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Transfer of Simple Prepositions from Standard
Arabic into English: The Case of Third Year LMD
Students of English Language at Mentouri
University – Constantine.

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the Master Degree in Applied Linguistics

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

My parents with great love, respect and gratitude.

My sisters: Sabrina, Houda and Widad.

My brothers: Toufik, Soufiane and Nedjemeddine.

My angels: Meissa, Louei, Mohamed, Maram and Malek.

My brothers-in-law and sister-in-law.

All my friends

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Abstract

This research aims at investigating the reality of the phenomenon of simple prepositions transfer from Standard Arabic into English by Algerian learners who study English as a foreign language. For the purpose of examining our hypothesis, a test is given to thirty students belonging to third year LMD students at the English Department, Mentouri University, Constantine. This test consists of twenty sentences where students are asked to fill in the gaps with the appropriate simple preposition that expresses spatial or temporal meaning. The analysis of the students' answers shows that Algerian learners transfer from Standard Arabic besides French and Algerian Arabic. Positive transfer occurs from Standard Arabic and French more than from Algerian Arabic whereas negative transfer is traceable to Standard Arabic more than French and Algerian Arabic. Hence, this research confirms our hypothesis. However, Standard Arabic is not the only source of transfer for Algerian learners since they also transfer from French and Algerian Arabic. Thus, Algerian learners rely on Standard Arabic, in addition to French and Algerian Arabic prepositional knowledge in order to acquire an understanding of prepositional usage in English and, as a result, transfer phenomenon takes place.

List of Abbreviations

L1: First language.

L2: Second language.

FL: Foreign language.

CA: Contrastive Analysis.

Ea: Error Analysis.

NL: Native language.

TL: Target language.

e.g.: example.

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Introduction

From a historical point of view, researches into second language (L2) learning are more complex than researches into first language (L1) learning. This complexity is due to some questions such as: Why L1 learning is more successful than L2 one? How can we have a good language learning? And what is the effect of L1 skills and intuition on L2 learning?

Discussions of language transfer began with the work of American linguists in the 1940s and 1950s. Thinkings and works of Charles Fries, Robert Lado and others are considered the stimulus for other researches in second/foreign language learning and teaching. Their views received considerable attention, as did the views of their critics. The importance of transfer, accordingly, in second language learning has been reevaluated many times. In the 1950s, it was often considered the most important factor in second language learning and second language teaching theories. In the 1960s, its importance decreased because learners' errors were not seen as evidence of language transfer. Moreover, some researchers denied its existence and emphasized the contribution of universal processes of language learning; in recent years, however, a more equilibrium perspective has been used. Researches in 1970s and 1980s have brought new and more convincing evidence for its importance in subsystems. Therefore, with this growth of transfer researches, researchers have conducted interesting studies in this field discovering new approaches to it.

Simple prepositions as an important area of English grammar are found difficult by L2/FL learners, as is the case of Algerian students. McCarthy (1972) (cited in Hamdallah and Tushyeh, 1993:181) maintains that "As any English teacher well knows, our prepositions are particularly troublesome lot to the non native speaker of English ". Pittman (1966) (cited in Hamdallah and Tushyeh, 1993: 181) as well states that "Among those who teach or learn the English language, prepositions have earned a reputation for difficulty if not downright unpredictability."

In comparing the usage of simple prepositions in Standard Arabic and English, we find some simple prepositions in English that have equivalents in Standard Arabic, and others that do not. Therefore, learners, in dealing with them, are exposed to many difficulties. They may relate the usage of English simple prepositions to their Standard Arabic prepositional system, Corder (1975) (cited in James, 1980:21) claims that, “the sense we make of our environment depends on what we already know about it [...] the relevant existing cognitive structures may be those of the mother tongue”. That is, second/foreign language learners depend on their native language, as it is a source of their prior knowledge, and the decision making of transferable items and structures is taken on the basis of learners’ perception of similarities and differences between their native language and the target language. Thus, cross-linguistic influence can in some cases lead to errors as a result of negative transfer, and in other cases will result in the correct form being produced in the target language i.e., positive transfer.

1. Aim of the Study

The main objective of this research is to shed some light on language transfer as a real and an inevitable phenomenon that should be considered in any study of the second / foreign language learning process, and determine whether Algerian students of English rely on their Standard Arabic prepositional knowledge and accordingly, areas of transfer occur.

2. Statement of the Problem

Simple prepositions are small words either in English or in Standard Arabic. Nevertheless, large numbers of Algerian students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) have a lot of problems concerning how to use them correctly, as some simple prepositions in English have equivalents in Standard Arabic and others do not. Subsequently, when they come to deal with them, transfer phenomenon may take place. Our piece of research aims at addressing the following questions:

Do Algerian students of English transfer simple prepositions from Standard Arabic into English?

Is Standard Arabic the only source of transfer, or there are other sources for Algerian learners?

3. Hypothesis

If Algerian students of English do not master English simple prepositions usage, then they will transfer positively or negatively from Standard Arabic.

4. Means of Research

The methodological procedure followed in conducting this research is testing. In this test, students will be asked to fill in gaps in twenty English sentences with simple prepositions of time or space.

5. The Sample

The test upon which our study is based is directed to 30 students chosen randomly from a population of third year LMD students at the English Department, Mentouri University, Constantine. The testees are all native speakers of Arabic. They are chosen in this research because they are supposed to have reached a certain level of proficiency in English. Consequently, they can manipulate the English grammatical structure.

6. Structure of the Study

This piece of research is divided into two main parts: a descriptive part which includes one chapter about the related literature, and an empirical part which consists also of one chapter.

Chapter one deals with the theory of language transfer, as an essential issue in applied linguistic and foreign language learning and teaching, as one of the most controversial issues representing considerably changing views. It deals also with contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA) as two approaches aiming at making language learning and teaching

process more effective and the semantic and syntactic properties of simple prepositions in standard Arabic and in English.

Chapter two is concerned with the methodology, the analysis and the interpretation of the results obtained from the test that was given to the students.

Introduction

Language transfer has been a fundamental issue to research in applied linguistics, second language learning and language teaching. It has been a controversy among scholars whose primary interests were not second language learning or language teaching, but rather language classification and language change. Some scholars claim the importance of transfer in learning because of its facilitative effect resulting from similarities existing in two languages, in other words, positive transfer from one language to another; others maintain that positive transfer does not always occur and an effective learning of any language can be achieved and realized without depending on any previously learned language regardless of the differences and similarities between them. Since our research is concerned with transfer of simple prepositions from Standard Arabic into English, a part of this chapter will be directed to language transfer and the factors that promote or inhibit its occurrence. The second one is devoted to simple prepositions usage in both languages. Our focus will be on their semantic and syntactic properties.

1.1. Language Transfer

In Webster's Third New World International Dictionary (1986) transfer, derived from the Latin word *transfere*, means to carry, to bear or to print, impress or otherwise copy from one surface to another. It also means the carry-over or generalization of learned responses from one type of situation to another. This meaning from the dictionary shows clearly that transfer is a neutral word in origin and nature since it does not indicate whether what is carried over is bad or good (liu, 2001).

Behaviourist views considered transfer in terms of habit formation. In other words, the habits of the NL would be carried over into the FL. Lado (1957:2) makes that clear when he says:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and to understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives.

Corder (1975:20) also describes the phenomenon in terms of “[...] the learner is carrying over the habits of his mother-tongue into the second language “. Thus, according to him, if the NL pattern and TL one are identical the learner could learn that TL easily through positive transfer. Yet, where the two patterns are different, errors occur as a result of negative transfer.

Transfer is also defined as the influence of a language A on language B. Ellis (1965) (cited in James, 1980:11) states: “[...] the hypothesis that the learning of task A will affect the subsequent learning of task B”. If task A and task B are substituted with L1 and L2 respectively, it will be easy to understand that L1 learning (prior learning) affects L2 learning (subsequent learning).

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a revolution in linguistics and in psychology where the turning point concerning language learning theories is marked by Chomsky’s review of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour in 1957 (ibid). Hence, the behaviourist approach was attacked and the role of transfer was decreased as learners’ errors were seen not as evidence of language transfer, but rather of the creative construction process. Gass (1983:116) illustrates that point by saying:

Language transfer seemed to be an “embarrassment” since there was no way of incorporating it within existing models. Further, support for the lack of L1 importance could be offered since many of the errors previously attributed to the L1 could be accounted for differently, for example, “by developmental” factors.

The importance of language transfer, once again, has been acknowledged, and its definition has been broadened and, as a result, different terms have been used by scholars to

refer to the phenomenon: Language mixing (Selinker, 1972; Kellerman, 1983), linguistics interference (Schachter and Rutherford, 1979; Ringbom; 1987), Language transfer (Lado, 1957; Selinker, 1972; Kellerman, 1983; Odlin, 1989), the role of the mother tongue and native language influence (Master, 1987; Mesthrie and Dunne, 1990; Jarvis, 2000) (Torrijos, 2009), and cross-linguistics influence (Kellerman and Smith, 1986) that was suggested to cover all the phenomena that can take place through transfer. They claim, Kellerman and Smith, that this term is “theory neutral, allowing one to subsume under one heading such phenomena as transfer interference, avoidance , borrowing and L2 related aspects of language loss and thus permitting discussions of the similarities and differences between these phenomena” (Kellerman and Smith, 1986:125).

According to Odlin (1989), transfer is not merely a consequence of habit formation as the behaviourist approach claims. He shows that the term transfer is not simply a matter of interference as well since interference implies only negative transfer. Hence the term positive transfer was neglected. He also states that transfer is not always NL influence because other previously acquired languages can also have effect on TL. He exposes his idea as follows: “When individuals know two languages, knowledge of both may effect their acquisition of a third [...] knowledge of three or more languages can lead to three or more different kinds of source language influence” (27), and “transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly acquired” (ibid).

1.2. Types of Transfer

Different types of transfer are stated in the definition of transfer given by Ellis (1994:341):

Transfer is to be seen as a general cover term for a number of different kinds of influence from languages other than the L2. The study of transfer involves the study of errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance of target language forms and their over-use.

