

**People's Democratic and Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia.Jijel**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of English**



**Students' Understanding of Semantic Complexity of English Spatial  
Prepositions in Reading Texts.**

**The Case of Second Year Students of English at The University of  
Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia.**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillments of the requirements for the degree of Master in  
Didactics of foreign languages

**Submitted by**

- Fatiha MEGHRICHE.
- Nadia KERKATOU.

**Supervised by**

- Dr. Meriem BOUSBA.

**Board of Examiners**

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- **Examiner:** Chadia CHIOUKH , Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel.

**2020-2021**



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## **Declaration**

We hereby that the dissertation entitled'' Investigation of students understanding of semantics complexity of English spatial prepositions even while reading texts'' is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

## **Dedication**

**In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful, on whom Ultimately we depend for sustenance and guidance.**

I dedicate this work to the memory of **my father**, my role model in life, may his soul stay in peace.

To my beloved "**mother**", may Allah save her.

To my beloved fiancé "**Abd Elatif**", the one who stay with me in my hard times and for his encouragement to continue this work.

To my lovely sisters: "**Zohra**" & "**Amira**".

To my fabulous brothers: "**Rabeh**" & "**Amer**".

To my "**grandmothers**", my Allah bless them.

To my beautiful friends and colleagues with whom I share the university life "**Sonya, Mouna, Jojo, Ranya, Nadia, kheira, Cherifa, Khadijah, Amel, Ghada, Romysa, Sara.**"

To all who helped me even by smile.

**Fatiha**

## **Dedication**

**In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious and Most Merciful, on whom ultimately we depend for sustenance and guidance.**

I dedicate this work to the most precious people to my heart:

My dearest parents who have been my source of inspiration, who continually provide me with moral, spiritual, and emotional support and for raising me to be who I am, may Allah bless them.

My wonderful brother "**Mohammed**" and My lovely sister "**Nabila**" for their encouragement and support.

My "**grandmother**" for always being proud of me, of my accomplishments, and of my ambitions.

To my fiance "**Fetheddine**" who gave me strength when I thought of giving up for his positive support and encouragement.

To my dear friends and colleagues: "**Hayet, Nadjat, Asia, Amel**" with whom I share the university life.

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To all my friends and family.

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Special thanks go to second year LMD students for their help in the data collection.

## **Abstract**

This study is an investigation of English foreign language students' understanding of the semantic complexity of the English spatial prepositions "in, on, at, for, from, above, over, to, and across". It aimed at diagnosing the factors that account for the difficulty in comprehending and using these prepositions and checking whether reading facilitates the comprehension and use of these prepositions. Furthermore, it spotlighted the most problematic prepositions for the learners. Thus, it was hypothesized that second-year students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University Jijel will better understand the semantic meanings of English spatial prepositions while reading texts. To check the validity of this hypothesis, a grammar test was used to collect the data. It was distributed to 67 sophomores from the population of 272 second year LMD students. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The obtained results indicated that the participants show weak performances in deciphering the semantics of English prepositions in reading texts. This semantic complexity is caused by two major reasons which are the students' lack of knowledge and the polysemous nature of prepositions. Given the findings, it was recommended for teachers to provide learners with ample instructions about the different meanings of each preposition in different contexts. Learners, on their part, are required to make extra efforts and practice to master the meanings and appropriate usages of prepositions.

**Keywords:** English spatial prepositions, semantic meaning, semantic complexity, polysemous nature of prepositions.



## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English Foreign Language

**TL:** Target Language **L1:** First Language

**LM:** Landmark

**TR:** Trajectory

**CA:** Correct Answer

**WA:** Wrong Answer

**NA:** No Answer

**N:** Number

**Sent:** Sentence

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## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the Study**

Prepositions are words that express a relationship between two entities or more. Many teachers and students of English as a foreign language perceive teaching and learning prepositions as one of the major challenges in second/foreign language teaching and learning. Their acquisition is sometimes regarded as a problematic issue that EFL learners encounter (Tayler and Evans, 2005). That is to say, learning English prepositions is not an easy process; many researchers and investigators agree on the difficulty in comprehending them.

