: “the temporal uses of prepositions frequently suggest metaphorical extensions from the sphere of place” (1972:377). Furthermore, Driven (1993:76) states that “extensions of meanings of a preposition from physical space via time into more abstract domains do not occur in any haphazard way but follow a path of gradually increasing abstractions, whereby, the link with each prior meaning remains obvious and many account for most, if not all. Co-occurrence restrictions between trajector and landmark”. In other words, special meaning can be extended metaphorically from physical to mental space.

In addition to that, temporal prepositions use two dimension types: point of time, and period of time.

1-1-4-2-1 The Most Important Prepositions which Express Relations in Time

After	at	before		between	by	during
For	from	in		on	past	since
Through (out)		to	towards		until (or till)	within.

The list above contains the most important prepositions which express relationship in time, supported by some diagrams and examples taken from Allosop (1986)

Before and After:

In the following diagrams: 'X' is a point in time and 'XY' is a period of time

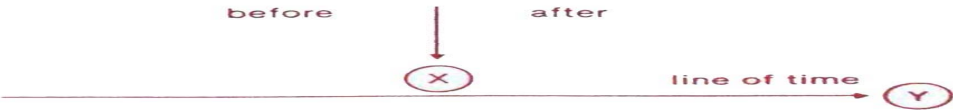


Figure7 (Allosop, 1986: 112)

Before and after indicate points of time on either side of an event.

- Examples: - Before the war.
- Before the game and after it.
- after dinner

- Before the Thursday.

- after the weekend.

Since, For, During, By, Until

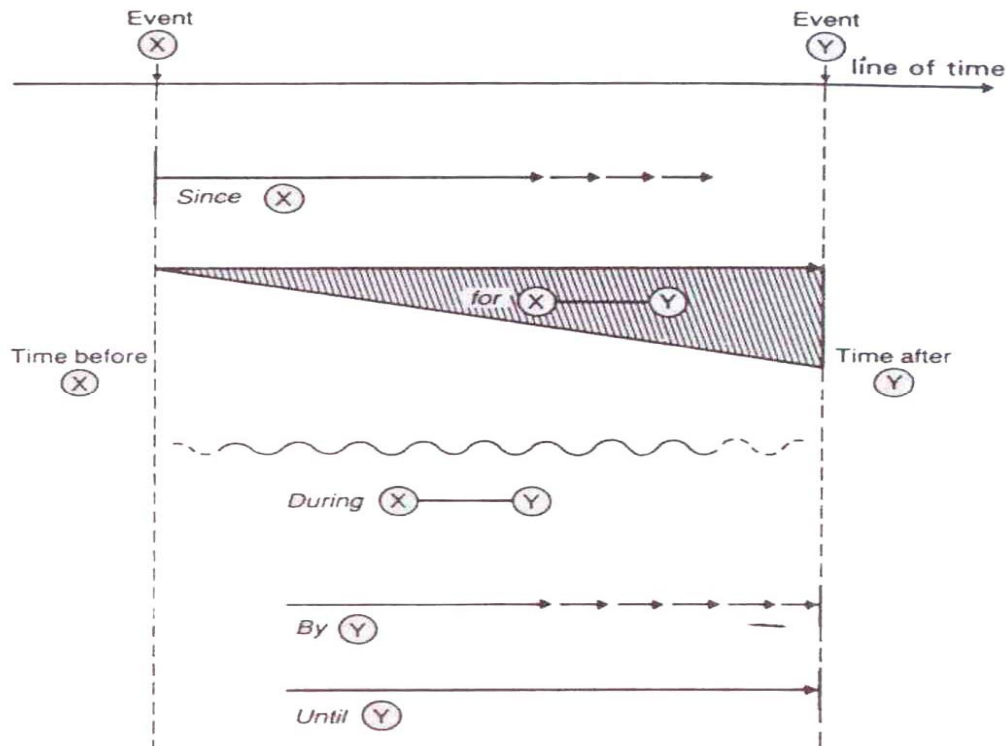


Figure 8 (Allosop, 1986: 113)

Since: a point of time: starting from that point. E.g. since 1989. Since breakfast. Since the beginning of May.

For: a period of time: starting at X and finishing at Y. E.g.: for a week. For several years. For the last three weeks.

During: a period of time: but not necessarily for the whole period e.g. during the concert. During my stay in France. During August.

By: a point of time: not later than Y, and perhaps before there is an estimate of probability. E.g. By nine, by ten.

Until: a period of time: stopping only when that point is reached. E.g. until Friday, until the end of the lesson, until tomorrow

To, From, Past and Between

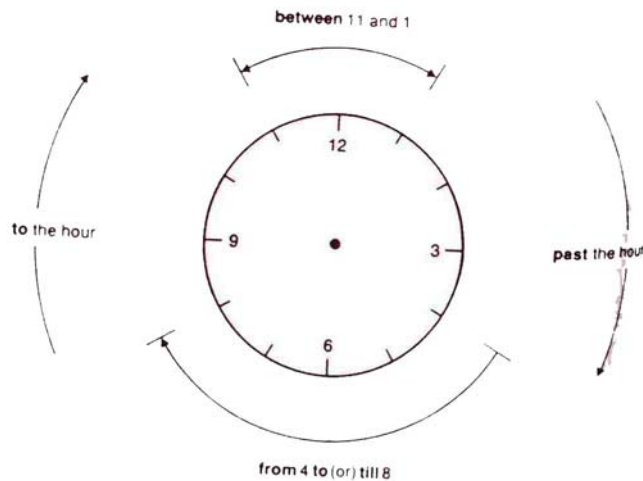


Figure 9 (Allosop, 1986: 115)

To, From, Past: a point in time.

Between: two times X and Y.

E.g. past: ten past five, a quarter past five, half past four.

To: a quarter to ten, twenty minutes to eleven.

From.....to: from July to September, from now to the end of the month

Between....and: between January and February.

1-1-4-3 Prepositions which express other relations

Many prepositions express neither time nor place. They can express a variety of meanings. Allosop (1986) mentions some relations that prepositions can express and support

them by examples. Some of these prepositions can be used with adjectives. E.g. “Afraid of”, “different from”, “angry with”, “amazed at”; a second category can be used to formulate fixed expressions with nouns. E.g. “by heart”, “from memory”, “on leave”, “without fail”; a third category, however, can be used without verbs. E.g. “depend on”, “go without”, “wait for”, “prevent for” a fourth category Can express different relationships. E.g. “Against”: “opposite”, “but”: “similar to except”, “by”: “means”. Let us take the case of ‘for’. According to Close (1981) ‘for’ can be used “to express the object or purpose of ‘to’ the movement or to indicate the person or thing affected by it” (p.151). Then, we can use ‘for’, for example:

Purpose: I only did it for money.

The one who receives: I bought it for you.

Destinations: where are you heading for? (Close, 1981:151)

1-1-5 Problems with prepositions

Prepositions are one of the most problematic issues in English because of different factors, Longendon (1970:86) states that: “the same relation may be introduced by a variety of prepositions and that the same preposition may be used to introduce many different relations” that is to say, the description of one meaning seems to be achieved by the use of many prepositions, and at the same time, the use of one preposition seems to be appropriate to describe different meanings.

Another problem caused by prepositions is that even short prepositions are provided, some try to use long and complex ones which are called “verbose prepositions” for instance; “for the purpose of”, “prior to”, “in the course of” which have simple equivalent prepositions which are: “to”, “before” and “during” respectively. In addition to that, sometimes, the

difficulty is that one cannot decide which preposition to use like: arrive at/in or to the airport (King, 2000).

1-1-6 The Use of: at, in, on, between and among

1-1-6-1 The Use in, on ,at

As has been mentioned above, at, in, on are the most problematic prepositions in English, since, they are the most difficult ones for learners when they use them, because each of them describes several meanings, as well as, the three of them can describe one meaning.

1-1-6-1-1 At, in, on as prepositions of space

According to Driven (1993:76) “at, in, and on are the basic and the most general place prepositions”.

At: is used:

- To state a point of orientation. E.g. meet me at the corner (Celce, Diane, 1999).
- To describe generally a situation without stating its preceded space. E.g. I ‘am sitting at my desk.
- To describe the last point of a movement which is separated from the person or thing that moves. E.g. do no throw it at me (Allosop,1986)
- We also use ‘at’ + event. E.g. we meet at Dephene’s party, didn’t we?
- We use ‘at’ + building when we deal with its purpose. E.g. the browns are at the theatre (: watching a play) (Estwood.2002)
- We use ‘at’ to describe a position as a point. E.g. he is standing at the bus stop (Clark ,2008).

In: according to Driven (1993:76) “in denotes the enclosure of the trajectory in the land mark and therefore, views the land mark as two or three dimensional space (a surface or a volume)”. For this reason, we use ‘in’ to describe a position in relation to three dimensional spaces or when something in a specific way. E.g. Stephen is in the room. (Celce, Diane 1999).

- We use ‘in’ in names of villages, towns and cities. E.g. arrive in London.
- We use ‘in’ when we want to mention something in a specific way. E.g. you are welcome any time in my home (Allosop, 1986).
- We use ‘in’ to describe larger areas. E.g. there was a zoo in our city (Estiwood.2002).

On: According to Driven (1993:76) “on” denotes physical contact between trajectory and land mark necessitating viewing the land mark as two or more dimensional spaces (a line) or two dimensional spaces (a surface)”

-We use on to refer to a position in relation to a surface or a line. E.g. don’t leave your glass on the floor.

- The house is right on the main road, so it is a bit noisy (Estiwood, 2002)
- Don’t sit on the desk. (Driven,1993).

1-1-6-1-2 At, In, On as prepositions of time

Quirk et al (1972) refer to “at”, “in”, “on” as prepositions of “time when” (p.317). Since, they seem to answer the question when? The table below describes the use of at, in, on with different relations of time.

Prepositions Units of time	ON	IN	AT
Days	On Friday	/	/
Day + part of the day	On Wednesday afternoon	/	/
Clock time	/	/	At 8:00 p.m
Dates	On the second of April	/	/
Year	/	In 1975	/
Month	/	In October	/
Part of the day	/	In the morning	At night
Special day	On Christmas day	/	/
Season	/	In winter	/
Festival	/	/	At Christmas/Easter
Mealtime	/	/	At lunchtime
Fixed Expressions that refer to specific points in time	/	/	-At the same time -At present
Long periods of time	/	In the middle ages	/

Table 02: The Distribution of on, in, and at with Different Units of Time.

1-1-6-1-3 The Use of at, in, on to Express Other Relations

In addition to the relation of space and time, the prepositions at, in, on can be used to describe other relations.

At: it can be used to express:

- Reaction especially (emotional):

E.g. I am amazed at your suggestion.

- Level of suggestion

E.g. good at games

bad at remembering faces (Allosop,1986)

- For giving directions

E.g. turn left at the supermarket.

- With the name of a particular organization.

E.g. he worked at the ACME bikes company.

- With meals:

E.g. one day at lunch, she told me the secret. (Estiwood, 2002)

In: it can be used to express:

- Manners :

E.g. she replied in the most offensive manner (way) (Allosop, 1986)

- The verb “arrive” when we think about the place itself.

E.g. we arrived in London two days ago (Ronberg and Lexus, 2002)

On: it can be used to express :

- Subject matter:

E.g. he spoke on the birds of Christ church harbor (Allosop, 1986)

- Means of transportation such as: bus, train, plane.

E.g. they traveled to France by plane

- With gerund of some words, mainly of information:

E.g. on checking, she discovered that the papers were not hers (Estiwood, 2002)

1-1-6-2 The Use of between and among

In addition to ‘at’, ‘in’, ‘on’. “between” and “among” can also be considered from these prepositions that make some confusion for learners because they think that ‘between’ and ‘among’ are absolute synonyms and they can use one of them to describe the same situation, however, each of them refers to particular situations and occasions.

- Between:

According to Allosop(1986:112)” between refers to a position or a movement of something or somebody in relation to two objects”.

e.g. she held the diamond between her thumb and for finger (Hewings, 2005)

* it can also be used to a period after one time and before another . e.g. not many people work between Christmas and new year’s day. (Estwood,2002)

- Among: according to Allosop (1986:112) among “refers to a position or movement in relation to more than two objects”.

e.g. She stood among all her friends in the room and felt very happy. (Hewings, 2005)

‘between’ and ‘among’ are not used only to express space, they can be also used to talk about something divided or shared between people.

e.g. the money is to be divided or shared between people. (Hewings,2005).