1.2.1. Positive Transfer

It is the transfer of a skill X which facilitates the learning or has a positive influence on the command of a skill Y because of similarities between both skills. Allen and Corder (1975:26) maintain that “positive transfer helps new learning, for instance, it is easy to learn to pronounce aspirated voiceless stops in a second language if the language also has aspirated voiceless stops”. Hence, prior language knowledge can be very helpful in learning a new language. One of the studies that support this idea is the test that was given to Spanish students in which they had to put the meaning of certain English words that they were not supposed to know. Students did well with the words that had identical spelling. However, they did not answer or answered incorrectly those words that they were not supposed to know, and whose spellings were not similar to any words in their NL. For example:

English words	Students' answers
Public	Público
Telephone	Teléfono
Important	Importante
Dizzy
Land
Scream

(Ramon Torrijos, 2009:152).

1.2.2. Negative Transfer

It is the transfer of a skill X which impedes the learning or has a negative influence on the command of a skill Y because of differences between both skills. In the field of SL/FL learning, it is understood as the systematic influence of the NL on the TL.

For some linguists such as Weinreich (1953), negative transfer is referred to as interference. He also explains the occurrence of this phenomenon by contrasting it to positive transfer. He states that

When a process of second language learning takes place, those linguistics phenomena which are similar in form, meaning and distribution are regarded as facilitating the process, and the transfer is seen as positive, if they are dissimilar, the transfer is considered negative and acquisition is viewed as distorted because the two structures differ. The phenomenon involved in these difficulties was called interference (1953:1)

Thus, this phenomenon is equated with difficulty in learning a L2 as an outcome of differences of the two languages structures.

1.2.3. Avoidance

It is a cognitive strategy that results in the absence of certain structures in the TL production i.e., L2 learners avoid using certain structures that are very different from their L1.

In a study, Schachter (1974) found that Chinese and Japanese students committed fewer errors in English relative clauses than did Persian and Arab students. It was thought that English relative clauses were less difficult for the Chinese and Japanese students than for the Arab and Persian students because the placement of relative clauses in Chinese and Japanese differs so much from their placement in English. Yet, she also found that the number of relative clauses produced was much lower for the Chinese and Japanese students compared with the Persian and Arab ones. This difference was attributed to an avoidance strategy which resulted in the production of fewer errors.

1.2.4. Over-Use

Learners may demonstrate a preference of certain grammatical forms, words and discourse types in L2 as the result of the avoidance or under production of some difficult structures.

1.3. Contrastive Analysis

Challenges to assumptions about the importance of transfer did not have much impact on the history of language teaching until the late 1970s. The challenges that arose in that period were largely in reaction to the claim made by Fries (1952) and Lado (1957) that states that the existence of cross-linguistic differences in second language learning could be determined through contrastive analysis. This approach has been the subject of intense debate. Applied linguists and language teachers have expressed divergent views on its feasibility and usefulness.

1.3.1. Contrastive Analysis and Language Transfer Theory

The psychological basis of C A is transfer theory elaborated within the behaviourist theory of psychology. In other words, C A is founded on the assumption that L2 learners will tend to transfer to their L2 utterances the formal features of their L1 as Lado (1957:02) puts it:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture.

1.3.2. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

According to Wardhaugh (1974), CA has two versions: CA a priori, which is also called the predictive or strong version and CA a posteriori, which is called the explanatory or weak version.

1.3.2.1. The Strong Version

It claims that L2 learning problems can be predicted on the basis of linguistic differences between L1 and L2. This idea is well explained by Banathy, Trager and Waddle (1966:37):

[...] the change that has to take place in the language behaviour of a foreign language student can be equated with the differences between the structure of the student's native language and culture and that of the target language and culture, the task of the linguist, the cultural anthropologist, and the sociologist is to identify these differences. The task of the writer of a foreign

language teaching programme is to develop materials which will be based on a statement of these differences; the task of the foreign language teacher is to be aware of these differences and to be prepared to teach them; the task of the student is to learn them.

According to Schachter (1979), CA a priori is said to be point by point analysis of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, or other subsystems of two languages. Researchers, through the comparison of one of these subsystems of language A and language B, can analyze them and discover the similarities and differences between them. Consequently, predictions can be made about what will be the points of difficulty for a learner of language A on the assumption that similarities will be easier to learn and differences harder (Ramon Torrijos, 2009).

Therefore, the strong version has generally been made under the following two assumptions: The chance of L2 learning problems occurring will increase proportionally to the linguistic differences between L1 and L2. So, linguistic differences give rise to interference. The chance of L2 learning problems occurring will decrease proportionally to the absence of linguistic differences. Thus, absence of differences gives rise to facilitation.

1.3.2.2. The Weak Version

The proponents of this version take a different methodological approach. They claim that some observed L2 learning problems can be explained on the basis of linguistic differences between L1 and L2.

According to Schachter (Ramon Torrijos, 2009:150), “learners of language A are found by the process of errors analysis to make recurring errors in a particular construction in their attempts to learn language B, the investigators make an analysis of the construction in language A, in order to discover why the errors occur”.

1.3.4. Contrastive Analysis Objectives

A number of fundamental and applied objectives have traditionally been attributed to CA: The first objective is discovering similarities and differences between languages. This can be interpreted as an attempt at establishing linguistic universals and language specific characteristics of languages. The second objective is explaining and predicting problems in L2 learning as Lado (1957: vii) states: “[...] the comparison of any two languages and cultures to discover and describe the problems that the speaker of the languages will have in learning the other”. In his book preface, *Languages across Cultures* (1957), Lado states that

The plane of the book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the students.

Weinreich (1953) provides the following definition of interference as an explanation of L2 learners’ problems:

Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact.

The third objective is developing course materials for language teaching as Lado (1957: I) says:

The results of such comparisons have proved of fundamental value for the preparation of teaching materials, test and language learning experiments. Foreign language teachers who understand this field will acquire insights and tools for evaluating the language and culture content of text-books and testees, supplementing the materials in use, preparing new materials and tests, and diagnosing students difficulties accurately.

1.3.5. Contrastive Analysis Criticism

CA reached an important prestige during the 1950s and the first half of 1960s. Yet, during the second half of 1960s, a critical attitude began to manifest itself which seriously

challenged CA two crucial claims: L2 learning errors result from NL interference, and difficulties are mainly due to the differences between the two languages and the similarities always lead to correct performance.

CA claim that what is different is difficult and what is similar is easy was criticized by Corder (1973). He makes two important observations: the first one is that there is not necessarily a connection between difference and difficulty. According to him, the fact that difficulty is a psycholinguistic rather than a linguistic matter makes it hard to predict which features in L2 learning are difficult and which are not. The second one is that learners must not only learn the differences between L1 and L2, they have also to discover the similarities (Aarts, 1980).

The contribution that CA can make to language teaching was challenged by many leading linguists. Mackey (Aarts, 1980:50), for instance, claims that the principle that “all the mistakes of the language learner are due to the make-up of his native language [...] is demonstrably false”. He also argues that the linguist’s prediction of mistakes based on a contrastive analysis is less reliable than the teacher’s prediction based on his experience (Aarts, 1980).

The adequacy of CA as a predictive means is also questioned by Whitman and Jackson (1972). On the basis of a comparison of the results of two tests administered to Japanese students with predictions of the relative difficulty of the test items derived from four contrastive analyses, they arrive at the conclusion that contrastive analyses do not adequately predict subject performance (Aarts, 1980).

These arguments show clearly that the main weaknesses of CA are the prediction of L2 learning problems which do not occur (over-prediction), and the turning out not to predict learning problems which occur (under-prediction); nevertheless, CA continued to prosper and proved very helpful in the field of teaching languages. In this respect DiPietro (Aarts,

1980:52) states that “in spite of the unsettled state of research in linguistic theory, CA should be continued because of its value for teaching”.

1.4. From Contrastive Analysis to Error Analysis

During the second half of the 1960s, critics began to question one of the main objectives of CA, namely the explanation and prediction of L2 learning problems. They started to realize more and more that this approach left L2 learners out of the consideration. Besides, the fact that there was no empirical basis for CA in turn led to the emerge of E A and shift of interest from CA to it.

E A is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors L2 learners make in order to analyze them, and investigate their sources.

1.4.1. The Notion of Errors

Before the 1960s, during the behaviouristic thought that was the dominant one, errors were considered flaws that needed to be eradicated. They were seen as some thing not permitted, and making errors could be undesirable to language learning processes. According to this school of thought, the main cause of errors is the inadequacy in teaching methods. Thus, with a perfect teaching method, errors would never be committed. Yet, the concept of universal grammar proposed by Chomsky (1957) and his claim that all human beings have an innate capacity which can guide them through a large number of sentence generation possibilities led many language teachers gradually to move away from the behaviouristic language learning.

Corder, known as the father of error analysis, was the first to advocate the importance of errors in the language learning process. He presented a completely different point of view through his article entitled “The Significance of Learner Errors” (1967). He suggested that with the classification of errors, researchers could learn a great deal about the second language learning process because they are believed to contain valuable information on the

strategies that L2 learners use. According to him, errors are also indispensable for learners themselves since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. For Gass and Selinker (1994), errors are red flags that provide evidence of the L2 learner's knowledge (Abi Samra, 2003).

1.4.2. Error Analysis Objectives

According to Corder (1973), error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical object serves to check the validity of theories, namely the psycholinguistic theory of transfer. The applied object concerns pedagogical purposes. When errors are analyzed, the nature of difficulties and problems faced by L2 learners is identified which helps teachers to modify their way of teaching and checking their teaching materials.

Corder (1975:265) points out that

Errors provide feed back; they tell the teacher some thing about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been adequately learned or taught and need further attention. They enable him to decide whether he can move on to the next item on the syllabus or whether he must devote more time to the item he has been working on.

According to Richards and Sampson (1974), at the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assess learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort.

1.4.3. Models for Error Analysis

Corder (1974) identified a model for error analysis which included three stages: data collection, description and explanation.

Ellis and Hubbard et al. (1996) gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how to identify and analyze learners' errors. The first step is the selection of a corpus of language followed by the identification and classification of errors. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error is the explanation of different types of errors.

Moreover, Gass and Selinker (1994) identified 6 steps followed in conducting an error analysis: collecting data, identifying errors, classifying errors, quantifying errors, analyzing source of error, and remediating for errors.