There are certain studies about the semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions. One of these studies is entitled " The Effect of Responding to Students Errors and Presenting the Semantics of Spatial Prepositions on their Acquisition: The Case of Second Students of English at the University 'Les Freres Mentouri', Constantine" (Athmani, 2016). The researcher used two tools, The first one is an experiment. The second means of research is a questionnaire that was handed to seventeen grammar teachers to investigate their attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning spatial prepositions. The obtained results show that there are certain ways to help learners to improve the uses of prepositions appropriately and help students to understand them better such as using the context of spatial prepositions and using errors correction of spatial prepositions in teaching and learning.

Another study is about students' errors in the use of the most common English prepositions (Zigha & Mekili, 2018) that aims to investigate the problems that students face in using prepositions while writing. It, also, set out to determine the most problematic prepositions for second year LMD learners. Moreover, it analyzed the errors of using nine

prepositions that were selected by the researchers. Two tools were used a grammar test , and an analysis of the students' compositions. The results demonstrate that students have three main problems in the use of the most common English prepositions and the interpretation of their usages. The study revealed that the lack of basic knowledge, incomplete learning of English prepositions, over-generalization of the rules are the most common reasons for the difficulty. The major reason for the wrong usage of prepositions is the L1 interference (Arabic, English), and the ignorance of important rules. This research study, also, found that the most problematic prepositions are 'by' and 'to'.

The third study dealt with the challenges encountered by Algerian EFL students when using the English prepositions " in, on, at" (Tergat, 2011), more specifically, second-year LMD students at Mohammed Kheider University Biskra. It aimed to determine the major problems in using " in, on, at" through a grammatical test. The results demonstrated that students encountered different problems when using " in, on, at" and the major ones are the interference of the mother tongue and ignorance of some rules. It also showed that learners did not have problems when they were aware of the correct use of these prepositions.

The aforementioned literature review on some previous studies on prepositions revealed EFL Algerian learners' difficulty to comprehend and accurately use the English prepositions due to many reasons.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Prepositions are regarded as a difficult area in grammar learning and teaching as they present a real challenge for EFL learners and teachers alike (Quick,1993; Grubic,2004). The researchers of this study, on their part, have experienced such a situation of not being able to decipher the various meanings of English prepositions despite having courses on English prepositions in their first and second years of study at the department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Benyahia, Jijel. It was, also, noticed that most second-year students, regardless of their proficiency level, claim their inability to properly understand and use the English prepositions, in general, and the English spatial prepositions, in particular. This study attempts to set out the major factors hindering students' understanding of the semantics of the English spatial prepositions.

## **3. Aims of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate EFL sophomores' understanding of the semantics of the English spatial prepositions'' in, on, at, for, from, above, over, to, and across'' at the University of Mohammed Seddik Benyahia. It, also, aims at diagnosing the factors that account for the difficulty in comprehending and using these prepositions. It attempts to check whether reading facilitates the comprehension and use of these prepositions. Furthermore, it spotlighted the most difficult prepositions for the learners to understand.

## **4. Research Questions**

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the spatial prepositions that second-year students find difficult to understand and use?
- What are the factors that hinder learners' understanding of the English spatial prepositions?

- Does reading texts help learners better comprehend the semantics of the English prepositions?

## **5. Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that second-year students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University Jijel will better understand the semantic meanings of the English spatial prepositions: on, in, at, above, over, across, for, to, from while reading texts.

## **6. Research Methodology**

To test the hypothesis of the present study, one means of research will be used. It is a grammar test that will be administered to 67 second-year students of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya, Jijel. It aims at identifying students understanding of semantic complexity of spatial prepositions in reading texts.

## **7. Organization of the Dissertation**

This research is divided into two parts. The first one refers to the theoretical part which includes two sections. The first one deals with English prepositions in general. It, also, presents the major characteristics of English spatial prepositions and explains their various semantic meanings. Additionally, this section sheds light on the factors that cause semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions. The last point covered in this section pertains to the approaches to teaching prepositions. The second section is devoted to the description of the reading skill. It provides a view of the nature of the reading process and reading comprehension. It, also, presents the three main models of reading and highlights the role of the text. The second part of this dissertation is practical. It discusses the research methodology used. It, also, analyzes the data obtained and provides an interpretation of the results.