1-1-6-2-1 Other uses of between

Hewings (2005) states that 'between' has many other uses. He describes these uses and supports them by simple examples as follows:

- To talk about comparisons and relationships
E.g. with the words association, balance, comparison, connection, contrast, correlation, difference, distinction, link, relationship. E.g. there should be a better balance on the committee between the various ethnic groups.
- To talk about choices:
E.g. I have to choose between the universities of Leeds, York and Manchester.
- To talk about discussions or the result of discussions when we specify the two or more people or groups involved.
E.g. there was a disagreement between Neil, John and Margeret.
- To say that people or things share an amount of something.
E.g. last year, the three companies built 30.000 houses between them.

1-1-6-2-2 Other uses of among

Hewings (2005) mentions also that 'among' indicates many other uses in which he describes the uses and supports them by some examples as follows:

-We can use 'among' to state or mean existing or happening in a particular group

E.g. their music is still very popular among young teenagers.

-When we mean included in a given group

e.g. they are among the best hokey players in the world. (2005) Hewings also states some common expressions in the following examples using 'between' and 'among'. Among others, among other things, between ourselves, and between you and me.

e.g. the concert features, among others, Karl Fish and Johnsons(: other singers/ groups are featured, too).

e.g. I later found out that he had been a carpenter and a dustman, among other things (: he had other jobs, too).

e.g. between ourselves (: keep this a secret): I do not think Tom is as honest as he should be.

e.g. I've got a month exam next week, but between you and me (: keep this a secret) I have not done any revision (Hewings, 2005).

1-2 Transfer

In the course of learning a second language, linguists consider transfer as one of the most important factors, that is related to learners during their progress of L2 acquisition, however; there are two main causes which can lead learners generally to transfer. The first one is concerned with the influence of the mother tongue, while, the second one is related to the difficulty of L2 rules or to the false application of its rules

1-2-1 Definition

One of the most technical definitions was stated by behaviourists who consider it as the unconscious and unaware use of a previous learned behaviour in order to produce new 'responses' (Carl, 1980).

Oudin (1989) refers to transfer as: "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and other language that has been previously (and perhaps) imperfectly inquired."(p7)

Many behaviourists were interested in the influence of previous learning tasks on the new learning ones, in other words; the new learning task is influenced by the previous learned

ones. This leads to the “hypothesis of transfer” which Ellis (1965) considers as ‘perhaps the single important concept in the theory and practice of education’ (cited in Carl, 1980:11).

Ellis defines transfer as ‘the hypothesis that the learning of the task A will affect the subsequent

Learning of task B” (ibid); that is to say, the learning of a L2 will be affected by the first language in which there are some elements in one language leading to the incorporation with the elements of the other one.

1-2-2 Factors which lead to transfer

1-2-2-1/ language transfer

language transfer is the first factor where sentences in the target language lead to interference because of the mother tongue. Richards (1974) states that interference “tends to be from the deviant sentence back to the mother tongue” (p05). He adds that linguists found that one-third of the wrong sentences from L2 learners are due to language transfer. Lance (1969) and Burudhipabha (1972) said that it would be impossible to evaluate the effect of “systematic language interference” nowadays. (Cited from Richards, 1974:5)

1-2-2-2: Intralingual Interference

According to Richards (1974) refers to intralingual interference that it is concerned with those “items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on special exposure to the target language” (p06). Richards in his quotation states that in the course of learning a L2, a learner attempts to sort out the rules for the purpose of solving the difficulty he has been faced. Furthermore, he can formulate new conventions which have no relation neither to the MT nor TL. Richards also

found that there are some errors related to intralingual interference which are: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and semantic errors. These previous errors indicate that these intralingual errors refer to the difficulty that learners generally face during their acquisition of the L2 rules, and students do these errors due to the contextual rules of the L2.(Richards,1974).

1-2-3 Types of Transfer

Allen and Corder (1975) mention that transfer can be positive (helps to acquire new learning tasks), as it can be negative (impedes the acquisition of new learning tasks).

1-2-3-1 Positive Transfer

It indicates that there are more similarities than differences between MT and FL, which make learning L2 easy. So, the learner will transfer rules from the previously acquired language without causing any problem of misperformance and with facilitation. Odlin (1989) assumes that the less differences between the L1 and L2 they are; the more positive and helpful the influence of the NL will be. For instance, English and French have a large amount of common vocabulary, and this latter leads the learner of the two languages to transfer positively from their MT. However, the case is not the same for Arab learners who have a distinctive language which is totally different from English and has a different origin.

Yule (2006) states that “if the L1 and L2 have similar features (e.g. marking plural at the ends of nouns), then, the learner may be able to benefit from the positive transfer of the L1 knowledge to the L2” (167). Yule in his quotation suggests when the L1 is similar to the L2, this may facilitate the progress of learning the L2 rules and application.

1-2-3-2 Negative transfer

It indicates those errors due to the differences between the MT and the FL. Yule (2006) describes negative transfer that “transferring a L1 feature which is really different from the L2 (e. g. putting the adjective after the noun) results in negative transfer and it may make the L2 expression difficult to understand” (168). Yule in his quotation states that NT can be described as the transfer of a behaviour ‘X’ which impedes the learning or has a negative influence on the commands of a behavior ‘Y’ because of differences between both behaviours. Furthermore, Richards ((1992) states that making an error and use wrongly the rules of L2 is due to the application of L1 rules on the L2, for example, the use of the verb ‘to have’ instead of ‘to be’ to express age (I have ten years old) is a negative transfer from French (j’ai quainze ans).

1-2-3-3 Avoidance

Behaviourists consider avoidance as a cognitive strategy that the L2learner uses in order to avoid using some structures which are totally different from his MT. Schacher (1974) presents evidence indicating that Chinese and Japanese learners avoid producing relative clauses in English. Kleinman (1977) presents more convincing evidence that Arab speaking learners avoid the English passive construction.

Sometimes L2 learners prefer to use formal rather than informal structures even if both of them are provided, also learners use the strategy of avoidance because of two reasons. The first one generated in that learners think that there is enough difference between elements in L1 and L2. The second one indicates that learners think that there are many difference between elements in L1 and L2. For these reasons, there would be an increased chance of avoidance for fear of interference.(corder, 1981).

1-2-3-4 Overgeneralization

It deals with the over use of some L2 rules or forms where students apply the rules that are sure about, rather than using rules that are not sure about or do not master them. Then, learners of a L2 could produce a sentence like this in their English.

What did he intend to say? (Richards, 1974:38).

Here, the use of the past tense marker “ed” is wrong, where the learner overgeneralizes the use of “ed” in a situation that does not require the application of this rule. the over use of certain rules can reveal also the cultural differences between learners. For this reason, an Indian learner of English who utters this sentence ‘drive a bicycle’ is normally overgeneralizing the use of ‘drive’ to all the vehicles. (Richards, 1974).

1-2-4 Contrastive Analysis between selected English and Arabic Prepositions

English and Arabic are related to different language families. Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family, while, English is a member of the Indo- European language family. For that reason, it would be logical that Arab students of English as a foreign language face difficulties in learning English in general, and then prepositions which leads to some difficulty. As Pittman (1966) mentions: “among those who teach or learn the English language, prepositions have earned a reputation for difficulty if not downright unpredictably”(cited in Hamdallah and Tushyeh:181). In addition to that, Mc Carthy (1972) states that “as many English teacher will well knows, our prepositions are a particularly troublesome lot the nonnative speaker of English”(ibid). Mc Carthy in his quotation, considers English prepositions as a serious difficulty for Arab EFL learners because there is no equivalence between Arabic and English prepositions. In addition to the difference in the usage.

1-2-4-1 Illustration and Classification of English and Arabic prepositions

As has been mentioned before, prepositions are words that relate words, phrases, or clauses to other words in a sentence. They express many ideas like: locations, destinations, direction of motion, time, manner and so on.

In the following examples, there will be an illustration of some English and Arabic prepositions:

1- To / ? ila/

I went to Amman

/ dahabtu ?la 9amman/

2- From /min/

From him

/ minhu/

5. at (exists only in English)

I am at home

/?ana bil bayti/ (in)

7-On /9ala/ (separate)

/9A/ (inseparable)

On Monday

/fi yami l?ionayni/ (in)

On the shelf

/?ala rrafi/ (on)

3- with /ma9/

with the girl.

/ ma9a lbinti/

4- for /li/

for them

/lahum/

6.in /fi: ?/ (separated)

/bilmaktabati/ (in)

to multiply by

/daraba fi/

8- By (exist only in English)

By Monday.

/ ?a litnaiyni/

9-Of (exists only in English)

I am proud of him

/? ana fakhouron bihi/ (in)

(Hamdallah and Tushyeh:181)

Zugoul (1979) classifies the prepositions that occur in the classroom phrases into the following three categories :

1-case prepositions

a- Go with Ali.

b- The cover of the book.

c-It was taken by samir.

2-Lexical prepositions

a-stand up.

b-sit down.

c-wait out side.

3- Unit prepositions:

a-Turn to the lesson 6.

b-At the back of the room.

c-On Monday.

Zyghoul(ibid) adds that both case and lexical prepositions have a direct translation in Arabic.

- Case prepositions	English	Arabic
Agentive	by	/ min qibali/
Instrumental	with	/ibi/
Dative	to	/li/ or/ li ?ajli/
Genitive	of	/al? idafah/

		Construction.
Commutative	with	/ma9a/
-Lexical prepositions	English	Arabic
	Up	/ʔ ala/
	Down	/ʔasfala/
	In(place)	/fi/
	On(place)	/9ala/
	to(motion)	/ʔila/
	Into	/ʔia dakhili/
	Beside	/bi janibi/
	In front of	/ʔ amama/
	From	/min/
	Before (time)	/aabla/
	before (place)	/min kabili/
	After (time and place)	/ba9da/
	Behind	/waraʔa/or khalfa/
	Under	/ yahta/
	On top of	/fowqa

(Hamdallah and Tushyeh:183)

1-2-4-2 General characteristics of English and Arabic prepositions

1- English prepositions

Quirk et al (1972) state that prepositions can have as a complement:

1- a that clause.

2- An infinitive clause.

3- Subject clause.

-at (that) she noticed him.

E.g: he was surprised

-at to see her.

-at she.

Hamdallah (1988) states that in English , prepositions can be used to describe a relation between two grammatical elements ,prepositional complement and the object ,as follows:

-she put the sweater on her shoulder; the complement of the the preposition ‘her shoulder’ and the the object ‘the sweater’ have a correspondance with each other. Furthermore, English prepositions come after a nominal, a verbal or an adjectival as follows: 1- The teacher at school is pleasant .

2- He traveled to London.

3- The class was empty of students. (hamdallah, 1988)

Other characteristics of is that the use of different prepositions with the same word results in totally different meanings. the verb + particles construction provides a good example

of this : the meaning of the structure ‘look at’ can be changed totally ,when we use ‘for’ ,’up’ or ,’after’ , ‘at’ .In addition to that , the meaning of a verb + particle is definitely different from the separated meaning of the structure. For example, ‘do in’ in: he threatened to do in all those who betrayed him means to kill. (hamdallah, 1988).

2- Arabic prepositions

Arab grammarians classify Arabic words into three classes: ‘asmaa’, ‘af9aal’ and ‘huruuf’, that are nouns, verbs and particles respectively.(Ibn hisham, 1969: 8)

Among the class ‘huruuf’ or ‘particles’, the Arab grammarians stated that they are called ‘hurruf? al jar ’ or ‘particles of attraction’. Hammdallah (1988) sees that Arabic prepositions are divided into two morphological classes; the first class contains prepositions that take the form of one consonant and one short vowel..These latter are inseparable and they are used as prefixes to the complement .

Bi..... → at ,by , in , with.

li..... → To.

Ka..... → As, like.

Ta..... → by (in swearing).

Wa..... → by (in swearing) .

Whereas, the second class contains prepositions that are independent and either bilateral or trilateral.These latter are separable.

a-bilateral

9an → from ,away , from .

Fii → in , at

kay → in order to .

min → from .

b- trilateral

9alaa → on.