1.4.4. Sources of Errors

While Selinker (1972) reported five sources of errors: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of TL linguistic material, Corder (1974) identified three sources of errors: language transfer, overgeneralization or analogy, and methods or materials used in the teaching (teaching-induced error). However, Richards and Sampson (1974) exposed seven sources of errors: language transfer, intralingual interference, sociolinguistic situation, modality, age, successions of approximative systems and universal hierarchy of difficulty.

As stated above, EA as an approach aims at investigating errors committed by language learners including the influence from the NL. This investigation can be at the same time diagnostic. It is diagnostic since it may show the learner's state of the language at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language materials on the basis of the learners' current problems.

1. 5. Variables Affecting Language Transfer

Language transfer may be affected by a number of factors that decrease or increase its occurrence. These factors can be accounted for in terms of variables, and they can be classified into three groups: learner-based variables, language-based variables and socio-linguistic variables.

1.5.1. Learner-Based Variables

Since the learner is an active participant, he plays a central part in L2 learning.

Age

Transfer takes place among children as well as among adults. Yet, children are less likely to draw their L1 than adult ones. Several studies have shown that children are more likely to achieve a more native-like pronunciation. However, the L1 pronunciation of older learners will be more influential (Zhang, 2006). According to Selinker (1984), L2 learning by young children is driven by universal grammar and target language input, and this process is similar to L1 acquisition.

Affection

Individuals can vary in many ways. Their affective states are viewed as obvious distinguishers in L2 learning that may increase or decrease the likelihood of transfer. Odlin (1989:129) argues that “A highly motivated Chinese speaker will probably learn more English and learn it faster than a poorly motivated Spanish speaker”.

According to Guiora et al. (1980) (cited in Zhang, 2006), empathy plays a large part in the learner’s learning of target language pronunciation. If individuals feel emotionally inside the TL speech community, they are more likely to overcome their foreign accent.

1.5.2. Language-Based Variables

Markedness

It is an important factor since it can help in determining when transfer may and may not take place. Marked rules are those that are not governed by universal principles, whereas unmarked rules are those that are derived from the general concept of human language (language neutral) (Zhang, 2006).

Hyltenstam (1984:43) comments:

Unmarked categories from the native language are substituted for corresponding marked categories in the target language [...] marked structures are seldom transfer, and if they are transferred, they are much more easily eradicated from the target language.

Those parts of one's language which speakers consider irregular or infrequent are highly marked and consequently are less transferable than frequent and regular forms. Thus, from a perspective of learner perception, an infrequent item will be considered psychologically marked, and therefore less transferable. In terms of the level of difficulty for learners, Eckman's (1977) basic assumption is that areas of TL which differ from NL will be difficult if they are more marked than in the NL, but they will not be difficult if they are not more marked. He suggests the "Markedness differential Hypothesis" (M D H) where he makes three predictions:

- A- marked than in the NL will be Those areas of the TL that are different from the NL and are relatively more difficult
- B- The relative degree of difficulty of the areas of the L2 which are more marked than the L1 will correspond to the relative degree of markedness
- C- Those areas of the L2 which are different from the L1, but are not more marked than the L1, will not be difficult (P. 321)

Language Distance and Cultural Distance

Close languages often share a great number of similarities (cognate vocabulary or close translation), and this can help L2 learners enormously whereas areas in the case of distant languages, L2 learners need more information about language form and use. Hence, they have to learn from scratch. Corder (1981) emphasizes positive transfer if there exist similarities between L1 and L2: "where the mother tongue is formally similar to the target language, the learner will pass more rapidly along the developmental continuum than there it differs." In addition to language distance, cultural distance can also greatly affect ease or difficulty of learning. When learners attempt to learn an L2 that has the same or similar cultural background, they are sure to find many similar elements, and when they try to learn an L2 with totally different cultural background from their L1, they may encounter more troubles (Zhang, 2006).

Proficiency

According to Ringbom (1987), L2 proficiency is a determinant factor affecting the extent of transfer. A learner is more likely to transfer from a language where he has a higher degree of proficiency than a language where he has a lower degree of proficiency. The correlation between low L2 proficiency and transfer applies primarily to negative transfer while Odlin (1989) points out that positive transfer such as cognate vocabulary use occurs at high levels of proficiency.

1.5.3. Socio-Linguistic Variables

Social context can also influence the extent to which transfer occurs. Odlin (1989) views that negative transfer is less common in classroom settings than in natural ones because in the former learners constitute a “focused context” and treat L1 forms as “intrusive”. In the latter, learners are unfocused and language mixing will be permitted, which encourages negative transfer to take place. Ellis (1994) also points out that the social context requires attention to external norms, and if the context encourages attention to internal norms, learners may resort to L1 when this helps comprehensibility and develops positive effective responses.

After dealing with language transfer, CA and EA we move now to simple prepositions usage in English and Standard Arabic.

1.6. Simple Prepositions Usage in English

1.6.1. Syntactic Properties

According to Quirk et al. (1993), a preposition expresses a relationship between entities: they indicate a relationship in space (between one object and another), and/or a relationship in time (between events). In addition to other relationships such as instrument and cause.

Prepositions can be used with different parts of speech of the same root word. One preposition can be used with the verb form, another with the objective and still another with the noun form of the word. e.g.: - *We are fond of something*

- *We have fondness for it* (Hamdallah and Tushyeh, 1993).

Prepositions can be classified according to their form, function and meaning. Concerning form, prepositions can be simple (one-word preposition), or complex (also called two- word, three-word, or compound prepositions). Simple prepositions are closed class. That is, we do not invent new single word prepositions. However, complex prepositions are open class because new combinations could be invented (Grubic, 2004).

In English, there are approximately seventy simple prepositions. The most frequently used are: at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to and with (Grubic, 2004).

According to Huddleston (1988), simple prepositions have the following properties:

A- Inflection: they do not enter into inflectional contrasts [...]

B-Complementation: they can take as a complement a NP (He will resign before/towards the end of the year)

Or a tensed declarative clause 'TDC' (He will resign before/unless a vote is taken) [...]. The complement may also be:

- i. A present participle clause: He resigned after reading
The report
- ii. An interrogative clause: it depends on whether we can afford it
- iii. A verbless clause: (she stood) with her back to the door
- iv. An adjectival phrase: (we regarded her) as very competent
- v. A prepositional phrase: (he emerged) from behind the bush [...]
- d. Function: prepositions function as head in PP structure (P.124-25)

Quirk et al. (1993) view that a prepositional phrase is made of a preposition followed by a prepositional complement which is a noun phrase (e.g. *at the bus stop*) or a WH-clause (e.g. *from what he said*) or V-ing clause (e.g. *by signing a peace treaty*).

These prepositional phrases may function as:

- 1- Adjunct (e.g. *The people were singing on the bus*)
- 2- Disjunct (e.g. *To my surprise, the doctor phoned*)
- 3- Conjunct (e.g. *On the other hand, he made no attempt to help the victim or apprehend attacker*)
- 4- Post modifier in a noun phrase (e.g. *The people on the bus were singing*)
- 5- Complementation of a verb (e.g. *We depend on you*)
- 6- Complementation of an adjective (e.g. *I'm sorry for his parents*)

1.6.2. Semantic Properties

1.6.2.1. Spatial Meanings

Leung (1990) (cited in Hasan and Abdullah, 2009:605) maintains that “the function of spatial preposition is to locate spatially one object with reference to another object “. In the sentence: *My friend lives in a small village*, there is a spatial relationship between ‘*My friend*’ and ‘*small village*’ through the use of the preposition ‘*in*’.

Cognitive linguists use the expressions ‘the trajector’ and ‘landmark’ to refer respectively to ‘*My friend*’ and ‘*small village*’, and both ‘the trajector’ and ‘landmark’ are located within a spatial domain (Hasan and Abdullah, 2009).

Bennett (1975:12) sees that

Any comprehensive account of spatial uses of English prepositions assigns a prominent place to the distinction between locative sentences, such as ‘*Gyneth is at the supermarket*’, and the directional sentence, such as ‘*Trevor went to the post-office*.’

Hence, locative sentences show clearly where something is located while directional sentences describe a change of position (i.e., from one position to another).

According to Close (1981:148),

In using spatial prepositions, we are concerned not so much with objective measurement, i.e. with the actual dimensions of the things to which we are referring, as with how we

imagine them to be at the time of speaking. Thus we can imagine a town as a point on the map, as a surface to go across, or as a space we live in, or walk through.

This quotation shows clearly the distinction made between the three prepositions: *in*, *on* and *at*. These prepositions and others locate along dimensions which are used to locate objects around us. e.g.:

- 1- *The car is at the cottage.*
- 2- *There is a window on the cottage.*
- 3- *There are two beds in the cottage.*

In the first sentence, using '*at*' makes cottage a dimensionless location, just a point in relation to which the car's position can be indicated. In the second sentence, with the use of '*on*', the cottage becomes a two dimensional area, covered by a roof. In the third sentence, with '*in*', the cottage becomes a three dimensional object which in reality it is. '*On*' is also capable of use with a one dimensional object (e.g. *Put your signature on this line*). '*In*' is also capable of being used with objects which are essentially two dimensional (e.g. *The cow is in the field* where field is considered as an enclosed space) (Quirk et al.1993).