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

## **Section One: English Spatial Prepositions**

### **Introduction**

1. What is Preposition

2. English Spatial Prepositions

2.1. Definition of English Spatial Prepositions

2.2. Characteristics of English Spatial Prepositions

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### **Conclusion**

## Chapter One: Literature Review

### Section One: English Spatial Prepositions

#### Introduction

A preposition is a word that expresses a relationship between two parts in a sentence Quirk (1993; as cited in Zigha & Mekili, 2018, p. 6) The acquisition of prepositions, in general, and spatial prepositions, in particular, for EFL learners becomes a big problem due to its complexity. Researchers (Lorincz & Gordon) agree that the acquisition and the comprehension of English spatial prepositions is a difficult process. This section deals with the different elements that relate to English spatial prepositions. First, it starts with a clear definition of prepositions and spatial prepositions. It, also, presents the main characteristics of English spatial prepositions (in, on, at, above, over, across, from and to) and their semantic meanings. This section highlights the factors accounting for the semantic complexity of these prepositions.

#### 1. What is a Preposition?

A preposition is a part of speech that we use to show the relationship of a word with another word in a sentence. According to Quirk (1993; as cited in Tergat, 2011, p. 12), a preposition expresses a relationship between two entities. A preposition is normally used with a noun or pronoun in a word group called a prepositional phrase. For example: *'Testing the engine in a propulsion laboratory is one effective approach.'* Here, the prepositional phrase "in a propulsion laboratory" acts as an adverb because its function is to tell us where the testing occurs.

Allosop (1986, p.105) described prepositions as words that show the relationship between things, peoples or events. It means that prepositions are connectors used to show the relationship between time, space or other relations. By the same token, Quirk (1993; as cited in Zigha & Mekili, 2018, p.6) stated that a preposition shows the nature of the

relationship between two parts in a sentence. That is to say, this relationship includes those of time, direction, position, place, movement and other relations.

Prepositions can express an adverb, conjunction and adjective. Usually, a preposition connects a noun or a pronoun to some other words in a sentence, such as: '*I studied in Britain five years ago*'. The preposition phrase 'in Britain' expresses an adverb that tells us where I studied or about the place that I studied five years ago.

## **2. English Spatial Prepositions**

### **2.1. Definition of English Spatial Prepositions**

There are around 150 prepositions in English (Essborger, 2012). According to Fion (2005), prepositions can be used to express a spatial relationship between the figure and the landmark for showing, manners, circumstances and states and giving reasons.

English prepositions have a relation with the landmark (LM) and the trajectory (TR). Therefore, English prepositions come after a nominal phrase (Hamdallah,2012). For instance :

- *The teacher at school is pleasant / He travelled to London / The class was empty of students (Hamdallah, 2012)*

Tyler and Evans (2003,p.7) discussed the notion of the spatial scene which involves two entities. The examples below will clarify this idea:

- *The cup is on the table / The coffee is on the cup*

In the first example, the spatial scene is that the cup is in the contact with the upper surface of the table. It, also, involves a support function between the table and the landmark. The second example describes the coffee location inside the cup which is contained in the cup prevents the coffee from spreading out of the cup which is called the containment function.

English spatial Prepositions are prepositions that talk about the location or change of location of some object. This object is called the figure or trajectory (Lindstromberg, as



cited in Athamni, 2016, p. 7) A preposition expresses the location according to the object called ground or landmark. For instance: ‘A *book on the shelf*’. In this sentence, ‘A book’(refers to trajectory/figure), ‘on’ (spatial preposition), and The shelf ( refers to landmark/ ground).

According to Zlatev (2007, p.p. 318-326),‘The trajector’ may be static like in the previous example "book", or dynamic as in the following example:‘she went to school’. ‘She’ here is dynamic.This means that the trajector may be either static which, generally, deals with prepositions of position or dynamic that works with prepositions of movement or movement and position.

Leung (1990; as cited in Hassan & Abdallah, 2009,p.605) stated that the function of English spatial prepositions is “to locate spatially one object with a reference to another object”as in this example: ‘*My brother lives in a small village*.’There is a spatial relationship between "my brother" and "small village" through using the preposition "In".So spatial prepositions are used to express the spatial relationship between the TR and LM as Quick (1993; as cited in Terdjat, 2011 p.12) stated that prepositions express a relationship between two entities by indicating a relationship of space.