9adaa → except

? ilaa → to, towards

Hataa → until, up to

Mataa → when

Mun&u → ago, for

X allaa → except (Hamdallah and Tushyeh :185)

Hammdallah (1988) adds that Some of the mentioned prepositions take the form of ?asmaa ?aahira” common nouns” like complements as: munu,ka....., wa.....,ta..... Other prepositions can take the form of ?smaa? aahira “common nouns” or ?asmaa? “pronouns” as complements such as : 9alaa, fii,.....

. Arabic prepositions like bi.....,fii.....,9alaa, ?illaa , li.....,min,9an, can be used both spacially and temporally (Hammdallah, 1988).

1-2-4-3 Sources of errors and linguistics problems

Tahir (1987) argues that English prepositions cause problems for Arab students learning English, who tend to use the Arabic preposition instead of the English one . For that reason,

students do not master English prepositions and their meanings, it is important to mention that these prepositions exist only in English like: at, of, by. Henceforth, they remain problematic.

Zughoud (1979) classifies the sources of difficulty in learning English prepositions. He finds that the first three ones are general difficulties, whereas, the last two ones are related to Arab EFL learners:

- 1- the first source of difficulty is related to the number of meanings that each preposition bears.
- 2- The use of different prepositions with the same word result in totally different meanings, for instance: look at, look after, look up,
- 3- English users do not have the ability to provide a convincing description for the use of these prepositions or a clear guide of their usage.
- 4- The traditional rules of teaching such as: the grammar translation method give the opportunity for students to translate in their minds.
- 5- In addition to the problem of translation ;the problem of interference from the NL Arabic.

To oversimplify the problem of interference Scott and Tucker (1974) asserts that prepositions rarely have a one to one correspondence between English and Arabic, that is to say, an Arabic preposition can be interpreted by many English prepositions, whereas, an English usage can bear many Arabic interpretations.

In their study, two thirds of the errors in prepositions are related to NL (Arabic) interference and one third to intra English interference.

Scott and Tucker (1974) affirm that errors containing omission of prepositions that had their causes in both NL and English interference. Also, the redundant use of preposition had

its cause in Arabic, as well as, the substitution of preposition derived from both Arabic and English structures. Scott and Tucker mention that Arab EFL learners acquire the meaning of the English lexical prepositions, before they acquire all descriptions of their usage.

1-2-4-4 Types of errors in prepositions

Generally, errors that Arab EFL learners make, can be classified into three kinds: substitution errors, redundant errors, and omission errors. Scott and Tucker (ibid) define substitution errors as the use of a wrong word; while they define redundant errors as they indicate that an unnecessary word or two or more words were used where only one was required. Further, they define omission errors as errors which indicate that a word was omitted where necessary.

These are examples of these three kinds of preposition errors:

1- substitution errors.

a – in the third day.

b- think in

c- then, he started to kill it by his knife.

d- one of the men sit down below the car to try to repair it.

e- the time was short to us.

f- each month begins in Saturday .

2- redundant errors.

a- judge on things.

b- treating with others.

c- I feel with happy.

d- factories make on littering.

e- they make on illness of people.

3- omission errors.

a- he came Monday.

b- I was born on 22nd of may, 1978.

c- it is bordered from the East of Iran. (Hamdallah and Tushyeh :186).

In studying preposition errors made by Arab EFL learners. Zughoul (1979) achieved the following conclusions:

1- sometimes, there is a correspondence between English and Arabic preposition equivalent.

2- In some cases, in describing an idea in Arabic, we do not require to replace the English preposition.

3- Generally, students attempt to keep one essential equivalent for each English preposition, and this one to one translation can express the proper English word in several cases, this does not work in many instances.

4- The English preposition can be described by different parts of speech, not just by an equivalent Arabic preposition.

Conclusion

Prepositions are a frequent source of errors. Though they are very often misused, this does not impede communication. Arab EFL students have to recognize the differences between

English and Arabic prepositions in order to master the use of English prepositions. In addition to that, teachers should introduce students to situations that are real and relevant to them, and determine which prepositions students need to communicate effectively, and give them relevant instructions about the usage of each preposition in different contexts. Teachers should not correct all the students' errors; but make them aware about the correct model when they are commenting instead of impeding their communication.

2- Chapter two

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology of the research that consists of a grammatical test given to third year students at the English department, Mentouri University, Constantine. It is a field work that aims at checking students' competence in learning rules of grammar and also their capabilities of using the prepositions; in, on, at and between,among with their different uses and meanings in the English grammar system. In addition to that, this field work aims at diagnosing the errors which students make and their causes.

2 -1-Description of the test

For the purpose of checking students' capacities in using the prepositions: in, on, at and between and among; a test was administrated to. Third year students at the English department at Mentouri University, Constantine were given two exercises. The first one consists of fifteen sentences in which students were asked to insert the appropriate preposition (in, on, at) in the provided space. The fifteen sentences of the first exercise were taken from "The good grammar" book. The second exercise contains ten sentences in which students were asked to insert the appropriate preposition (between, among or between /among) in the provided space. These sentences were taken from "Advanced grammar in use" book. The prepositions in both exercises have different uses, in which one preposition describes various relations. In some sentences there are some expressions where different prepositions can be used. However, replacing the preposition by another one affects the meaning of the expression.

2-2 Analysis

Exercise one

Sentence 1

Granny arrived in a taxi, as usual.

Sentence 01	IN	ON	AT	TOTAL
NUMBER	18	9	3	30
Percentage	60%	30%	10%	100%

Table 3 : The use of prepositions in the first sentence .

Sentence 01	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
NUMBER	18	12	30
Percentage	60%	40%	100%

Table 4: Correct VS. Wrong use of prepositions in the first sentence.

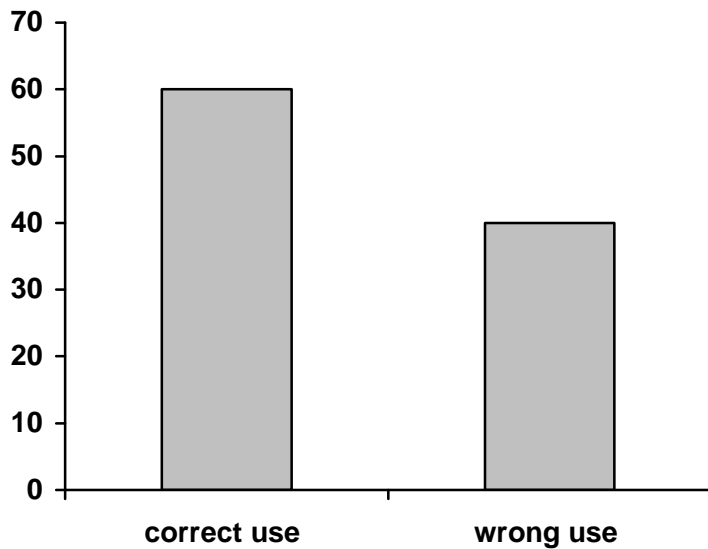


Figure10 : Correct VS. Wrong use of prepositions in the first sentence.

Although , 40% of the answers included the wrong preposition “ at” and “on” , 18 students (60%) inserted the appropriate preposition “ in” .We can deduce that the percentage of correct answers is higher than the percentage of the wrong ones , because students seem to be accustomed to this type of prepositional use. These results show that students who inserted the appropriate preposition “ in” think of “granny” as being inside the car . It is also a positive transfer from the Arabic preposition “ Fi”. Students who used the preposition “ on” overused the use of this preposition which is normally used with another means of transportation such as : trains and buses . While students who inserted the preposition “at” used it haphazardly. Students who used both preposition “on” and “at” made a substitution error whereby they inserted the wrong preposition.

Sentence 2

I am leaving on the 4:15 train

Sentence 2	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	1	15	14	30
Percentage	3.33%	50%	46.66%	100%

Table 5: The use of prepositions in the second sentence.

Sentence 2	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	15	15	30
Percentage	50%	50%	100%

Table 6: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the second sentence



Figure11: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the second sentence.

The prepositional use in this sentence seems to be problematic, since the percentages of the use of “on” and “at” are the higher. They represent 50% and 46% respectively. This explains that Students do not know the rules of this prepositional use. Those who inserted “at” consider the “train” as just occupying a space in the station. The student who puts “in” overgeneralized the use of “in” to all means of transportation and it is also a negative transfer from the Arabic Preposition “ fi” . Students who inserted the preposition “on” think of “train” not just as a point of space at the station, but as a means of transportation. However, students who inserted “at” and “in” made a substitution error because of their lack of competence in mastering the rules.

Sentence 3

- I'll see you this evening at Sarah's house

Sentence 3	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	14	0	16	30
Percentage	46.66%	0 %	53.33 %	100 %

Table 7: The use of prepositions in the Third sentence.

Sentence 3	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	16	14	30
Percentage	53.33 %	46.66 %	100 %

Table 8: Correct VS wrong use of prepositions in the third sentence.

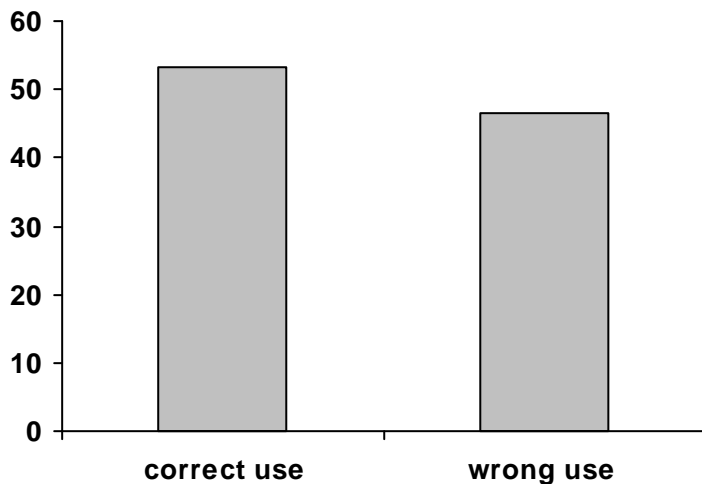


Figure12: Correct VS wrong use of prepositions in the third sentence.

The use of “in”, “on”, “at” in the third sentence was as such: 14 answers (46.66%) included the preposition “in”, 0 (00 %) ”on” and 16 (53.33%) “at”. Thus, the correct answer “at” represent more than half of the whole answers (53.33%). The wrong answers are near to the correct ones, because “at” exists only in English, and in this example, they inserted “in” because they consider “Sarah’s house” as a place with three dimensional spaces and do not think of it as a place where something will take place (a meeting). Students who inserted “at” know the rule that “at” can be used to show where something will happen. It is noteworthy

that students who used the preposition “in” made a substitution error because of their ignorance of the rule.

Sentence 4

-You have to change planes at Karachi.

Sentence 4	IN	ON	AT	Total
NOUMBER	17	3	10	30
PORCENTAGE	56.66 %	10 %	33.33 %	100 %

Table 9: The use of prepositions in the fourth sentence.

Sentence 4	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	10	20	30
percentage	33.33 %	66.66 %	100 %

Table 10: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourth sentence.

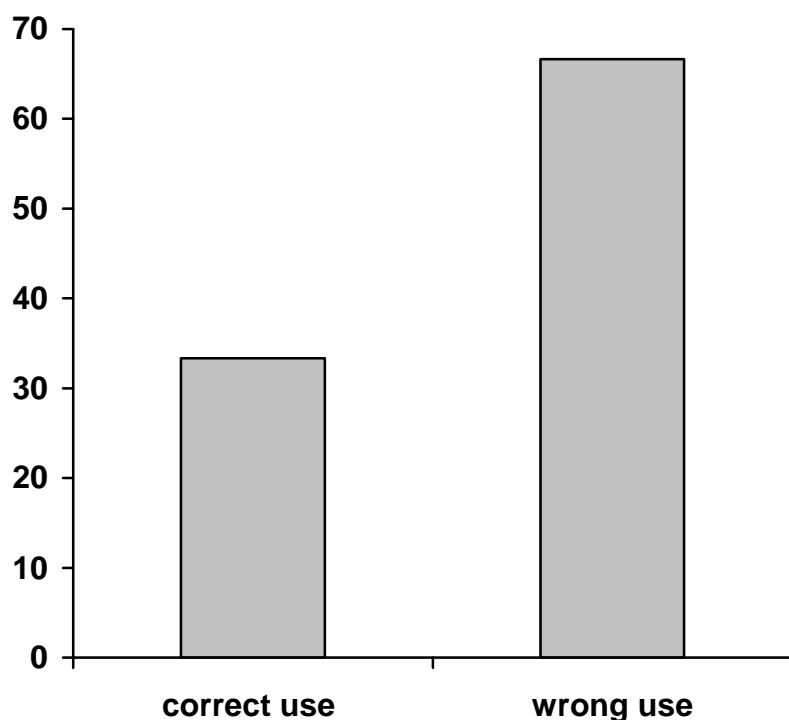


Figure13: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourth sentence.