Quirk et al. (1993) set out the dimensional orientation of the chief prepositions of place as follows:

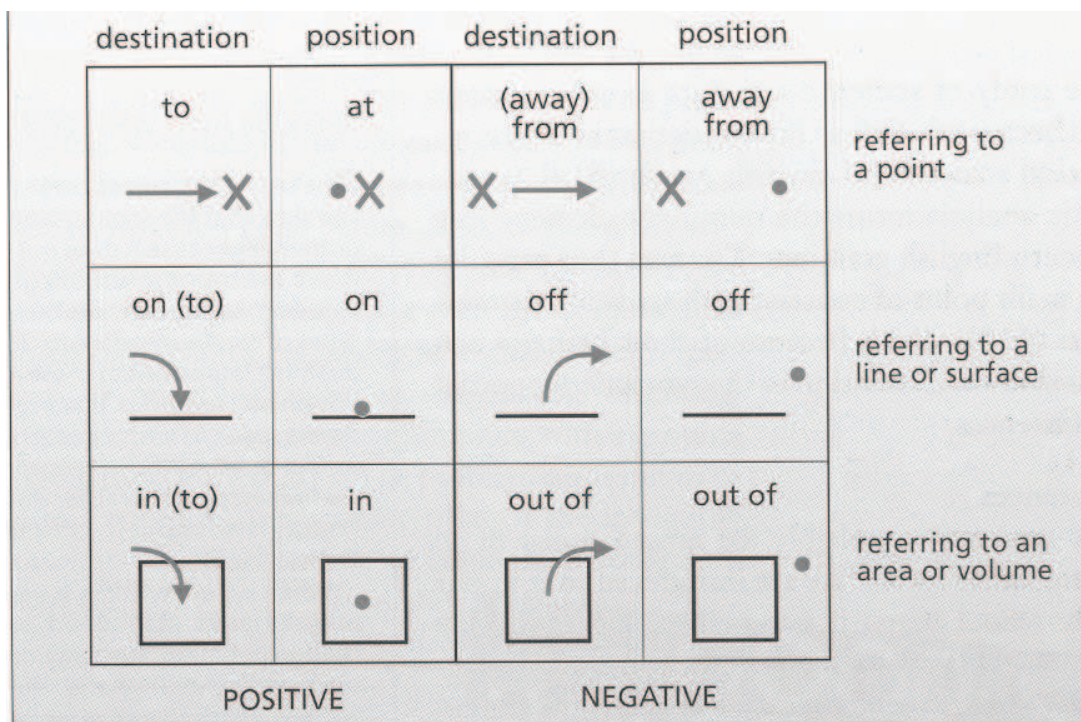


Figure 01 : Place and Dimension (Quirk et al. 1993:147)

The contrast between on (expresses a surface) and in (expresses an area) has various amplifications according to context, as these examples show:

- *The frost made patterns on the window* (window is used as a glass surface).
- *A face appeared in the window* (window means a framed area). (Quirk et al.148).

A cause-and-effect relationship is obtained between the notions of simple position (or static location) and direction (movement with respect to a destination).

Direction

Position

Tom went to the door

as a result: Tom was at the door

Tom fell on (to) the floor

as a result: Tom was on the floor

Tom dived in (to) the water

as a result: Tom was in the water

(Quirk et al., 1993)

Prepositions such as *by, over, under...*etc may express the idea of relative position of two objects or groups of objects, e.g.:

- *He was standing by his brother*, i.e., he is at the side of his brother.
- *I left the keys with my wallet*. That is, in the same place as my wallet (Quirk et al., 1993).

The sense of passage is the primary locative meaning tied to *across* (dimension-type ½), *through* (dimension-type 2/3) and *past* (the passage equivalent of *by*). There is a parallel between *across* and *on*, *through* and *in* as the following diagram shows:

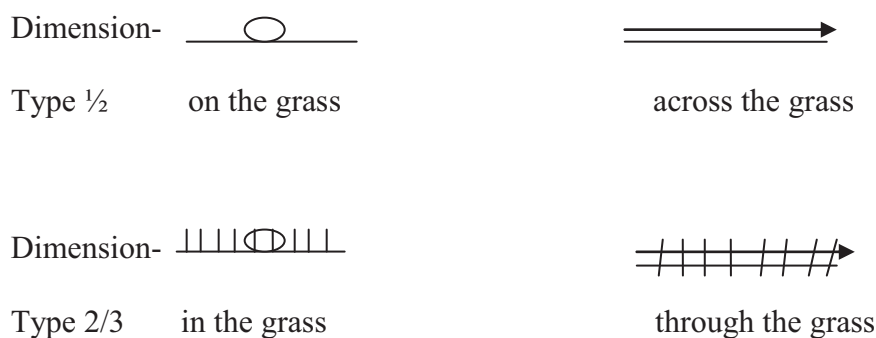


Figure 02: The parallel between ‘*across*’ and ‘*on*’, ‘*through*’ and ‘*in*’

(Quirk et al., 1993:150).

‘*Beyond*’ which means ‘on the far side of’ is a simple preposition whose primary meaning is one of orientation. *Over, past, across* and *through* can also express the meaning of ‘*beyond*’ (e.g. He lives *across* the moors i.e., from here, the village *past* the bus-stop *through* the wood...etc) (Quirk et al., 1993).

Among the areas which may seem problematic for learners of English as a second/foreign language is the one in which many simple prepositions have approximately similar meaning. Yet, when using one instead of another the meaning will be changed. Here we are concerned with simple prepositions which are relatively general in meaning (*in, under...*) and those which are more specific (*within, below...*). e.g.:

- *These chemicals only occur in the cell walls*
- *These chemicals only occur within the cell walls*

The two sentences seem to have the same meaning. But, in fact, they have not.

Lindstromberg (2000:33) makes a distinction between the two prepositions when he says:

If 'in' is used, native speakers tend to understand that the chemicals are in the walls themselves, perhaps as constituents of the walls. 'Within', on other hand, strongly suggests a different meaning [...] that the chemicals are in the space enclosed by the walls. This is because 'within' means well and truly in, not just a bit in.

Besides, Lindstromberg (1997:34) explains that we cannot say "within the water" because 'if you are totally immersed in water, it touches you. This is why 'within' is inappropriate here".

There are also other simple prepositions such as 'onto' (as opposed to *on*) and 'into' (as opposed to *in*) that may prove to be problematic for learners. Close (1981:157) shows that

Movement in the direction of a surface, and reaching it, is expressed by 'on' to emphasize movement towards and then position on the surface or effort required to complete process, we say 'onto'.

Concerning 'in' and 'into', he adds:

[...] movement in the direction of a space and penetrating it is expressed, simply, by 'in'; but to mark the emphasis comparable to that expressed by 'onto' we say 'into' a space (1981:159)

1.6.2.2. Temporal Meanings

The temporal domain shows that an event takes place within an enclosing time-span. According to Driven (1993), this event "is associated with the time-span seen from the present time-point". There are two sub-types of time enclosure: the first indicates a period of time such as in the afternoon, in the early 19s, in the 21st century, in summer...etc whereas the second sub-type indicates duration such as length of time. e.g.: *promised to come back in a few hours* (Hasan and Abdullah, 2009:605).

Quirk et al. (1993) refer to 'at' and 'in' as prepositions of 'time when' because they are used to answer the question 'when?' 'At' is used for points of time mainly clock-time (at

ten o'clock, at 5:30 pm, at noon...etc), for holiday periods (at the weekend, at Christmas, at Easter) and for phrases (at night, at the/that time ...etc). 'On' is used with phrases referring to days (on Monday, on the following day...etc). 'In' is used to indicate periods of time such as: in the evening during holy week, in August, in the months that followed, in the eighteenth century....etc (Quirk et al. 1993).

Other prepositions of time are *for* (in addition to others that express duration), *between*, *by*...etc.

Before, *after*, *since* and *until/till* occur almost exclusively as prepositions of time, and are followed by a temporal noun phrase (e.g. before next week), a subjectless V-ing clause (e.g. *since leaving school*), or a noun phrase with adverbial noun or some other noun phrase interpreted as equivalent to a clause. e.g.:

- *Until the fall of Rome* (i.e., until Rome fell)
- *Before the war* (i.e., before the war started or took place) (Quirk et al.155).

We can summarize the usage of 'in', 'on' and 'at' with different descriptions of time:

on	in	at	Prepositions / Description of time
		At 6:00 pm	Clock time
On Saturday			days
On Saturday morning			Day + part of the day
	In the after noon	At night	Parts of the day
On Christmas day			Special day
On 16 May 1999			dates
	In April, in six month		month
	In 2005		year
		At breakfast time	mealtime

		At Easter	festival
	In spring		Season
	In the middle Ages		Long periods of time

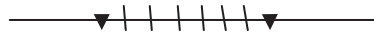
Table 01: Usage of ‘at’, ‘in’ and ‘on’ with different units of time

(based on Murphy, 2004: 242).

Hill (1989) also adds some diagrams that can help learners to understand what the different prepositions mean:



We arrived at 2 o'clock



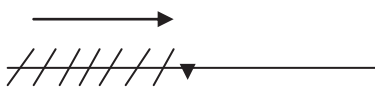
we'll be there about 2 o'clock



The doctor can't see you before 2 o'clock

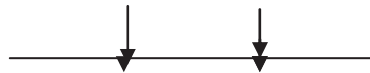


I'll be in my Office after 2 o'clock



I won't be there until 2 o'clock

Or



will we be there by 2 o'clock



I haven't seen her since 2 o'clock



they are open from 2 o'clock

(Looking back to a point in the past)

Figure 03: Diagramming some Temporal Relations (Hill, 1989: 224)

Prepositions of ‘time when’ are always absent from adjuncts having the deictic words: last, next, this and that; the quantifying words some and every; nouns which have ‘last’ ‘next’ or ‘this’ as an element of their meaning: yesterday, today, tomorrow. e.g.:

I saw him last Thursday.

I'll mention it next time I see him.

Plums are more plentiful this year.

Every summer she returns to her childhood home (Quirk et al., 1993).

The preposition is usually optional with phrases referring to times such as : (*on*) Monday week, (*in*) the January before last, (*on*) the day before yesterday. It is also optional with phrases identifying a time before or after a given time in the past or future: (*in*) the previous spring, (*at*) the following weekend, (*on*) the next day (Quirk et al., 1993).

The preposition 'for' is often omitted in phrases of duration such as: We stayed there (*for*) three months; the snowy weather lasted (*for*) the whole time we were there. The omission also takes place with phrases which begin with all. For instance: all day, all (the) week (Quirk et al., 1993).

1.7. Simple Prepositions Usage in Standard Arabic

1.7.1. Syntactic Properties

Arab-grammarians used to classify Arabic words into three classes: Nouns, Verbs and particles. From the class of particles, they separated prepositions which they called 'huruf al-jarr (particles of attraction) (Hamdallah and Tushyeh, 1993).

Arabic prepositions are divided into two morphological classes: The first class consists of prepositions that are inseparable i.e., which are always united in writing with the following noun. They occur as prefixes to the complement: *bi* (at, by, in, with); *li* (to); *Ka* (as, like); *Ta* (by 'in swearing'); *wa* (by 'in swearing').