## **2.2. Characteristics of English Spatial Prepositions**

Prepositions are notoriously difficult for EFL learners to master due to the sheer number of them in the English language and the different senses of each preposition.

According to Putz (2007) and Tyler (2007), English spatial prepositions are well known for their polysemous nature which is a semantic characteristic of words that have multiple meanings. Each spatial preposition is related to a prototypical meaning ( as cited in Athamni, 2016, p.6). That is to say, cognitive linguists believe that the meanings of each spatial preposition are distinct but all related to the central/original meaning with different

degrees. Hence the meanings of each spatial preposition extend from the main core meaning (Tyler, 2003)

English spatial prepositions are characterized by having two complementary components: geometrical and functional (Lindstromberg, 2010). These two terms refer to the relation between landmark (which is the subject of spatial prepositions, also called figure) and the trajector (which is the object of spatial prepositions known by ground or reference). Talmy (2003) defined the geometric component as the spatial visual element that represents a physical scene, to illustrate are the trajector and landmark close to each other, far, in contact, one higher than the other, or one in front of the other ?. (as cited in Athamni, 2016,p.7). Lindstromberg (2010) identified the functional component as the role assigned to the use of a specific spatial preposition. These functions consist of concepts of support, existence or absence of contact, goal, path. In other words, each spatial preposition has a geometrical and functional meaning (as cited in Athamni, 2016,p.7).

In brief, English spatial prepositions are well-known for their polysemous nature and number.

### **3.The Semantics of English Spatial Prepositions**

As mentioned in the article retrieved from internet which is entitled introduction to semantics " Semantics is a subfield of linguistics that is concerned with the relation of linguistic forms and mental representations to explain all the parts of speech among them prepositions". Thus, the semantics of English spatial prepositions is based on a cognitive view. It is mainly cognitive." It doesn't just reflect a correlation between the real world and the language one uses" (Verhagen, 2007; as cited in Athamni, 2016 p.9). In other words, it focuses on the relationship between the language and its lexical meanings.

According to Close (1981; as cited in Zigha & Mekili, 2018, p.15),

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 referred, as with how we imagined them to be at the time of speaking. Thus, we could imagine a town as a point on the map, as a surface map, as a surface to go, as a space we lived in, or walk through.

Indeed, when using some spatial prepositions ‘in’, ‘on’, and ‘at’, learners, sometimes, get confused because their meanings overlap such as "in, on, at". For this reason, the meanings of each of these spatial prepositions should be presented in addition to the differences between them. As the prototype theory of Lakoff (1987) states, prepositions have various meanings, but one meaning is the most dominant, or prototypical, such as the preposition ‘on’ which has multiple meanings but the prototypical definition of it is "contact of an object with a line of surface" (Lindstromborg, 1996, p. 229).

In brief, semantics concerns the meaning of words such as the distinct senses of each spatial preposition.

### **3.1. The Semantic Meanings of the Most Common Spatial Prepositions.**

In English language, there are distinct meanings to every preposition. The preposition "at" has five distinct meanings, while "over" has four meanings. The preposition "above" has three meanings and "in" has four meanings. The prepositions "to" and "on" have two senses. Whereas the prepositions "from", "for", and "across" have just one meaning. All these senses will be succinctly presented below.

#### **3.1.1. The Spatial Preposition ‘At’**

The location is perceived as a point and the trajectory (TR) and the landmark (LM) are close to each other or at the same location. It is very suitable to use ‘at’ when the landmark (LM) refers to instructions, crossroads, corners and junctions (Lindstromberg,

2010, p. 174). For example, '*She is at the corner*'. When the LM and the TR refer to cities, countries and are conceptualized in a situation as points of maps or roads, it is more appropriate to use the spatial preposition 'at' (Lindestromberg, 2010, p. 178).

Another different meaning is when emphasizing the TR as a place at a particular point mainly for a specific purpose (Lindistromberg 2010), for example, '*The man is at the kitchen table*'. This means that he is sitting at the kitchen table for a particular purpose which is eating.

According to Lindestromberg (2010, p. 194), there is another distinct sense of the preposition 'at' which is when the LM is regarded as a target point, not as a point, as in '*He throws the ball at him and he looked at her*'. Both he and she emphasize the LM for particular purposes, which are causing pain in the first and showing anger in the second. Thus, when the speaker or writer wants to stress the intensive focus of the TR covering the LM, the spatial preposition 'at' is the most appropriate option.