Here, 10 students out of 30 answered correctly; that is to say inserted the required preposition “ at “. A considerable percentage of 66.66% used the wrong preposition “ in “, and “ on “ with proportion of 56.66% and 10% respectively. The big percentage of the wrong answers reflects the difficulty in inserting the appropriate preposition to state space, since all these three prepositions (at , in , on) can be used to express this relation. However, the preposition “ at “ is the correct one because it is often used to refer to points in a journey (Karachi). The insertion of “in “by some students is because Karachi is a city which has boundaries. While the use of the preposition”on”is because students consider (Karachi) as a surface with two dimensional spaces. Students who inserted “ in “ and “ on “ made a substitution error which can indicate their lack of the prepositional use of such cases.

Sentence 5

Did you go away at Christmas?

Sentence 5	IN	ON	AT	TOTAL
Number	12	12	6	30
percentage	40 %	40%	20 %	100 %

Table 11: The use of prepositions in the fifth sentence

Sentence 5	Correct use	Wrong use	TOTAL
Number	12	12	30
percentage	20 %	80 %	100 %

Table 12 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fifth sentence.

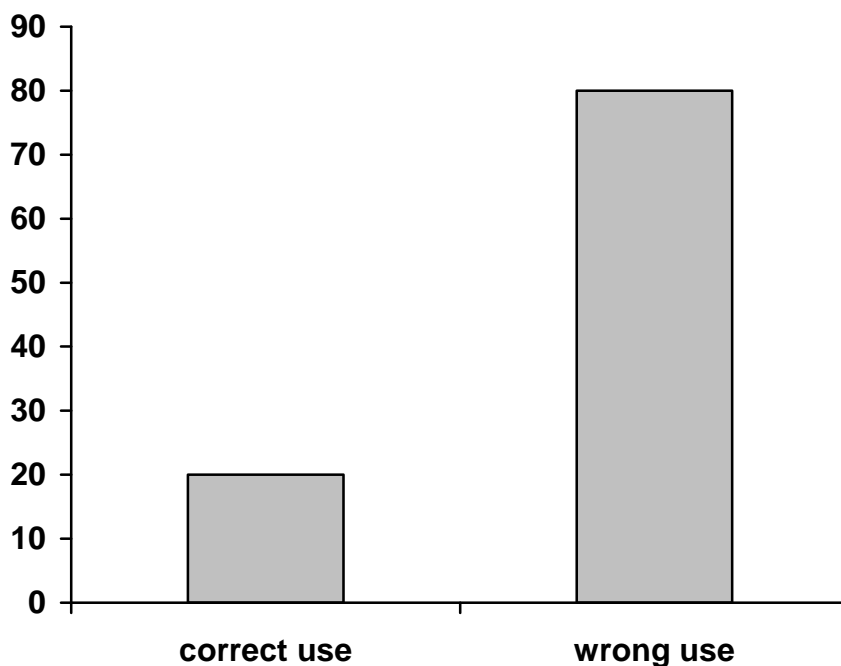


Figure14: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fifth sentence.

As far as this sentence is concerned, the percentage of wrong answers (80%) is higher than the percentage of correct ones (20%), in which only 6 students got the right answer “at”, while, the rest of students inserted either “in” (12 students) or “on” (12 students). Students who inserted “at” find that “at” can be used as an orientation of point in time (Christmas), while, students who inserted “on” consider “Christmas” as a period of time happening every year. Students who used “in” and “on” made a substitution error, and this is because “at” exists only in English. Henceforth, most of them avoided the use of “at” because of their ignorance of its prepositional use.

Sentence 6

Turn left at the next corner

Sentence 6	IN	ON	AT	TOTAL
Number	2	10	18	30
Percentage	6.66	33.33	60%	100%

Table 13: The use of prepositions in the sixth sentence.

Sentence 6	Correct use	Wrong use	TOTAL
Number	18	12	30
Percentage	60%	40%	100%

Table 14: Correct VS Wrong use of preposition in the sixth sentence.

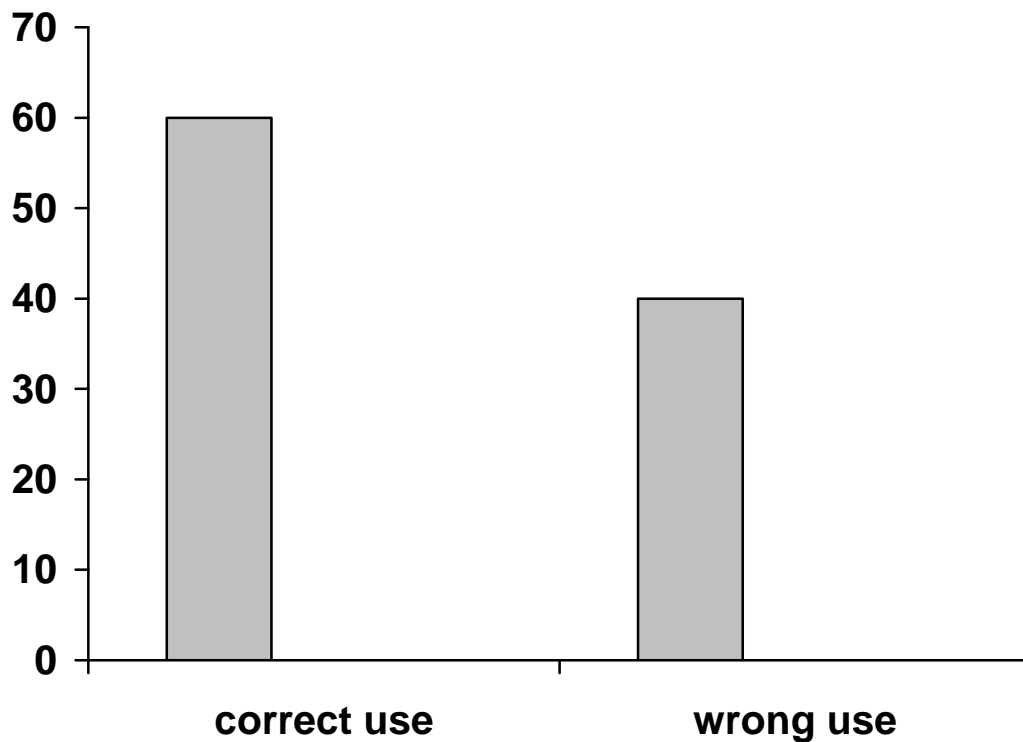


Figure15: Correct VS Wrong use of preposition in the sixth sentence.

The correct use of the preposition in the sixth sentence represents more than half of the whole answers. 18 students (60%) used the correct preposition “at”, while 12 students (40%) provided the wrong answers. This can be explained by the fact that students inserted “at” because they consider “the next corner” as a point of orientation in space. On the other hand, some students used “on” because they consider “the next corner as a situation with a specific place to describe. Students who inserted “in” used it haphazardly. Those who put “in” and ”on” in this sentence made a substitution error by replacing “at” with “in” and “on” ,and this because of their insufficient mastery and inadequate knowledge of the correct prepositional use.

Sentence 07

Are there any good films at the cinema this week.

Sentence 7	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	16	2	12	30
Percentage	53.33%	6.66%	40%	100%

Table 15: The use of prepositions in the seventh sentence.

Sentence 7	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	12	18	30
Percentage	40%	60%	100%

Table 16: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the seventh sentence.

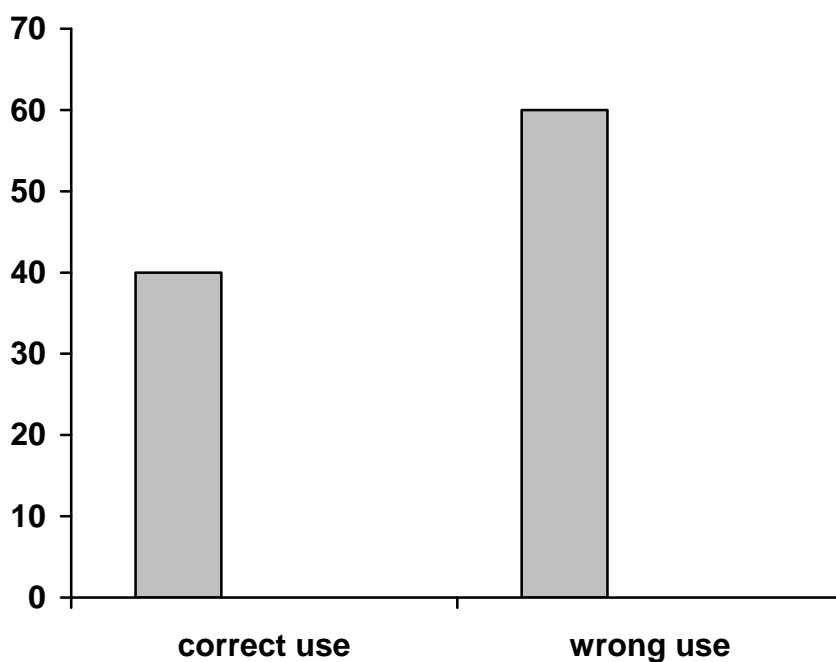


Figure 16: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the seventh sentence.

Students who inserted the right preposition “at” represent a proportion of 40%. 53.33% of students inserted the preposition “in”. 6.66% inserted the preposition “on”. Students who inserted the preposition “in” consider the cinema as an enclosed place which requires the use

of “in”. furthermore, it is a negative transfer from the Arabic preposition “fi”. The 16 students who Inserted the preposition “at” got the idea that the person is asking about good films this week for the purpose of seeing them, and not merely for the sake of asking. Students who inserted “in” were thinking in Arabic, and this very frequently results in a substitution error, because of their ignorance of this prepositional use.

Sentence 8

Is their any interesting in the paper.

Sentence 8	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	13	15	2	30
Percentage	43.33%	50%	6.66%	100%

Table 17: The use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

Sentence 8	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	13	17	30
Percentage	43.33%	56.66%	100%

Table 18: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

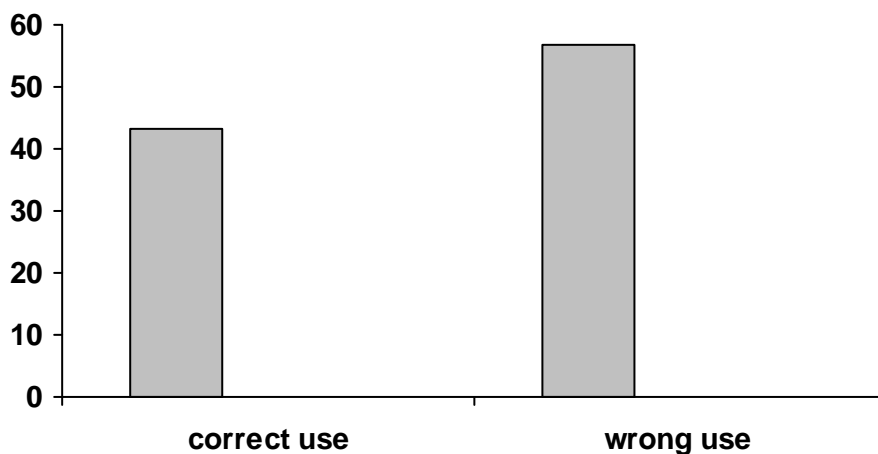


Figure17: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

The eighth sentence requires the use of “in”, however, not all students inserted the correct answer. Students who used “in” represent 43.33% (13 students), they inserted “in” because they consider the paper as a space with three dimensions; that is to say, what was asked about appeared on paper. Some students inserted “on” (50%) because they consider the paper as a surface with two dimensional spaces. In other words, the interesting thing he was asking about is supposed to take a physical shape and occupies a space on the surface of the paper. Students who inserted “at” and “on” instead of “in” made a substitution error by using wrong prepositions instead of the correct one, because of their lack of competence in terms of the appropriate rule.