The second class is made of prepositions which are independent and either bilateral or trilateral.

1/ Bilateral:

An (from); *fii* (in, at); *Kay* (in order to) and *min* (from).

2/ Triteral:

Alaa (on); *adaa* (except); *ilaa* (to, toward); *hattaa* (until, upto); *laallaa*(perhaps); *mataa* (when); *munthu* (ago, for); *hachaa* (except) (Hasan and Abdullah, 2009).

Some of the above mentioned prepositions take common words as complements such as *munthu* (ago, for); *Ka* (as, like); *wa* (by); *Ta* (by)...etc. others may take either common nouns or pronouns as complements such as *alaa* (on), *fii* (in, at), *min* (from)...etc.

Some prepositions in Arabic such as: *an*, *min*, *alaa*, *fii*, *bi*, *li*, *ila* are more frequently used than other prepositions (Hasan and Abdullah, 2009).

1.7.2. Semantic Properties

Although the number of prepositions in Arabic is relatively limited (twenty prepositions), they have a spatial and/or a temporal meaning as do English prepositions.

Concerning spatial prepositions, the dimension expressed is either two-dimensional (for example the preposition *alaa*), or three dimensional (in that case the preposition used is *fii*).

The following table summarizes spatial and temporal meanings of some Arabic prepositions:

Meanings prepositions	Spatial meanings	Temporal meanings
fii	-it introduces the act of staying 'in', 'within', 'inside', a place. -it introduces the location in which the verbal action is completed e.g. kana yakdi fasla echitaa fii el beiti (He used to spend the winter in the house). -it has a meaning of motion into a place derived from the above mentioned idea of the rest in a place	-expresses the temporal extension in which during which or during which the action takes place e.g.kana takso fii hada el fasli djamilan(the weather this season was beautiful),ata el khadimo fii elleili (The servant arrived in the evening).

	e.g.yatanawalo minho lokmatan yadosoha fii famihi (taking from it a small morsel which he put into his mouth).	
bi	-used to express the idea of close or vicinity e.g. karyaton bibabi el Kahirati (A village at the gate of EL-Kahira). -when 'bi' means 'in' it is used to refer to larger geographical area e.g.konto bimisra (i was in Egypt).	-the local idea expressed by 'bi' may be applied to time e.g.yasiro elleila wa yakhtafi binahari (He travels at night and hides during the day).
fawka	-Indicates a local idea which can be understood as either static or as in motion: e.g. thoma wadaa asabiaho bilotfin alaa kalbiha (Then he gently placed his fingers over her heart).	-when modifying temporal motion, it has the meaning of more than e.g.ana fawka elkhamsin (i am over fifty).
baada		-used only to introduce a temporal modification it introduces a temporal determinations after which 'the action takes place' e.g.la aalamo ma sayahdotho maii baada el ghadi (I do not know what will become of me after tomorrow).
nahwa	-Indicates a direction towards a place or some thing e.g.asraa erajolo nahwa el binayati (The man hurried two and the building).	-Expresses a temoral approximation e.g.bakya yohadithoni anka nahxa essaati(he kept talking to me about you for about an hour).

Alaa	-Its local meaning approaches the one expressed by 'on', 'over': e.g.kona nanamo alaa elardi (we used to sleep on the floor).	-expresses a temporal occasion e.g.alaa hin ana kola wahid yahtajo ila el akhari (at a time when one needs the other).
bayna	-it indicates a separation or an intervening place as some thing that separates e.g.fii hada el beiti elmonfaridi bayna el hadaaki walbasatin (In this isolated house among fields and gardens)	-indicates a separation between two periods of time e.g.sawfa naltaki bayna essaati 3:30 wa 4:00 (We will meet between 3:30and 4p.m).

Table 02: Spatial and Temporal Meanings of some Standard Arabic

Prepositions (based on Cantarino, 1975: 262-358).

Conclusion

On the basis of a thorough understanding of language transfer and simple prepositions usage in English and Standard Arabic two main points can be concluded: The first one is that language transfer is important in L2 learning and teaching and CA is considered a recommended means for transfer studies. In other words, teaching and learning may become more fruitful and effective through consideration of similarities and differences between languages and cultures, and transfer should not be viewed as facilitative when L1 and L2 have the same structures and a source of errors in the case where the two languages have different structures. Besides, the main objective of CA and EA is to make language teaching and learning process more effective. Therefore, they should be seen as complementing each other rather than considering EA as an alternative approach of CA. The second one is that the usage of simple prepositions expressing time and space is present in Standard Arabic as well as in English. Yet, prepositional usage in both languages has a relation with each language specificity. The two languages have some characteristics in common, and they differ in the usage and the number of these simple prepositions.

Introduction

This study aims at confirming or infirming our hypothesis: If Algerian students do not master English simple prepositions usage, then they will transfer, positively or negatively, from Standard Arabic. For this purpose, a test is used as a data collection tool for our research project. The analysis of the test is based on the answer of the students with possible explanation of the correct and wrong answers in each sentence.

2.1. The Sample

The sample consists of thirty students chosen randomly from a population of third year LMD students at the English Department, Mentouri University, Constantine. They are all native speakers of Arabic, and they have been administrated the test because they are supposed to have reached a certain level of proficiency in English.

2.2. Description of the Test

The test given to the students is an elicitation test. It encompasses twenty sentences where test-takers are asked to fill in the gaps with the appropriate preposition that expresses spatial or temporal meaning. They are also asked to put Ø where no simple preposition is needed (this was done on purpose to show one of the cases faced by Algerian students where one language uses a preposition and the other language does not).The twenty sentences are divided into three parts:

- First part: Cases where the two languages use the same preposition.
- Second part: Cases where the two languages use different prepositions.
- Third part: Cases where one of the two languages uses a preposition and the other language does not.

However, the sentences denoting these cases are not arranged.

2.3. Analysis of the Data

To analyze the data, the percentage of correct and wrong usage of simple prepositions in each sentence is calculated. Then, the correct and wrong usage of simple prepositions of the testees in each sentence are compared with the corresponding usage of simple prepositions in Standard Arabic. French is also included in the investigation since it is closely related to English. Hence, Students may use it as a source of transfer. We will take into consideration two types of transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer.

Sentence № 1: He enjoyed the film

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	18	60	12	40

Table3: Insertion of a preposition in a sentence with no preposition

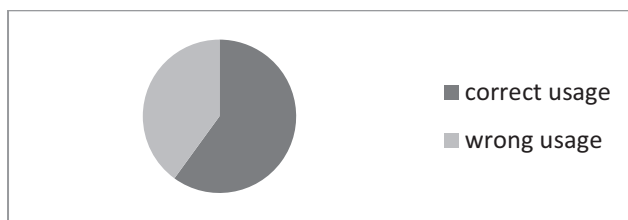


Figure 4: Insertion of a preposition in a sentence with no preposition

In the case of the wrong answers, three unnecessary prepositions were inserted: ‘by’ (four students) i.e., ‘he enjoyed by the film’, ‘with’ (five students) i.e., ‘he enjoyed with the film’, which are the equivalents of the Standard Arabic sentence ‘istamtaa bilfilm’, and ‘from’ (three students) i.e., ‘istamtaa mina el film’. Hence, students inserted ‘by’, ‘with’ and ‘from’ to make a relationship between the enjoyment and the film, as it is the case in Standard Arabic. Therefore, they transferred negatively from their language and the result is the insertion of unnecessary prepositions in English. The insertion of ‘by’ is also a case of negative transfer from Algerian Arabic ‘estamtaa belfilm’ where ‘b’ expresses a relation between the enjoyment and the film, which is the cause of the enjoyment.

Sentence № 2: Write your name at the top of the page.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	07	23.34	23	76.66

Table 4: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

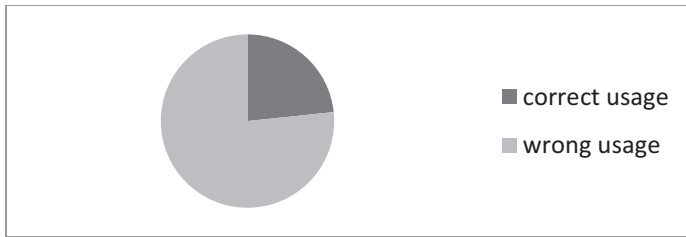


Figure 5: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

The prepositions used instead of ‘*at*’ and the number of students who used them are ‘*in*’ (12), ‘*on*’ (08) and \emptyset (03).

The wrong choice of the English simple preposition ‘*in*’ in this sentence is traced back to Standard Arabic since in Standard Arabic we say ‘Okto**b** issmaka fii aala el waraka’. Yet, the English preposition ‘*at*’, in this sentence, indicates a positioned point (the top) in place (page). It is a position type 0 whereas ‘*in*’ is used with objects which are essentially two-dimensional (e.g. *The cow is in the field* where the field is conceived of as an enclosed space), or three-dimensional (e.g. *There is a cake in the box*). Thus, learners transferred negatively the usage of this preposition from Standard Arabic where ‘*fii*’ shares the same concept as ‘*in*’. The possible explanation of learners’ wrong choice of the usage of ‘*on*’ and ‘ \emptyset ’ is because of their carelessness.

Sentence № 3: Eliza, John and Georgiana were now clustered around their mother in the drawing room.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	15	50	15	50

Table 5: Correct and Wrong Usage of *around*



Figure 6: Correct and Wrong Usage of *around*

This sentence is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic one: ‘Eliza, John wa Georgiana tajamaou elana hawla omihim fii ghorfati el istikbali’. The English simple preposition that was inserted by students who answered correctly is ‘*around*’, which is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*hawla*’. So, the two languages use the same preposition which led to give the exact response by testees. Therefore, the similarity between English and Standard Arabic in the usage of this preposition gave rise to positive transfer. Yet, students’ correct prepositional usage is also traced back to French (Eliza, John et Georgiana s’etaient groupés autour de leur mère dans le salon). For students who answered wrongly, the appropriate simple prepositions were: ‘*with*’ (nine students) and ‘*to*’ (six students).’*with*’ is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*maa*’ (Eliza, John wa Georgiana tajamaou elana maa omihim fii ghorfati el istikbali). Hence, students transferred negatively the usage of this simple preposition from Standard Arabic, and inserted an inappropriate simple preposition in the English sentence. The usage of this wrong preposition is also the influence of the Algerian Arabic (m’aa) i.e., learners transferred negatively from Algerian Arabic and, in this case, not from Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 4: On the next day, the boats went out again.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	09	30	21	70

Table 6: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

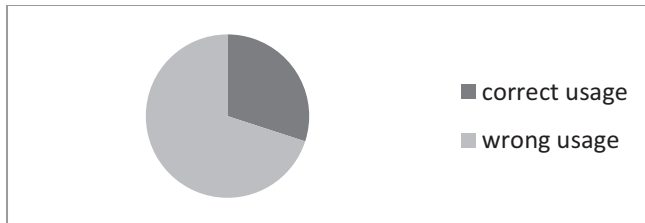


Figure 7: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

The prepositions used instead of ‘*on*’ and the number of students who used them are ‘*in*’ (13) and \emptyset (08).