To Lindestromberg (2010), when there is some vagueness about the exact place of the TR, then it is more appropriate to use the preposition 'at'. In the sentence, '*The party is at his house*.' we don't know where exactly the party is, inside the house or in the garden. To illustrate, in the sentence '*If you are at the beach*', we don't exactly know where you are. The idea of '*the beach*' as a location includes being in the ocean, in the sand, and any area directly connected with it, such as any shop that might be across the street. Thus, there is a kind of bubble of space and it is considered a big scale. However, if, for example, '*you look at a map*', the specific location is just a dot on the map.

### **3.1.2. The Spatial Preposition 'Over'**

According to Tyler & Evans (2003, p 65), the spatial preposition 'over' expresses something in a higher position with contact between the TR and the LM. In other words, it

expresses that the TR is higher than the LM and its scope, such as *'The bird is over the bridge.'* There is a notion of contact between the bird and the bridge.

According to Lindstromberg (2010), The TR is higher than the LM and there is an influence, for example: *'the plane flow over the city'*. It is appropriate to use the spatial preposition " over" either when the TR is higher than or at the same level with the LM, such as: *'the sky is over us'*, " Over "entails that it influences the inhabitants of the city which is to cause or attract the attention of the inhabitants.

Another distinct meaning is expressing a movement from one side to another side, as in the example: *'He jumped over the fence'*. Tyler and Evans (2003, p.82) explained that the spatial preposition 'over' has the meaning of 'on the other side; the point at which the boy has located means that the boy went through a path where there is a point higher than the LM (the fence) which considered as an obstacle for the TR (the boy).

Another different sense is the so-called 'covering sense which is higher' (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p.91). The TR functions as a cover for the LM such as *" put the blanket over the bed "*.

### **3.1.3. The Spatial Preposition 'Above'**

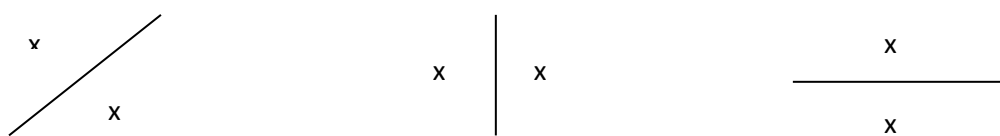
According to Tyler & Evans (2003), the spatial preposition 'above'expresses something in a higher position without contact between the LM and the TR; they are separated (p.116). In other words, it is used when the TR is higher than the LM.

Another distinct meaning of the spatial preposition 'above' is associated with the nature of the LM. According to Tyler and Evans (2003), when the TR is identified about a point lower than it used, both the TR and the LM are the point of the river, it is much better to use above as in the example: *'the nearest bridge is about a half-mile above the fall'* which means a half-mile from the fall in direction of the source (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p. 121).

A third meaning of the spatial preposition ‘above’ relates to the notion of contact (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p.119). This can be explained more in this example ‘*give me the box just above the one you are touching now*’; that is to say, the next box in a vertical sequence higher than the LM. Here, there is total contact between the TR and the LM.

### 3.1.4. The Spatial Preposition ‘Across’

The spatial preposition ‘across’ indicates that the TR is facing the LM (Lindstromberg, 2010, as cited in Athamni, 2016, p. 74) which means that the TR is separated from the LM by a short distance. Downing and Lock (2006) stated that the spatial preposition ‘across’ is more appropriate in the case when the way of movement is as a plus symbols (+) with the street.



**Figure 1:Proto- Scenes for « Across »**

### 3.1.5.The Spatial Preposition ‘On’

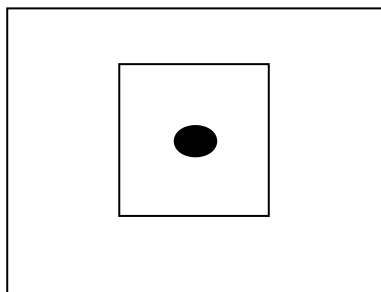
According to Tyler and Evans (2003), the spatial preposition ‘on’ is perceived as a two-dimensional entity represented through the surface of the LM(p.52). This means that there is a direct contact between the TR and the LM at a point or more than the trajector. In the following example:‘*The book is on the table.*’,the LM is (the table) supports the trajector (the book) which is expressed by the spatial preposition ‘on’. This prevents any possibility of falling caused by gravity. the book is not in direct contact with the LM because it is separated by another book so both the two books are supported by the table which is the LM (Lindstromberg, 2010, p. 52).