Sentence 9

Her photo is on page 4.

Sentence 9	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	8	21	1	30
Percentage	26.66%	70%	3.33%	100%

Table 19: The use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

Sentence 9	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	21	9	30
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Table 20: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

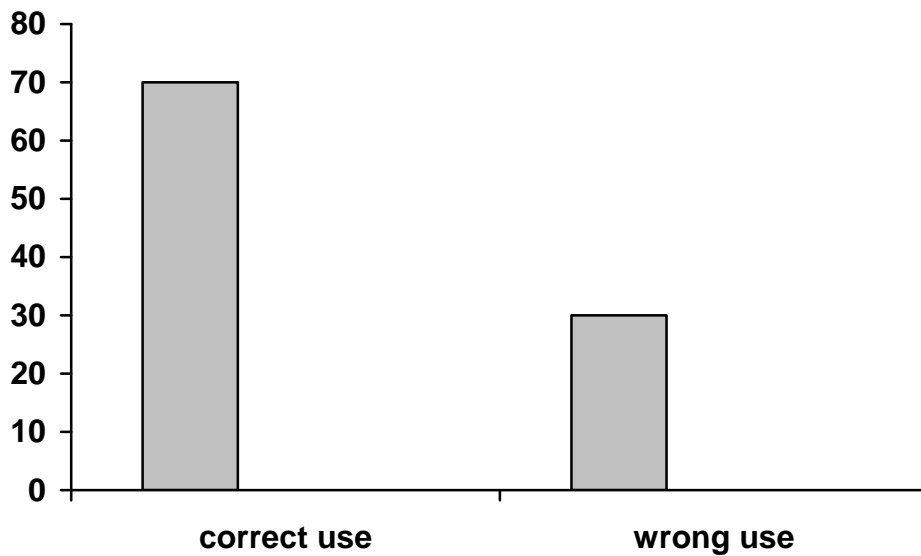


Figure18: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

The most striking point here is that, the percentage of correct answers (70%) is higher than the percentage of wrong ones (30%). These results show that students used “on” because they are accustomed to this type of prepositional use. Whereas, students who used “in” overused the use of “in” which is normally used with books, newspapers. The only student who used “at” thought that the “ photo “ takes only a part of the page and not all the whole page. Students who used “in” and “at” made a substitution error because they ignore totally the rule.

Sentence 10

They live in park street

Sentence 10	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	21	1	8	30
Percentage	70%	3.33%	26.66%	100%

Table 21 : The use of prepositions in the tenth sentence

Sentence 10	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	21	9	30
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Table 22 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the tenth sentence.

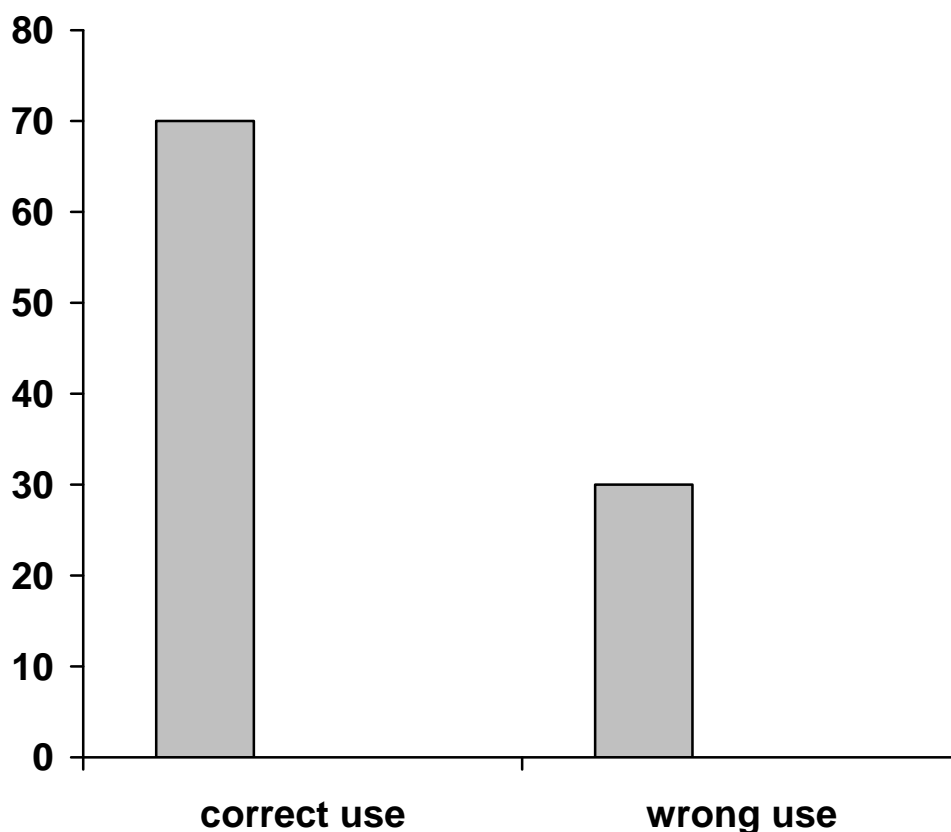


Figure19: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the tenth sentence.

Students who inserted the required preposition “in” represent 70%. Whereas, students who inserted the wrong preposition represent 30%. The percentage of correct answers is greater than the one of wrong answers. This reflects the students’ knowledge about this prepositional use in which they consider these persons as being inside the Park Street, since they live there. In addition to that, it is a positive transfer from the Arabic preposition “fi”. Some students inserted “at” because they did not consider “the Park Street” as a space which

has boundaries. The only student who inserted “on” considers “the Park Street” as a surface.

The ninth students who inserted “on” and “at” made a substitution error because of their ignorance of the rules.

Sentence 11

The sweater looks good on you.

Sentence 11	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	0	26	4	30
Percentage	0%	86.66%	13.33%	100%

Table 23 : The use of prepositions in the eleventh sentence.

Sentence 11	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	26	4	30
Percentage	86.33%	13.33%	100%

Table 24: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eleventh sentence.

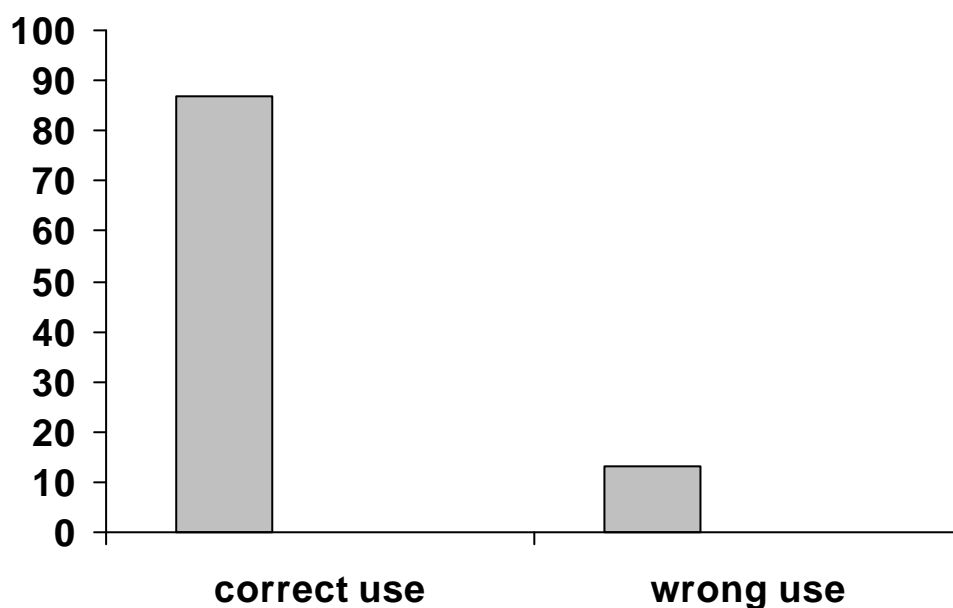


Figure20: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eleventh sentence.

The majority of students got the right answer “on” (86.66%). While only (13.33%) ,4 students inserted the wrong prepositions. Students who inserted the correct preposition “on” have a good command over this prepositional use; that the clothes are on people. Some students used “at” because of their ignorance of the rule or just used it at random. The 4 students who used “at” made a substitution error, because they did not know the prepositional use of “at” since it does not exist in Arabic.

Sentence12

She had a ring on every finger.

Sentence 12	IN	ON	AT	TOTAL
Number	19	7	4	30
Percentage	63.33%	23.33%	13.33%	100%

Table 25: The use of prepositions in the twelfth sentence.

Sentence 12	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	7	23	30
Percentage	23.33%	76.66%	100%

Table 26 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the twelfth sentence.

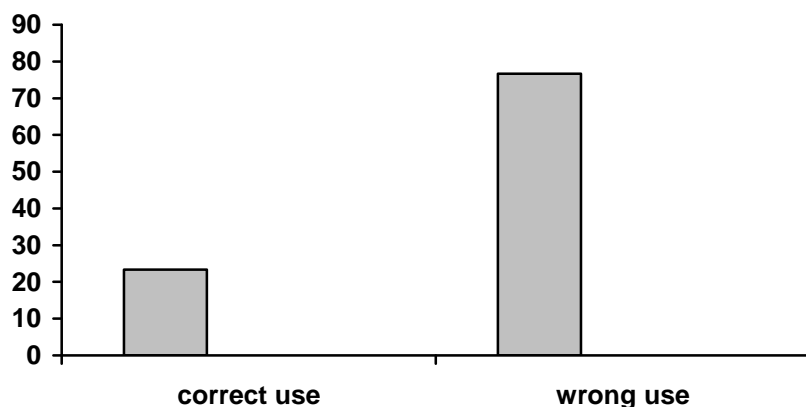


Figure21: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the twelfth sentence.

Out of 30 students; only 7 students inserted the right answer “on”. The other 23 students inserted “in” or “at” with percentages of 63.33% and 13.33% respectively. Students who inserted “in” consider “the finger” as a part of the hand and each finger has a ring; that is to say, each ring occupies a place in each finger; secondly, it is because of the negative transfer from the Arabic preposition “fi”. Some students inserted “at” because they consider that each ring occupies a space at a finger. “on” is the appropriate answer in this sentence. However, only 7 students used it because they have a command over the rule that: jewellery is on people and not in people. Students who used “at” and “in” made a substitution error due to their lack of competence.

Sentence 13

Who is the man in the grey suit.

Sentence 13	IN	ON	AT	TOTAL
Number	22	4	4	30
Percentage	73.33%	13.33%	13.33%	100%

Table 27: The use of prepositions in the thirteenth sentence.

Sentence 13	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	22	26.8	30
Percentage	73.33%	26.66%	100%

Table 28: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions the thirteenth sentence.

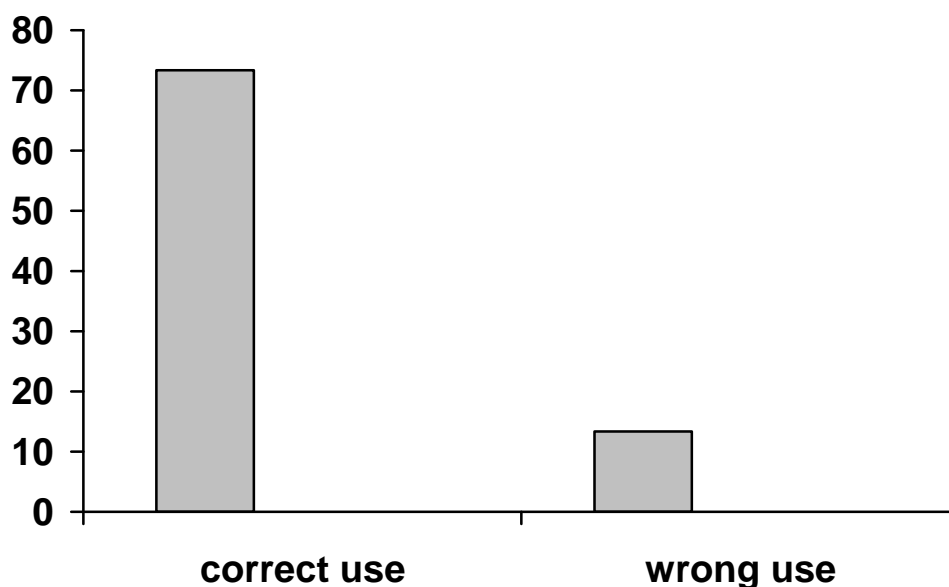


Figure 22: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions the thirteenth sentence.