With days, English and Standard Arabic make use respectively of the ‘time when’ prepositions ‘*on*’ and ‘*fii*’ where the prepositional complement in both languages is seen as an enclosed period of time in which the action took place. ‘*on*’ indicates a positioned point in time, and is used with phrases that refer to days (as in this sentence) and dates since these are perceived as a surface or line. ‘*fii*’ is also used to express both punctuality and duration i.e., points in time and extensions over a span of time. So, the usage of the preposition ‘*in*’ which is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic ‘*fii*’ instead of ‘*on*’ explains the wrong answer of the students (negative transfer). The usage of ‘ \emptyset ’ is a result of negative transfer from French (\emptyset le lendemain...). Hence, negative transfer is from another language background of the learner rather than Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 5: The great whale rose from the sea.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	02	6.67	28	93.33

Table 7: Correct and Wrong Usage of *from*

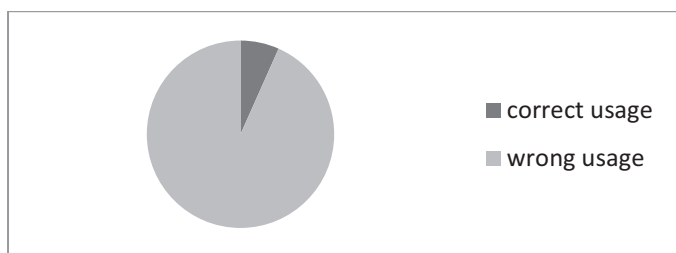


Figure 8: Correct and Wrong Usage of *from*

In the case of wrong answers, ‘*above*’ (nine students), ‘*over*’ (six students), ‘*on*’ (six students) and ‘*to*’ (seven students) are the simple prepositions that were inserted by testees. ‘*above*’ and ‘*over*’ are the equivalents of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*fawka*’ (irtafaa el huto el kabiro fawka sathi el bahri), ‘*on*’ is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*alaa*’ (irtafaa el huto el kabiro ala sathi el bahri) and ‘*to*’ is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*ila*’ (irtafaa el huto el kabiro ila sathi el bahri). Thus, students’ wrong answer was the result of their negative transfer from Standard Arabic. The usage of ‘*to*’ is also a case of negative transfer from Algerian Arabic (Tlaa lhut lakbir lsath labhar).

Sentence № 6: St. Antoine was a miserable street in Paris.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	27	90	03	10

Table 8: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

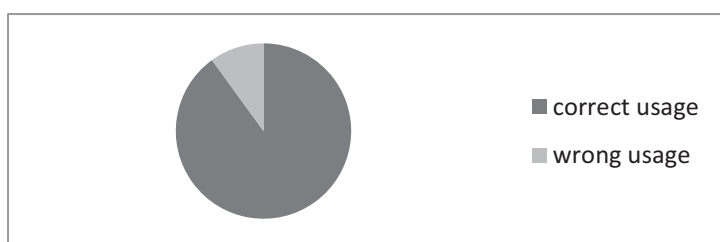


Figure 9: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

Twenty seven students except three filled in the gap with the appropriate preposition. The first English preposition that is likely to be used as the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*fii*’ to denote place is ‘*in*’. In English, the spatial ‘*in*’ uses an object that is

conceptualized as an area (like our sentence) or volume. It is used to indicate the relationship of two objects, the trajector and the landmark. The Standard Arabic preposition '*fii*' shares the same concept as '*in*'. In our sentence, the trajector is the object 'St. Antoine' that is located and totally surrounded by the landmark which is the object 'Paris'. Thus, the two languages use the same preposition which makes the task easy for the Algerian students (positive transfer). The other three students put the simple preposition '*from*' instead of '*in*'. '*from*' is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition '*mina*' (Kana san Antoine charian baisan min chawarii barisa). Therefore, students' wrong choice is the result of negative transfer from Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 7: The wine barrel had been on its way to an inn.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	12	40	18	60

Table 9: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

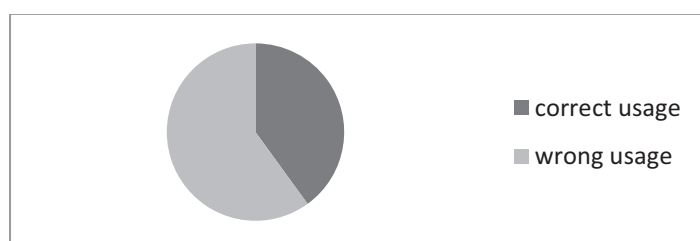


Figure 10: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

This sentence also illustrates the case where the two languages use different prepositions. Students who put '*in*' instead of '*on*' think that it is like in Standard Arabic since the equivalent of this sentence in their language is: 'kana birmilou el khamri fii tarikihi ila hanatin'. '*on*', in this sentence, conveys the meaning of line (the path). But, '*in*' which is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic '*fii*' is used with two or three dimensional objects. This is the reason behind the wrong usage of '*in*' rather than '*on*' (negative transfer). However, testees' wrong answer is also the outcome of negative transfer from French since '*in*' is the

equivalent of the French preposition ‘*dans*’ (Le baril de vin était dans le chemin à une tavern).

This also explains the wrong insertion of the simple preposition ‘*in*’ instead of ‘*on*’ in this English sentence.

Sentence № 8: In Britain, we drive on the left-hand side.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	17	56.66	13	43.34

Table 10: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

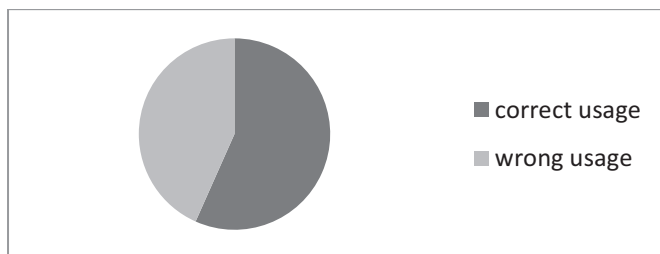


Figure 11: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

The students’ wrong usage of the preposition ‘*from*’ instead of ‘*on*’ is explained by the fact that, in Standard Arabic, the appropriate preposition is ‘*mina*’ which is the equivalent of the English simple preposition ‘*from*’. So, learners transferred negatively the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*mina*’ to English and the result is an incorrect one in the English sentence. An other possible explanation of the wrong usage of the preposition ‘*from*’ instead of ‘*on*’ is the influence of Algerian Arabic because the equivalent of this sentence in Algerian Arabic is ‘*Fii Britania nsogo men lisra*’. Accordingly, students’ wrong choice, in this case, is a result of negative transfer from Algerian Arabic and not from the Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 9: Robinson Crusoe was marooned on an uninhabited island.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	19	63.33	11	36.67

Table11: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*



Figure 12: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

The prepositions used instead of ‘on’ and the number of students who used them are ‘*in*’ (08), ‘*with*’ (01) and \emptyset (02).

Standard Arabic and English consider an island as a surface. They make use of the *equivalent spatial prepositions ‘alaa’ and ‘on’ which both direct attention to the expanse of the island.* This explains the correct answer of the students (the two languages use the same preposition since they conceptualize the island in the same way which facilitates the choice for learners). Eight students filled the gap with the simple preposition ‘*in*’. This is a case of negative transfer either from Algerian Arabic ‘*fii*’, or from French ‘*dans*’ where the island is perceived as an enclosed space. Yet, ‘*in*’ is used with two or three dimensional objects and not with surfaces in English. As a possible explanation for students who answered with the simple preposition ‘*with*’, or \emptyset is that they did not understand the English sentence, or they did not answer seriously because their choices do not correspond to any preposition in Standard Arabic, Algerian Arabic or in French.

Sentence № 10: He slept in bed.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	20	66.66	10	33.34

Table12: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

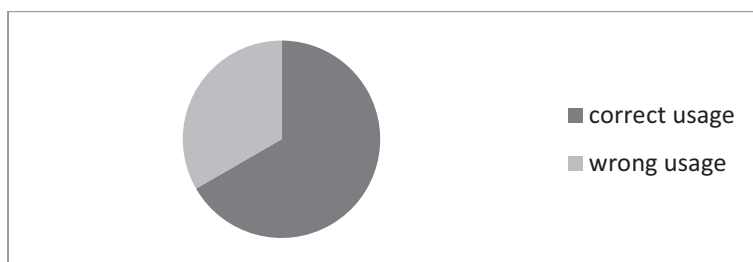


Figure 13: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

More than half of the testees answered with '*in*' which is the appropriate preposition. The reason behind the correct usage of this simple preposition is related to the usage of the corresponding one in Standard Arabic '*fii*'. In the two languages, the bed is conceived as an enclosed space. So, the two languages use the same preposition which facilitates the answer for the students (positive transfer). Another reason behind the learners' correct prepositional usage is traced back to French because the French corresponding preposition to '*in*' is '*dans*' (French also perceives the bed as an enclosed space). Hence, learners' transferred positively from French which led them to give the appropriate answer. Seven students inserted the simple preposition '*on*' instead of '*in*'. This is the influence of Algerian Arabic (Regad fug srir), as it is the case of students who answered with the simple preposition '*at*' (Regad alaa srir). Yet, the usage of '*on*' as an equivalent of '*fug*' makes the bed a one dimensional object i.e., a surface and the usage of '*at*' as an equivalent of '*alaa*' makes the bed a dimensionless location. So, the inappropriate answer for those students is the result of negative transfer from Algerian Arabic.