Another distinct meaning occurs when there is no support between the TR and LM, and the contact found between them is unreal. According to Herskovits (as cited in Athamni, 2016, p. 55) for instance: '*A shadow on the floor*'. Here the contact is not real because the shadow is just abstract not concrete. Dimensional surface with the LM refers to flowers, tables, walls; it is appropriate to use the spatial preposition "on"(p. 351).

There is a situation where it is possible to use 'on/in' according to the intention of the speaker. In other words, how the LM is perceived. The statement: '*there is oil on the pan*' refers to the case that oil is just on the surface of the pan while '*there is oil in the pan*' means that oil occupies volume in the pan. ( Herskovits, 1985, p. 352).

### 3.1.6. The Spatial Preposition 'In'

The main meaning of the spatial preposition 'in' is when the TR is in the LM. Thus the LM is perceived as a three-dimensional entity interior, exterior and boundary (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p. 183).



**Figure 2: The Proto-Science for 'In'**

A second meaning of the preposition 'in' is when the TR is just a part of the LM; when moving the LM the TR moves with it (Tyler & Evans, 2003), as in the example: '*The flowers are in the vase*.' Another distinct meaning is when the TR is surrounded by any number of the same entity as in: '*The child is in the crowd*.' The TR, in this example, is the child and the LM is the crowd. The TR is surrounded by dimensional space (p.185).

According to Walter and Swan (2001), when the LM refers to countries, areas, seas, and towns, sometimes the LM is omitted when it is well understood from the context like: "*the workers stayed in for the strike*", where it is understood that the workers were inside the workplace.

### **3.1.7. The Spatial Preposition 'To'**

According to Tyler and Evans (2003), the spatial preposition 'to' is used to describe an LM as an end in itself such as: '*I am travelling to London*' which means that the LM is an end in itself (London is the place where he or she lives or visit someone). (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p. 149).

Another meaning is when the relationship between the TR and LM entails a direct contact (near contact) (Tyler & Evans, 2003). That is to say, LM is not merely an end for the TR, for instance: "*apply the medicaments directly to the wound so that it heals*" (p.151). So that the medicaments and the wound are in contact with each other.

### **3.1.8. The Spatial Preposition 'For'**

According to Tyler and Evans (2003), the spatial preposition "for" indicates that the LM isn't an end in itself. It refers to the LM as a means to another end like in the example: '*I am leaving for London*' which means that he or she is moving toward London for study. Thus, using 'for' means that the LM is considered a means to get another purpose in a planned way (p.153).

### **3.1.9. The Spatial Preposition 'From'**

According to Lindstromberg (2010), the LM is the source when using the preposition "from". For instance, '*I am travelling from London*' means that my source of movement is that LM (London); my departure is London. Also, it may express the origin and source at the same time, as in: '*She is from the USA, they just got home from work*', as well as the place of leaving such as: '*She went out from the library.*' (p. 43).



### 3.2. The Semantic Complexity of English Spatial Prepositions

Prepositions are considered a difficult part of teaching and learning due to certain factors. Quirk (1993) and Grubic (2004) stated that prepositions are regarded as a difficult area in grammar learning and teaching which present a real challenge for EFL learners and teachers alike ( as cited in Zigha & Mekili, 2018, p.1)

The nature of prepositions is polysemy which refers to the semantic characteristics of words that have multiple meanings which makes learners feel frustrated to determine the meanings of prepositions. Evans and Tyler (2006, p.329) defined polysemy as:“a phenomenon where lexical material has two or more meanings ". This means that English spatial prepositions have a variety of meanings depending on the context (purpose, points, vagueness...), as shown in the examples below:

*'The party is at her house.* Here, 'at' is used to express vagueness about the exact place of the TR. While *'He is at the library all the day'*, the emphasis is on the TR " the library" for a particular purpose which is studying. These examples have different meanings or senses, This means that 'at' shows polysemy. This demonstrates that there are different senses of each preposition understood from the context.