(73.33%) students answered correctly, whereas (26.66%) gave wrong answers. Some students inserted "on" and "at" because they did not have knowledge about this prepositional use and they used them just at random. The majority of students inserted "in" because they know the rule that people are "in" clothes and not "on" clothes. Some students inserted "on" and "at" because of their ignorance of the prepositional use of "in" and this is what made them use a substitution error by using the wrong preposition instead of the correct one

Sentence 14

The church has a wonderful paintings on the ceiling.

Sentence 14	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	4	21	5	30
Percentage	13.33%	70%	16.66%	100%

Table 29 : The use of prepositions in the fourteenth sentence.

Sentence 14	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	21	9	30
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Table 30 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourteenth sentence.

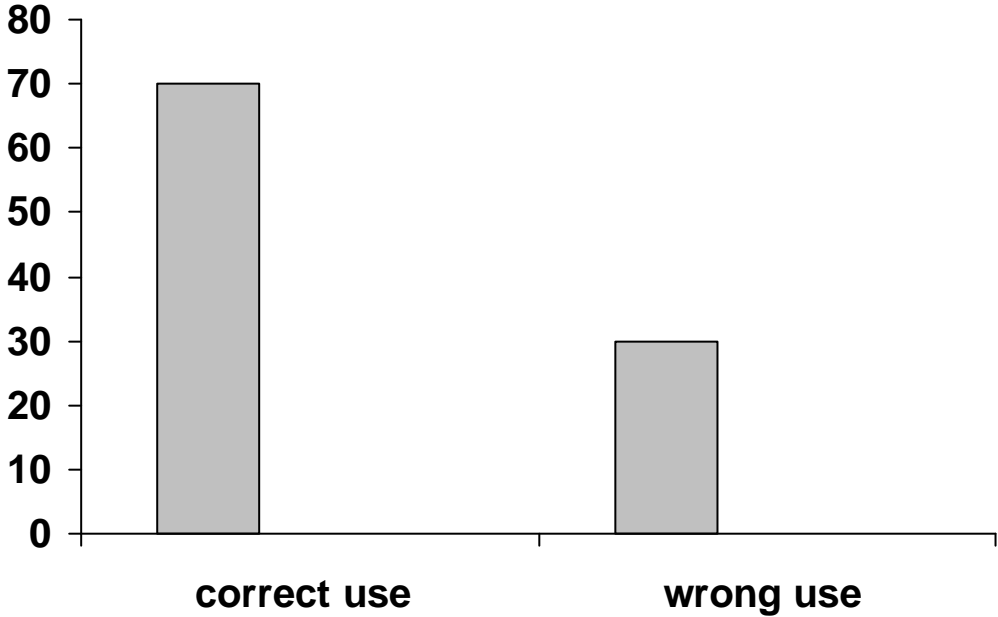


Figure 23: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourteenth sentence.

The majority of students used the convenient preposition “on” (70%), while, the wrong answers in this sentence represent (30%). Students inserted “on” because of their awareness that the “ceiling” is a surface that has two dimensional spaces and hence requires the use of “on”. Some students used “at” because they consider “the ceiling” as a space where painting

takes place. Other students used “in” because they consider the “ceiling” as a space with three dimensions. Students who inserted “in” and “at” ignore the rule that “on” can be used with a surface with two dimensional spaces. This led them to make a substitution error by using one preposition instead of another one.

Sentence 15

Your soup will be ready in ten minutes

Sentence 15	IN	ON	AT	Total
Number	21	7	2	30
Percentage	70%	23.33%	6.66%	100%

Table 31 : The use of prepositions in the fifteenth sentences

Sentence 15	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	21	9	30
Percentage	70%	30%	100%

Table 32: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions the fifteenth sentence.

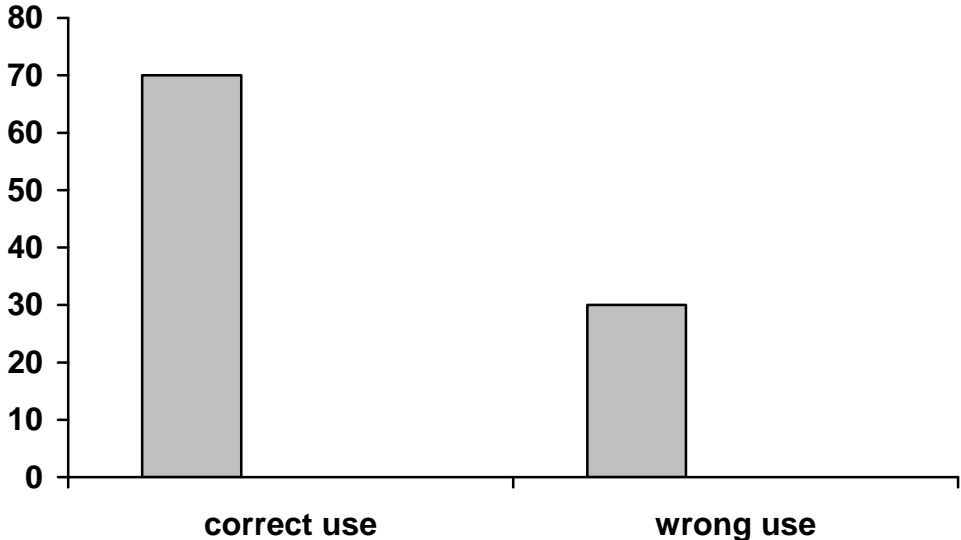


Figure24: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions the fifteenth sentence

Only 30% inserted wrong prepositions “on” and “at”. 70% inserted the appropriate preposition “in”. Students used “in” because of their knowledge about this prepositional use : “in” can be used to say how long it takes to finish something and this is the case with this sentence; that the soup will take ten minutes to be ready. Further, they used “in” because of the positive transfer from the Arabic preposition “fi”. Some students used “on” because they consider the expression of “ten minutes” as a precised time. Some students used “at” because they consider the expression of “ten minutes” as a point in time and not as a period of time. Students who used “at” and “on” made a substitution error by using the wrong prepositions instead of the appropriate one.

Exercise two

Sentence 1

I wasn't feeling very angry, so Jo and I shared a bowl of noodles between us.

Sentence 1	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	24	4	2	30
Percentage	80	13.33%	6.66%	100%

Table 33 : The use of prepositions in the first sentence.

Sentence 1	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	24	6	30
Percentage	80%	20%	100%

Table 34 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the first sentence.

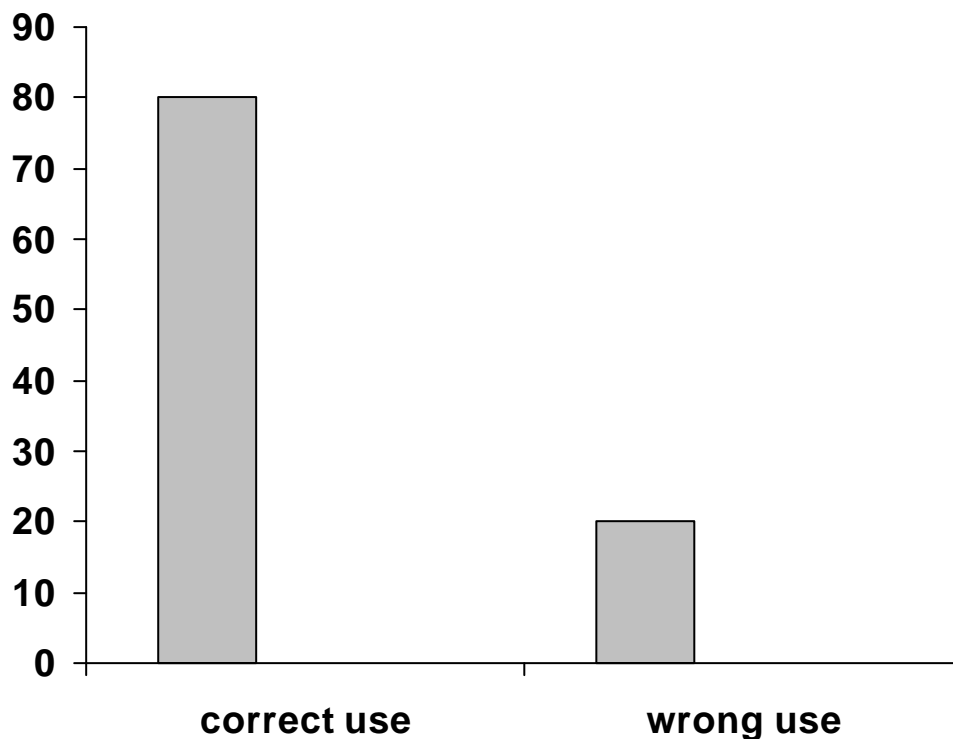


Figure25: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the first sentence.

In the first part of the sentence, the majority of students (80%), inserted the required preposition “between” because they know the rule that: “between” can be used to mention a shared thing between two persons. 4 students used “among” and 2 inserted both “between/among” because they do not know the prepositional use of “between”. This is why they were subject to a substitution error by using the wrong preposition instead of the correct one.

Sentence 2

I bought four bars of chocolate and divided them between / among people.

Sentence 2	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	11	16	3	30
Percentage	36.66%	53.33%	10%	100%

Table 35 : The use of prepositions in the second sentence.

Sentence 2	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	3	27	30
Percentage	10%	90%	100%

Table 36 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the second sentence.

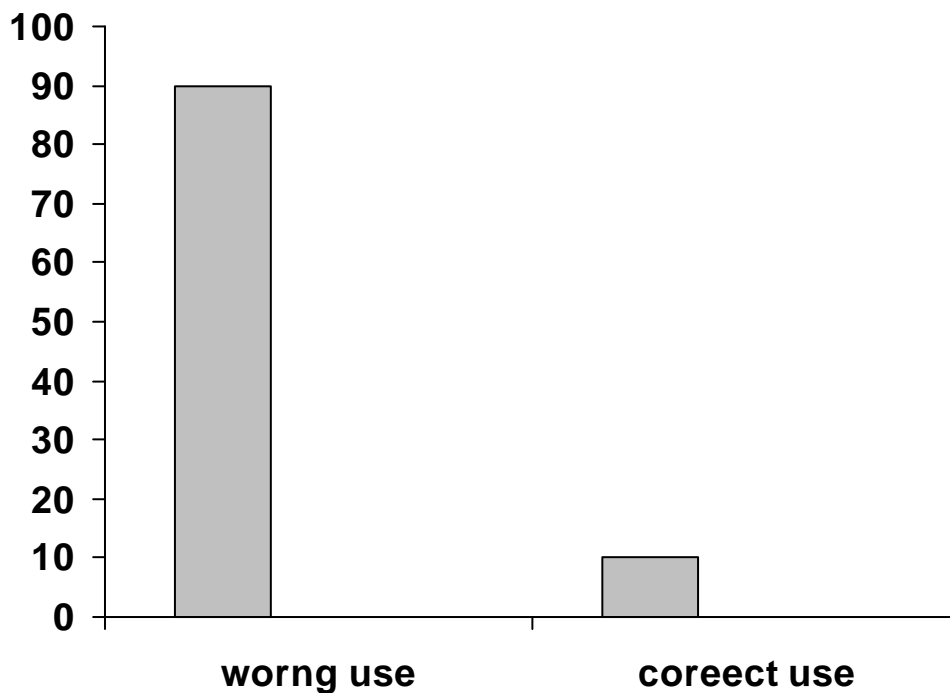


Figure26: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the second sentence.

Although the use of “between” and “among” is not wrong, we have considered both uses as wrong answers, because in the test we gave them the choice for inserting both “between / among” as an isolated answer. 90% of students used either “between” or “among”, while, only 10% used both “between/among”. Students who inserted “between” or “among” did not know exactly what the required one is. Some students inserted both “between/among” because they know the rule that we can use both “between/among” to state a divided thing between people.