Sentence № 11: I went home happily.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	14	46.67	16	53.33

Table13: Insertion of a preposition in a sentence with no preposition

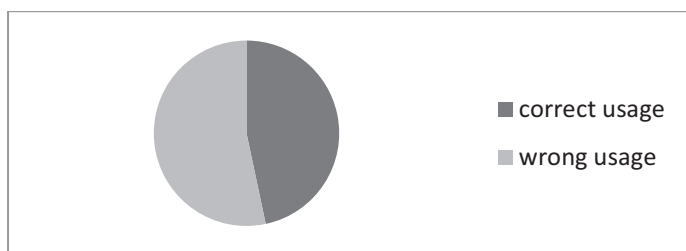


Figure14: Insertion of a preposition in a sentence with no preposition

The prepositions used instead of no preposition 'Ø' and the number of students who used them are 'to' (12) and 'at' (04).

Like the first sentence, this one does not need any preposition. Learners' wrong answer is traced back to Standard Arabic since in their language it is necessary to put the preposition 'ilaa', and this explains why they put the English simple preposition 'to' which is the equivalent of 'ilaa', and both of them carry the meaning of movement of the object towards a point i.e., the direction of that object (negative transfer). This wrong answer is also a case of negative transfer either from Algerian Arabic (Rejaat leddar), or from French (Je suis revenu à la maison heureusement) where 'à' and 'en' also convey the idea of directive movement, as the English preposition 'to'. The possible explanation for learners' insertion of the simple preposition 'at' is also the influence of Algerian Arabic (rejaat addar). But, the usage of 'at' in this sentence is wrong since it makes the home a mere point (dimensionless location) and not a three-dimensional object. Thus, learners transferred negatively from Algerian Arabic and French, and the result is an inappropriate simple preposition in the English sentence.

Sentence № 12: Spring begins on the first of March.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	10	33.34	20	66.66

Table14: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

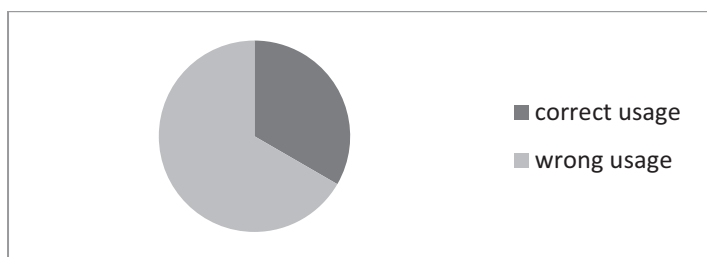


Figure 15: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

In this sentence, ‘*on*’ is used to indicate a positioned point in time. It is used with ‘*the first of March*’ which is a phrase that refers to a date since this is perceived as a surface or line, in English. In the case of the wrong answers, the two simple prepositions inserted by students are ‘*in*’ (eight students) and ‘*from*’ (seven students), in addition to five students who answered with \emptyset . ‘*in*’ is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*fii*’, which expresses location in time (yabdao errabio fii awali marisa), and the Standard Arabic equivalent preposition of ‘*from*’ is ‘*mina*’ that indicates movement starts from a specific point in time (yabdao errabio min awalai marisa). Both ‘*in*’ and ‘*from*’ are incorrect in this sentence. The temporal ‘*in*’ is used to indicate periods of time, and the temporal ‘*from*’ is used with ‘*to*’ (as pair of prepositions) whose locative meaning is transferred to duration (e.g.: *We camped there from June to September*). That is why students put ‘*in*’ and ‘*from*’ instead of ‘*on*’ (negative transfer from standard Arabic). The insertion of ‘ \emptyset ’ by the five testees is the influence of French as another language background of the learners (Le printemps commence le premier Mars). Consequently, this wrong choice is a negative transfer from French and not from Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 13: At the end of the journey we brought fruit.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	14	46.67	16	53.33

Table 15: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

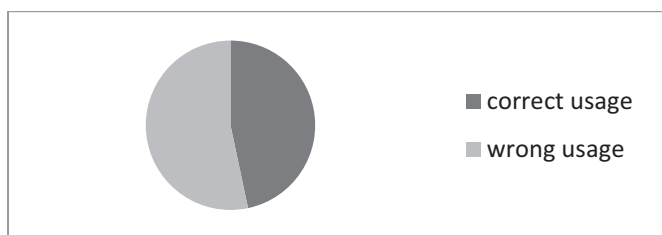


Figure 16: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

Testees' correct prepositional usage is a positive transfer from French, for the French equivalent of the simple preposition '*at*' is '*à*' (*à la fin du voyage on a acheté des fruits*). In the case of the wrong answers, the English simple prepositions that were inserted by testees are '*in*' (nine students) and '*by*' (seven students), '*in*' is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition '*fii*' (*fii akhiri rihlati ichtarayna el fakihata*). In English, there is a difference between '*At the end of something*' which means at the time when something ends (as in our sentence: when the journey ends) and '*In the end of something*' that carries the meaning of finally. It is used to say what the final result of a situation was. (e.g.: We had a lot of problems with our car. We sold it in the end i.e., finally we sold it). Thus, students transferred negatively this simple preposition from the Standard Arabic which led them to put an inappropriate one in this English sentence. The insertion of the simple preposition '*by*' is a case of negative transfer from French (*Avant la fin du voyage on a acheté des fruits*).

Sentence № 14: I saw a football match on TV.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	19	63.33	11	36.66

Table16: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*



Figure 17: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

Eleven test-takers filled in the gap with the English simple preposition ‘*in*’. If we give the Standard Arabic equivalent of this sentence, it will be: ‘chahadto mobarata el kadami fii eltilfazi’. In Arabic, TV is perceived as a three dimensional object whereas in English, TV is perceived as a surface i.e., it does not refer to the whole entity, which is three dimensional, but, only to its two dimensions since the semantic distinctions made by language with respect to any spatial environment do not necessarily agree with the entity’s real spatial extension. So, the appropriate preposition is ‘*on*’ and not ‘*in*’. Therefore, test-takers wrong answer is traced back to Standard Arabic (negative transfer) since the first equivalent of this English simple preposition is ‘*fii*’ in Standard Arabic. Therefore, the two languages conceptualize differently the same object, resulting in a difference in the usage of spatial prepositions. The insertion of ‘*in*’ instead of ‘*on*’, however, is also explained by a case of negative transfer from Algerian Arabic (choft match fetelevision) (TV is also perceived as a three dimensional object). In this case, negative transfer is related to Algerian Arabic and not to Standard Arabic.

Sentence № 15: We sat at the table.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	11	36.66	19	63.33

Table 17: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*



Figure 18: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

The wrong prepositions that were inserted by students are ‘*around*’ (nine students); ‘*to*’ (six students) and ‘*on*’ (four students). The reason behind the wrong usage of these three prepositions rather than ‘*at*’ is related to the usage of the corresponding preposition to ‘*around*’, ‘*to*’ and ‘*on*’ in Standard Arabic, ‘*hawla*’ (djalassna hawla ettawilati), ‘*ila*’ (djalassna ila ettawilati) and ‘*ala*’ (djalasna ala ettawilati). Thus, students transferred negatively from Standard Arabic. The wrong usage of ‘*around*’ instead of ‘*at*’ is also related to the usage of ‘*autour*’ in the French corresponding sentence (On s’est assis autour de la table). This is another justification for learners’ wrong usage of ‘*around*’ rather than ‘*at*’ (negative transfer from French).

Sentence № 16: The bird is flying above my head.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	17	56.66	13	43.33

Table18: Correct and Wrong Usage of *above*

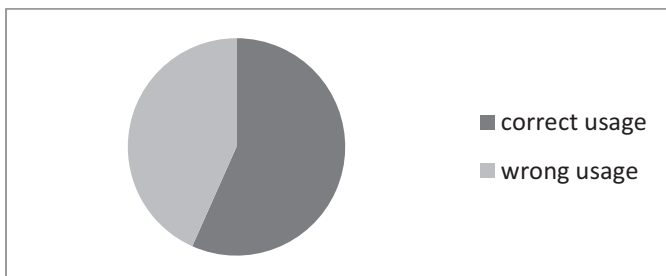


Figure 19: Correct and Wrong Usage of *above*

The prepositions used instead of ‘above’ and the number of students who used them are ‘over’ (eight students) and ‘on’ (five students).

The simple preposition inserted by seventeen testees is ‘above’ which is the correct one, and it is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘fawka’ (El osforo yorafri fo fawka raasi). Hence, testees transferred positively this simple preposition from Standard Arabic (the two languages use the same preposition). Their choice is also the influence of the Algerian Arabic (Lfarkh gaad ytir fug rasi). Students who have chosen ‘over’ rather than ‘above’ think that it is like either Standard Arabic (fawka) or Algerian Arabic (fug). Yet, their answer is incorrect because of the difference that exists between the two English simple prepositions: ‘over’ tends to indicate a direct vertical relationship and / or spatial proximity, while ‘above’ indicates simply ‘on a higher / lower level than’. The wrong usage of ‘on’ is also traced back to Standard Arabic (fawka) or Algerian Arabic (fug). However, ‘on’ as a preposition has two meanings: attached to (e.g. *The apples on the tree*) and ‘on top of’ (e.g. *Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall*). So, ‘on’ is also inappropriate in our English sentence.

Sentence № 17: There was a long queue of people at the bus stop.