The use of prepositions in context varies from one language to another, as far as the English language is concerned particularly, English prepositions which have a variety of meanings that are related to context. In the process of understanding spatial prepositions, most learners refer to their mother tongues which often cause syntactic transfer and complexity in understanding them (Lam, 2009, p.3). This is called by Selinker (1992) 'interlanguage' which takes place because of the incomplete knowledge of the TL. In other words, interlanguage is a system created by second language learners, when they try to learn or communicate in the target language, they use a system neither the first language nor the second language. This system is affected by the learner's native language in which

they use the knowledge of the native language to comprehend the existing competency gaps, which cause difficulty in understanding English prepositions (as cited in Zigha & Mekili, 2018, p.61).

According to Lado (1957; as cited in Gary & Selinker,1993, p. 2),"individual tends to transfer the forms and the meaning and destination of forms and meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture".That is to say, learners transfer the form and meaning from their mother tongue and culture to another language and culture, there are two types of transfer positive transfer and negative transfer (interference) the latter occurs when the differences between the two languages, structures lead to a systematic occurrence of errors in the learning of second/foreign language or fossilization.

The sheer number of prepositions in the English language makes learners get confused to comprehend and use them accurately. The common prepositions are nearly 60 to 70 prepositions; it has a high number in comparison with other languages (Koffi, 2010 p. 297). As a result, EFL learners can not understand and use them appropriately (Catalan,1996, p.171). Close spatial prepositions, in particular, make learners could not get to their real meanings, such as the prepositions ‘on, in’, and ‘over, above’. Each pair is derived from the central meaning. As for the case of native speakers of Arabic, they would have difficulties in translating the spatial preposition ‘faw9a’. When learners translate it to English, they generally expressed it by: ‘on, over, and above. Thus, learners get confused because they consider all the prepositions to have the same meaning.

In short, the semantic complexity of understanding English spatial prepositions is caused by various factors such as the polysemous nature and the sheer number of prepositions.

## **Conclusion**

In short teaching and learning English prepositions remain a challenging issue for EFL learners and teachers alike. This section gives a detailed explanation for all the elements that related to our research topic, such as the major factors that cause semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions as the interference of the mother tongue, its polysemous nature, and their sheer number...etc.

## **Section Two: The Reading Skill**

### **Introduction**

#### 1. Reading

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1.2. The Process of Reading

1.3. Reading Comprehension

#### 2. Types of Reading

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### **Conclusion**

## **Section Two: The Reading Skill**

### **Introduction**

Achieving effective comprehension is a very important area of investigation in FLT, in addition to the difficulties that may hinder EFL learners' comprehension of a text. Therefore, the present section presents a brief overview of the nature of reading, the processes of reading and reading comprehension. It, also, highlights the role of text as a variable that affects readers' comprehension. It also describes three main models of reading.

### **1. Reading**

#### **1.1. Definition of Reading**

“Reading is a comprehending process in which learners passed through three stages: Reading, interpreting, comprehending”(Patel, 2008, p.116)which means there is an interaction between the writer, text and readers. The writer conveys the intended meaning to readers through the text in the process of reading.

Reading has been a problematic area for researchers and psychologists because of the different perspectives about it. A single definition of reading can not cover all its parts appropriately because the concept of reading differs from one context to another. As Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.13) claimed:

So it is with some reluctance that we begin this part with an attempt to say what we mean by the term reading, our excuse is that people do use the term in different ways and that while this may be permissible when everybody is conscious of the differences, an occasion, it can cause real confusion and difficult.

That is to say, reading is a wide field that identified words, sentences written on the text and their meanings that are related to ideas, memories and knowledge. Thus, it is hard for researchers to give just one definition to the notion of reading.

Reading was traditionally viewed as a passive process in which the readers simply decode the written symbols without bringing their knowledge to interact with text (Clark & Silberstein, 1977). While other researchers do not agree and they say it is no longer a passive process because they believe that readers bring their prior knowledge which eases the learning process (p.188). Goodman (1976, p. 126) stated that "reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game in which learners interact with the text to get to the meaning of words and sentences". This means that reading refers to the ability to construct meaning from the printed page and interpret information appropriately.