Sentence 3

The distinction between amateurs and professional athletes are becoming less clear.

Sentence 3	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	24	6	0	30
Percentage	80	20%	0%	100%

Table 37 : The use of prepositions in the third sentence

Sentence 1	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	24	6	30
Percentage	80%	20%	100%

Table 38 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the third sentence.

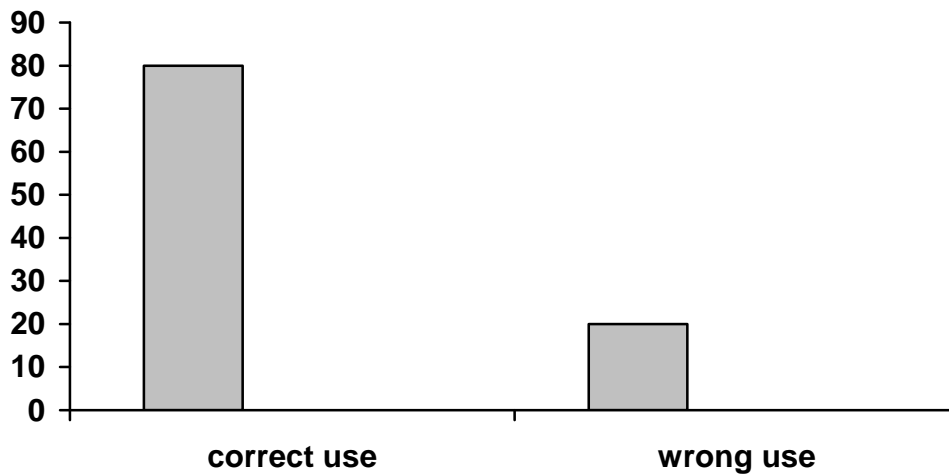


Figure27: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the third sentence.

The percentage of the correct answers (80%) is higher than the percentage of the wrong ones (20%). Students inserted “between” because they were aware of the rule that “between” can be used in comparing between two things or people. Students who inserted “among” confused and misused the two prepositions “between” and ”among” because of the negative

transfer from the Arabic preposition “baina” which can be generalised to all situations. The result is a substitution error where “among” is used instead of “between”.

Sentence 4

It has become fashionable among teenagers to dye their hair in various colours.

Sentence 4	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	3	26	1	30
Percentage	10	68.66%	3.33	100%

Table 39: The use of prepositions in the fourth sentence

Sentence 4	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	26	4	30
Percentage	86.66%	31.33%	100%

Table 40 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourth sentence.

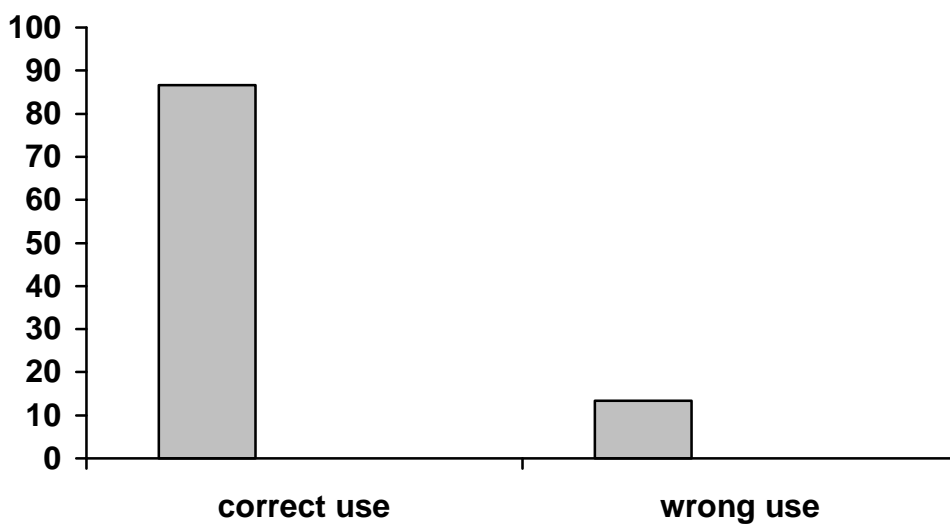


Figure28: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fourth sentence.

Out of thirty students, 26 students (86.66%) managed to insert the appropriate preposition “among”. This shows that they are familiar with this prepositional use. Yet, students who inserted “between” did not know the prepositional use of “among” and used “between” rashly as a substitution error.

Sentence 5

When jack died, his daughter inherited the house and the rest of his money was split between / among his remaining relatives

Sentence 5	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	10	16	4	30
Percentage	33.33%	53.33%	13.33%	100%

Table 41 : The use of prepositions in the fifth sentence

Sentence 5	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	4	26.	30
Percentage	13.33%	53.33%	100%

Table 42 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fifth sentences.

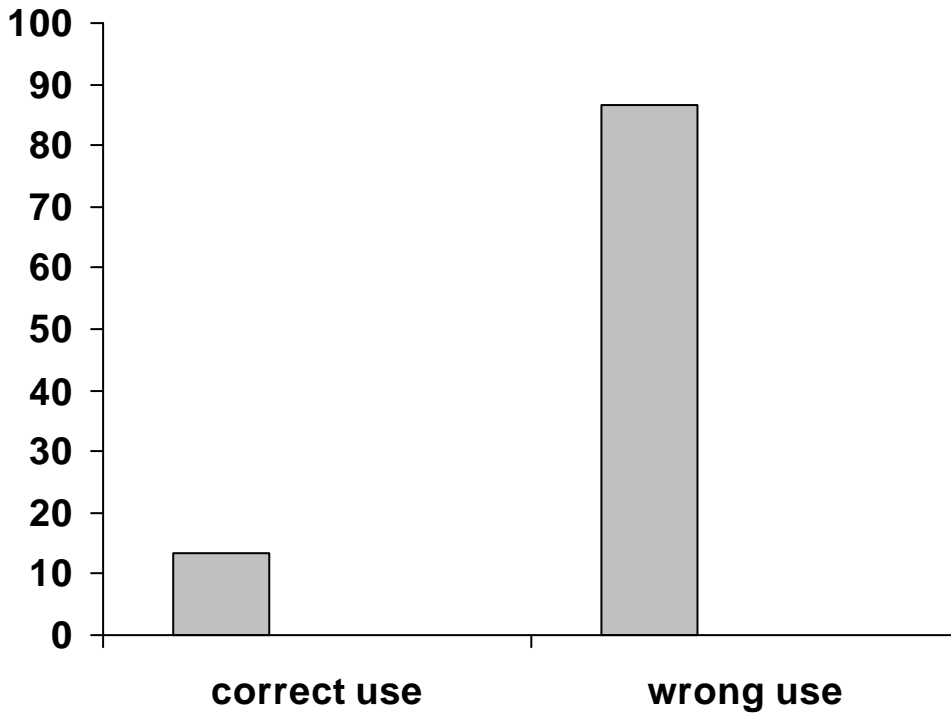


Figure29: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the fifth sentence.

The required answer in the fifth sentence is both “between/among”. Only 4 students inserted the suitable answer, because they were well aware of the rule that if we talk about a divided or shared thing between/among people we can use both “between/among”.

Meanwhile, 16 students used “among” and 10 used “between”. This use of preposition reflects the students’ confusion about which preposition to choose.

Sentence 6

The advertising company is very successful, membering most of the big banks among its clients.

Sentence 6	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	11	18	1	30
Percentage	36.66%	60%	3.33%	100%

Table 43 : The use of prepositions in the sixth sentence.

Sentence 6	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	18	12	30
Percentage	60%	40%	100%

Table 44 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the sixth sentence.

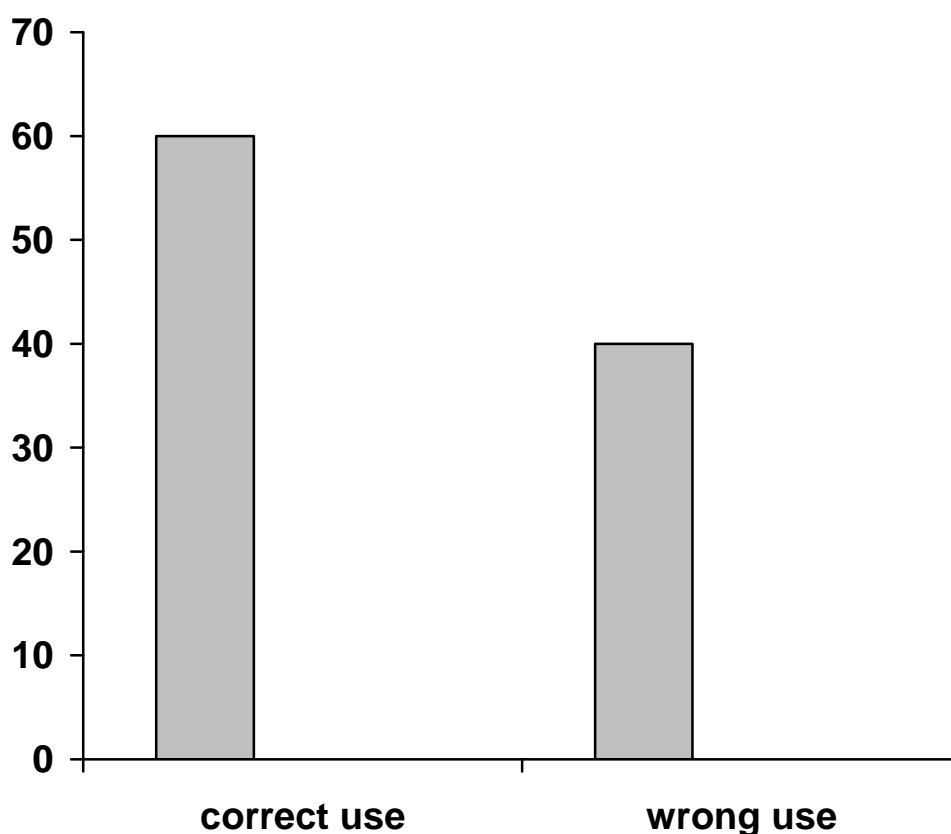


Figure30: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the sixth sentence.

The percentage of the correct answers represents 60%, whereas, the percentage of the wrong ones represents 40%. Some students inserted “among” because they master the preposition of use of “among”. Consequently, “among” was substituted by “between”, where a substitution error takes place.

Sentence 7

Researchers have found a striking correlation between intake of refined sugar and arthritis.

Sentence 7	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	24	6	0	30
Percentage	80%	20%	0%	100%

Table 45 : The use of prepositions in the seventh sentence

Sentence 7	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	24	6	30
Percentage	80%	20%	100%

Table 46 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the seventh sentence.

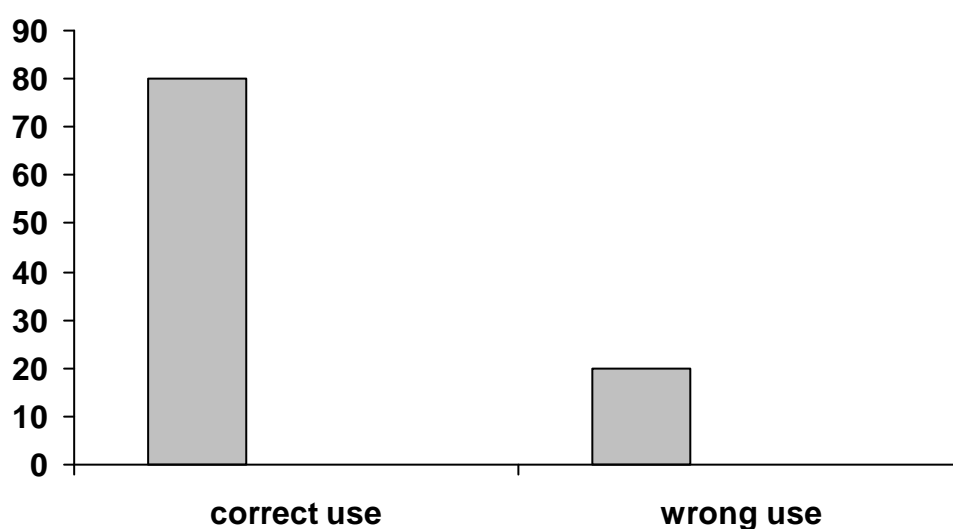


Figure31: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the seventh sentence.