Number of students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	18	60	12	40

Table19: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

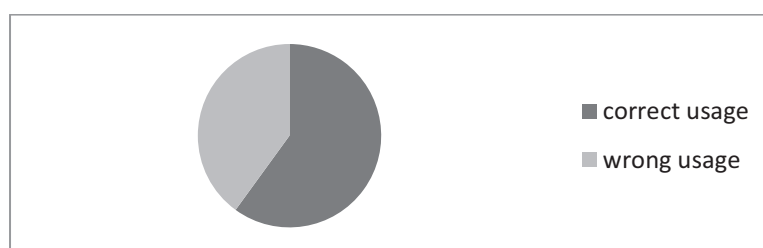


Figure20: Correct and Wrong Usage of *at*

Students who answered correctly transferred positively this simple preposition from French, as the preposition ‘à’ is the equivalent of ‘at’ (Il y avait une longue queue de gens à

l'arret de bus). For the other twelve students, the appropriate answer was 'in', which is a wrong one, instead of 'at'. The reason of the wrong usage of 'in' rather than 'at' is related to the usage of the corresponding preposition to 'in' in Standard Arabic, 'fii'. However, the usage of 'at' makes the bus-stop a mere point (the bus-stop does not refer to the whole entity which is three dimensional, but only to a point) whereas the usage of 'in' makes the bus-stop a three-dimensional object, which in reality it is. Therefore, students transferred negatively this preposition from Standard Arabic and the result was an incorrect preposition in the English sentence.

Sentence № 18: When we arrived in Jericho we bought fruit.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	14	46.67	16	53.33

Table20: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

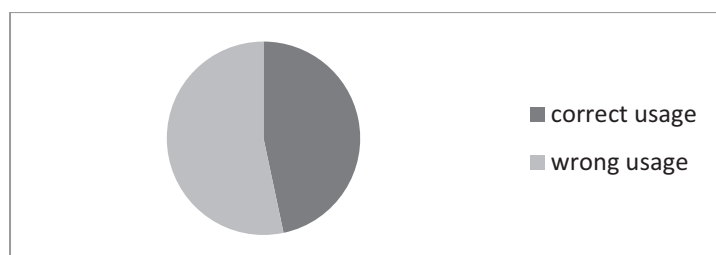


Figure21: Correct and Wrong Usage of *in*

Concerning the wrong answers, students put \emptyset (nine students) and 'to' (seven students) instead of 'in'. In English, it is necessary to insert the preposition 'in' to form a relationship between the arrival and the place. But, this sentence in Standard Arabic does not need such preposition because the relationship exists without it (lama wasalna jericho ichtarayna el fakihata). This explains students' choice of putting \emptyset instead of 'in' (negative transfer). The possible explanation for the others who answered with 'to' is the influence of either Algerian Arabic (Ki wasalna ljericho chrina lfakha) or French (Lorsqu'on est arrivé à

Jericho on a acheté des fruits). Thus, students' wrong prepositional usage is also traced back to Algerian Arabic or French.

Sentence № 19: I arrived on time.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	11	36.67	19	63.33

Table 21: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

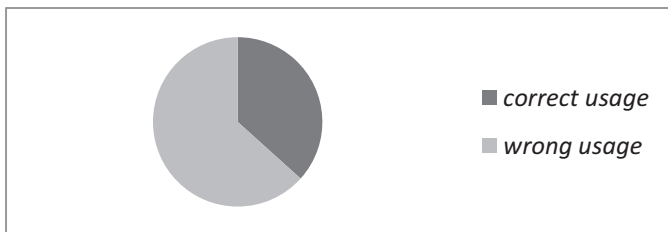


Figure 22: Correct and Wrong Usage of *on*

The temporal '*on*' in this sentence conveys the idea of an exact point in time. Ten students put '*in*' instead of '*on*'. If we give the Standard Arabic equivalent of this sentence, it will be: 'wasalto fii el wakti'. Hence, students' response is traced back to Standard Arabic which led them to insert an inappropriate preposition (negative transfer). In English, there is a difference between '*in time*' (not late, punctual) and '*on time*' (soon enough e.g. *I want to be home in time to see the game on TV* i.e., soon enough to see the game). Accordingly, an inappropriate usage of a preposition may change the intended meaning of a sentence. Yet, students' response is also related to Algerian Arabic (Wsalt felwakt) i.e., students transferred negatively from Algerian Arabic. The nine remainder testees chose '*at*' as an appropriate answer, instead of '*on*'. This is a case of negative transfer from French (Je suis arrivé à l'heure).

Sentence № 20: I did not see him since we were at the university.

Number of Students	Correct Usage		Wrong Usage	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
30	27	90	03	10

Table 22: Correct and Wrong Usage of *since*

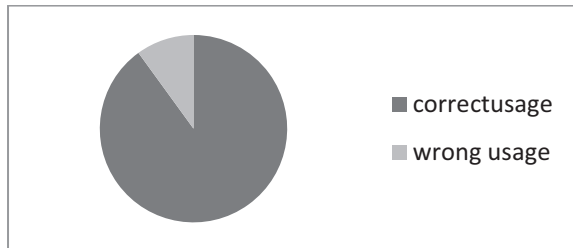


Figure23: Correct and Wrong Usage of *since*

Twenty seven students inserted the simple preposition ‘*since*’ which is the equivalent of the Standard Arabic preposition ‘*munthu*’ (lam araho munthu an kona fii el djamiaa). So, students’ correct choice is a result of positive transfer from Standard Arabic. ‘*since*’ is also the equivalent of the French preposition ‘*depuis*’ (Je l’ai pas vu depuis l’université). This is another explanation for learners’ correct prepositional usage (positive transfer from French). Another possible justification for learners’ correct answer is the usage of ‘*melli*’ in Algerian Arabic which is the equivalent of ‘*since*’ in English (machaftuch melli kuna feljamiaa). This means that learners transferred positively from Algerian Arabic. Thus, positive transfer takes place in Standard Arabic, French and Algerian Arabic because ‘*since*’, ‘*munthu*’, ‘*depuis*’ and ‘*melli*’ are used to specify a particular point of time in the past where the action began. Two students put \emptyset and one answered with ‘*from*’. The two responses are wrong, and they cannot be traceable to another language background of the learners (Standard Arabic, French, and Algerian Arabic). The possible explanation for these errors is that students did not answer seriously because the sentence is a very simple one, and it has no difficult word.

We can summarize the results we reached in the following table:

Type of transfer	Positive transfer			Negative transfer		
	Standard Arabic	Algerian Arabic	French	Standard Arabic	Algerian Arabic	French
1				-	-	
2				-		
3	+		+	-	-	
4				-		-
5				-	-	
6	+			-		
7				-		-
8				-		-
9	+				-	-
10	+		+		-	
11				-	-	-
12				-		-
13			+	-		-
14				-		-
15				-		-
16	+	+		-	-	
17			+	-		
18				-	-	-

19				-	-	-
20	+	+	+			

Table 23: Positive and Negative Transfer from Standard Arabic, French and Algerian Arabic in the Twenty Sentences

These results show that the number of wrong answers exceeds the number of correct answers in the twenty sentences. Besides, positive transfer takes place from Standard Arabic and French more than from Algerian Arabic, and negative transfer occurs from Standard Arabic more than from both French and Algerian Arabic

Conclusion

The analysis of these results demonstrates that Algerian students have three types of problems with English simple prepositions: usage of a different simple preposition, usage of unneeded simple preposition and omission of a required simple preposition.

An analysis of all the correct and wrong prepositional usage shows that Algerian learners transfer from Standard Arabic, Algerian Arabic and French. They transfer positively from Standard Arabic and French more than from Algerian Arabic, and they transfer negatively from Standard Arabic more than from both French and Algerian Arabic. Besides, when English and Standard Arabic use the same simple preposition, Algerian learners' answers are due to positive transfer. However, when the two languages use different prepositions, learners' responses are the outcome of negative transfer. Consequently, Standard Arabic is a source of knowledge that facilitates learners' production when there are similarities between the two languages. Accordingly, Algerian learners do not adequately master English simple prepositions usage, and they rely on Standard Arabic, French and Algerian Arabic in order to comprehend their usage.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the probability of the existence of simple prepositions transfer from Standard Arabic into English. English simple prepositions are difficult in the sense that they can have different functions, and the greatest problem faced by Algerian learners who learn English as a FL is the correct usage of these simple prepositions in their writings and speeches. An inappropriate usage of a simple preposition may change the intended meaning of a sentence entirely. The results of this investigation reveal that Algerian learners, when they face situations they do not know, transfer simple prepositions from Standard Arabic. However, the latter is not the only source of transfer. They also transfer from French and Algerian Arabic as other sources of their knowledge. Consequently, while positive transfer takes place when there are similarities between English and one of these varieties, negative transfer occurs whenever there are differences. It is found that Algerian learners transfer positively from Standard Arabic and French more than Algerian Arabic and the result is a correct usage of English simple prepositions, and they transfer negatively from Standard Arabic more than from French and Algerian Arabic and, as a result, they commit errors in the usage of these prepositions. Hence, Algerian learners try to relate the usage of English simple prepositions to these varieties as sources of their previous knowledge. Yet, there are differences between each one of these varieties and English simple prepositions usage. Prepositional usage has a relation with each variety specificity. Accordingly, not every English simple preposition has definite equivalent in each one of these varieties. Thus, Algerian learners do not adequately master English simple prepositions and they rely on their knowledge from Standard Arabic, Algerian Arabic and French to choose the correct simple prepositions. When English and one of these varieties use the same preposition, learners master adequately English simple prepositions. However, there is a problem when the two varieties use different prepositions. It comes out that Algerian learners have three types of

problems with English simple prepositions: usage of a different simple preposition, usage of unneeded simple preposition, and omission of a required simple preposition. On this basis, English simple prepositions usage often stands in the way of achieving grammatical fluency and accuracy for Algerian learners.

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Appendix

Students' Test

Fill in the gaps with simple prepositions of time or space where appropriate (if there is no preposition you can put Ø):

- 1-The boy enjoyed..... the film.
- 2- Write your name.....top of the page.
- 3-The said Eliza, John and Georgiana were now clustered their mother in the drawing-room.
- 4-..... the next day, the boats went out again.
- 5- The great whale rose the sea.
- 6- St. Antoine was a miserable street Paris.
- 7- The wine barrel had been its way to an inn.
- 8- In Britain we drive the left-hand-side.
- 9- Robinson Crusoe was marooned an uninhabited island.
- 10- He slept bed.
- 11- I went home happily.
- 12- Spring begins the first of March.
- 13-..... the end of the journey we brought fruit.
- 14- I saw a football matchTV.
- 15- We sat the table.
- 16- The bird is flyingmy head
- 17- There was a long queue of people the bus stop.
- 18- When we arrived Jericho we bought fruit.
- 19- I arrived time.
- 20- I have not seen himwe were at the university.