As the table might suggest, 24 students (80%) inserted the correct answer “between”, whereas, only 6 students (20%) inserted the wrong preposition “among”. This clearly reflects the students’ knowledge about this prepositional use, and for that reason they made a substitution error by putting “among” instead of “between”.

Sentence 8

Given a choice between cooking and washing up, I know which I’d prefer to do.

Sentence 8	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	29	1	0	30
Percentage	96.66%	3.33%	0%	100%

Table 47: The use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

Sentence 8	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	29	1	30
Percentage	96.66%	3.33%	100%

Table 48: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

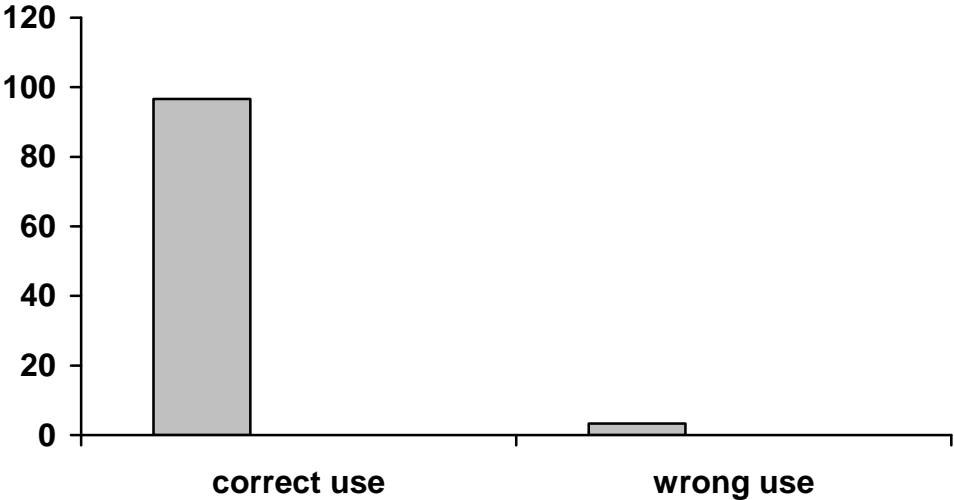


Figure32: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the eighth sentence.

Approximately all students (29) answered correctly by using the necessary preposition “between”. This proves that, they were aware of its prepositional use: “between” can be used to talk about a choice between two elements or things. Furthermore, this correct use also can be described as a positive transfer from the Arabic preposition “baina”.

Sentence 9

Neil and Ashley are among my closest friends, so I’ll invite them to the wedding, of course.

Sentence 9	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	1	28	1	30
Percentage	3.33%	93.66%	3.33%	100%

Table 49: The use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

Sentence 9	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	28	2	30
Percentage	93.66%	6.66%	100%

Table 50: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

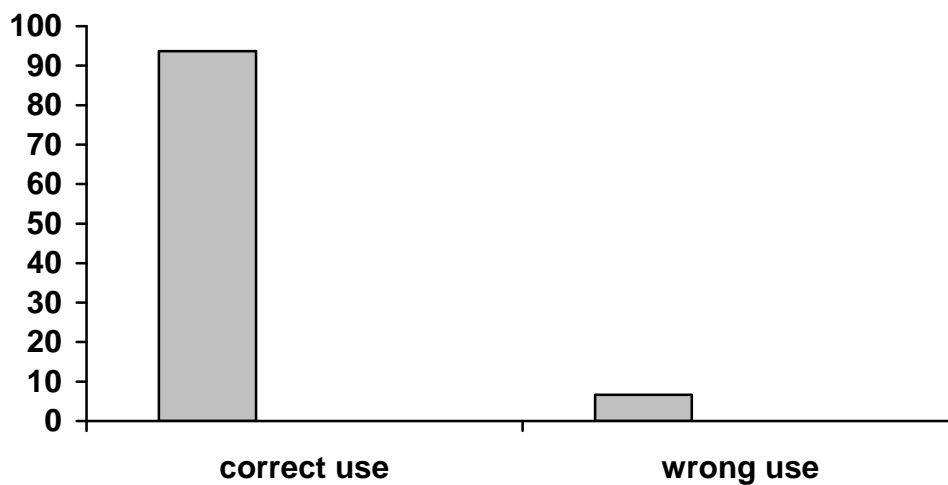


Figure33: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the ninth sentence.

A careful look at the table reveals that, 28 out of 30 students is the number of students who inserted the appropriate preposition “among”. This shows that they know the rule stating that “among” can be used when we talk about something which is included in another thing. Only 2 students provided wrong answers because of their ignorance of this prepositional use and ended up with a substitution error.

Sentence 10

Late last night the talks between the striking doctors and their employers broke down.

Sentence 10	between	among	Between /among	Total
Number	24	6	0	30
Percentage	80%	20%	0%	100%

Table 51 : The use of prepositions in the tenth sentence.

Sentence 10	Correct use	Wrong use	Total
Number	24	6	30
Percentage	80%	20%	100%

Table 52 : Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the tenth sentence.

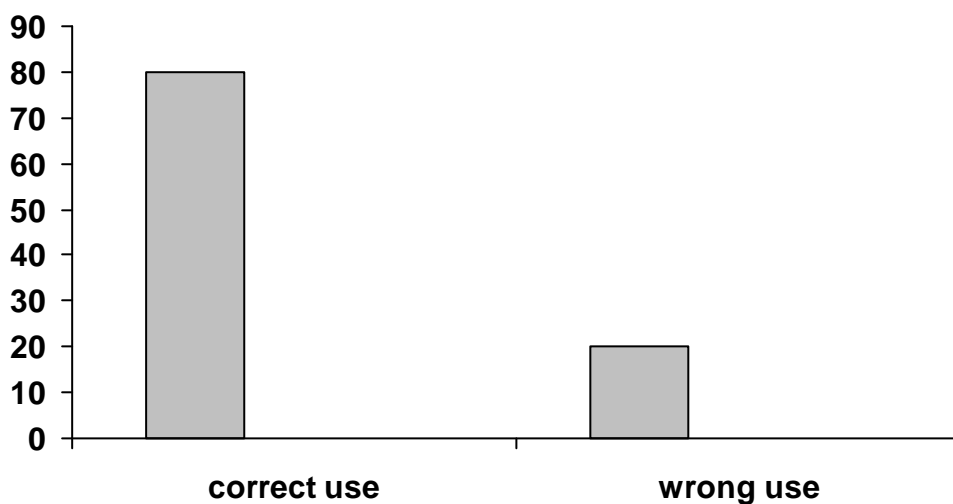


Figure34: Correct VS Wrong use of prepositions in the tenth sentence.

In the last sentence, 80% of the answers were correct, while, 20% of the answers were wrong. This reveals the students' capacities in dealing with such prepositional use. Some students inserted "between" because of their lack of competence with this prepositional use and because of their ignorance of the rule; they made a substitution error by using the wrong preposition instead of the correct one.

II-3 Results

The results of this grammatical test reveal that students have problems with the use of "at", "on", "in" and "between" "among". Yet they do not find any difficulty in inserting the necessary preposition when they are accustomed or aware about the case or the expression. Further, they encounter the difficulty when only one relation can be described by the use of many prepositions and also the probability that one preposition can be used to express many relations. Furthermore, they encounter such problems because in some expressions, there is not a convincing description for the use of these prepositions or a clear guide of their usage.

Undoubtedly, students face troubles and make errors because of their interference from their ML (Arabic). They think in Arabic and express themselves in English.

Conclusion

To conclude, the use of these five prepositions represents a problematic issue for Arab EFL learners because they have not a good command over the uses of these prepositions. They insert prepositions haphazardly. Also the use of these prepositions is governed by other items in the sentence such as the verb. Sometimes they deviate from what is going on the mind of the speaker. In addition to that, there is not always a convincing explanation rule for some uses of these prepositions. Furthermore, students tend to relate each English preposition to an Arabic equivalent one and this leads them to make errors and transfer negatively.

General conclusion

As a result of this study, we can say that the use of English prepositions in particular the case of "at" "in" "on" and "between", "among" represents a problematic issue for Arab EFL students. Students encounter difficulties in using these prepositions because they think in their ML and tend to transfer and try to relate each English preposition to an Arabic equivalent one. However, this is not always the appropriate method, since, there are prepositions confined only to one language. Moreover, students confront difficulties because of their ignorance about the number of meanings that each preposition bears in the target language. In addition to that, the absence of a convincing description or a clear guide about the usage of these prepositions affects the students' competence. Furthermore, the traditional methods that are followed by teachers give the opportunity for the students to translate in their minds and interfere from their ML. To sum up, the difficulty of using prepositions, in particular the case of: "at" "in" "on" and "between" "among" is because of difficulties in mastering the prepositional use of each preposition, and the students' attempt to relate each English preposition to an Arabic equivalent one. Needless to say that an effective teaching is to a large extent required from teachers. Prepositions are the weak point in the students' life and they will remain so unless considerable attention and effective teaching will be provided to remedy the situation.

It would be needless to say that an effective teaching is to a large extent required from teachers. Prepositions remain the weak point in the students' life and they will remain so, until considerable attention and effective teaching will be provided to remedy the situation.

One way to help Algerian EFL students in mastering English prepositions is to emphasize the following differences between English and Arabic prepositions :

1-Arabic prepositions can be separable and inseparable , whereas, English prepositions are always separable.

2-English prepositions consist either of one word alone or more, whereas Arabic prepositions mostly consist of one word.

3-Arabic prepositions have a distinctive feature ;where it affects the last vowel ,whether it is short or long ,of the word by changing it to a short vowel called /kasra/ or /I/. In English this feature is not found.

4-English prepositions are relatively various where Arabic ones are relatively limited.

5-English prepositions can be attached to verbs or nouns to form units with different meanings.

6-Some usages of English prepositions ,especially ,those of :at,in,on are ambiguous and difficult compared with the Arabic preposition which really replaces those prepositions in meaning.

Teachers should teach English prepositions in a communicative based method. The English teacher should begin with situations that are as real and relevant to the student as possible and see which prepositions the student needs in order to communicate effectively, that is to make him understood correctly.

The student is likely to make mistakes in the use of prepositions ,but since communication is the chief of language teaching ;it would be better to give a greater tolerance of errors ,as long as, they do not impede understanding,and instead of correcting all the student's errors it would be better to put him on a defensive situation.the teacher should simply use the correct model while commenting without interrupting the communication.

Furthermore ,the influence of the native language is not always negative.Teachers should state the similarity between the two languages and give direct translations where they are appropriate and not likely to lead to overgeneralizations.

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Appendix

This grammatical test serves as a research instrument. I will be so grateful if you share me your grammatical experience by providing sentences with the appropriate prepositions. Thank you very much for your accepting in advance to undergo this test because your input will be of a great importance for this research work.

Exercise n1

Put in, on, at.

1. Granny arriveda taxi, as usual.
2. I am leavingthe 4.15 train.
3. I'll see you this evening.....Sarah's house.
4. You have to change planes.....Karachi.
5. Did you go away.....Christmas.
6. Turn left.....the next corner.
7. Are there any good films.....the cinema this week.
8. Is there any interestingthe paper.
9. Her photo ispage 4.
10. They livepark street.
11. The sweaters looks good you.
12. She had a ring.....every finger.
13. Who is the manthe grey suit.
14. The church has a wonderful painting.....the ceiling.
15. Your soup will be ready.....ten minutes.

Exercise n2

Complete the sentences with *between* or *among*. If you can use both, write between/among

1. I wasn't feeling very angry, so Jo and I shared a bowl of noodles.....us.
2. I bought four bars of chocolate and divided thempeople.
3. The distinctionamateurs and professional athletes are becoming less clear.
4. It has become fashionable.....teenager to dye their hair in various colors.
5. When Jack died, his daughter inherited the house and the rest of his money was split.....his remaining relations.
6. The advertising company is very successful, membering most of the big banks.....its clients.
7. Researchers have formed a striking correlationintake of refined sugar and arthritis.
8. Given a choicecooking and washing up, I know which I' d prefer to do.
9. Neil and Ashley aremy closest friends, so I'll invite them to the wedding, of course.
10. Late last night the talks.....the striking doctors and their employers broke down.