In short, reading is a technical process because it demands reading every letter and word then interpret and understand them in the process of constructing meaning (Davenport, 2002, p. 5). In other words, it requires decoding what is written then comprehending it.

## **1.2. The Process of Reading**

The reading process means the cognitive operating in real-time. The Reader deciphers every letter, word, and sentence in the text in the process of reading. The reader uses cognitive abilities to identify the words and their meanings (Anderson, 1994). In other words, it refers to mental operations that occur to derive meaning. Manzo (1993) perceived reading as "a process that refers to the functions or operations that one goes through in deriving meaning" (p.9).

On his part,Grabe (1991, p. 375). )argued that reading is an"[...] active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently". Thus,

the reader has to use the most appropriate strategies and the suitable techniques to comprehend words, sentences, and texts more efficiently.

Grabe and Stoller (2013, p.344) stated that reading is an interactive process between the reader's prior knowledge and the knowledge that exists in the text and which makes the readers able to understand and interpret the text more appropriately. Therefore, reading is an active process, not a passive one where the reader applies various strategies to perceive the writer's message.

By the same token, Anthony, Pearson, and Raphael (1993) believed that reading is "the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among readers' existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language and the context of the reading situation" (as cited in Farel, 2009. p.20). Thus, reading the same piece of writing does not express the same meaning because it is perceived differently at different times by different readers with different objectives. Briefly, the reading process is a mental operation for deriving meaning.

### **1.3. Reading Comprehension**

Most researchers agree on the main aim of reading which is comprehension and meaning detection. Grabe (2009) stated that: "reading is a centrally comprehending and getting meaning." (p. 14). Similarly, Wooly (2001, p. 259) claimed that:

Reading requires readers to go beyond the words sentences in order to comprehend their meanings. It demands from the reader to go beyond the words, sentences in order to move beyond decoding individual vocabulary and statements to constructing a solid understanding of the entire message.

Khatib (2012) argued that reading comprehension is “a mental process since the reader is actively interacting with the language used by the author to gain the meaning of the texts”. Thus, reading comprehension is an active process which involves many levels of mental processing and cognitive activities including prior knowledge, knowledge of the text and the target language codes that are needed for readers to comprehend new elements while reading (Varita, 2017).

In general, reading comprehension plays a vital role in language learning. It refers to the capacity to understand what is printed by relating the current meaning to prior knowledge.

## **2. Types of Reading**

According to Patel (2010), there are four types of reading: extensive, intensive, aloud and silent reading as it will be explained below.

### **2.1. Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading means reading a large quantity of selected, interesting material. This type of reading takes place outside the classroom. It refers to "... reading longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure. This is fluency activity, mainly involving global understanding" (Grellet, 1981, p.4). Extensive reading develops learner's knowledge and it is usually used for pleasure; it involves learners in reading texts for enjoyment and to enhance their reading skills (Patel, 2008, p.119).

### **2.2. Intensive Reading**

Intensive reading, usually, takes place in the classroom. This type of reading emphasizes the details of the text, which build student's understanding of the text. Day and Bamford (1998) defined intensive reading as "to take a text, study it line by line referring at every moment to our dictionary and our grammar, comparing, analyzing, translating and retaining every expression that it contains." (p.5). Thus, readers take in mind the whole

printed materials (grammar rules vocabulary...etc) with the help of dictionaries when they need to analyze, translate while reading texts. In general, intensive reading aims to evolve vocabulary and grammar (Patel, 2008, p.118).

### **2.3. Silent Reading**

Silent reading is a reading skill that allows learners to read without voicing the word. In this type of reading, learners read without voicing the word which is beneficial for acquiring much information. It is considered as a skill in teaching English. According to Patel (2008 p 123), silent reading is done to acquire a lot of information and it is beneficial for saving time because all students read silently at one time then they participate together at one time. Thus, silent reading has multiple advantages.

### **2.4. Reading Aloud**

Reading aloud develops learners' reading skills in a good way. According to Patel (2008, p 121), it is a very effective tool for teaching English, in general, and pronunciation, in particular. It has also the advantage of developing the skills of reading and speaking, expressing ideas, opinions, and emotions without difficulties. During the process of reading loudly, the teacher has to concentrate on the stress, intonation, accent ... etc. Reading aloud is an effective way for enhancing speaking and pronunciation, especially for beginners.

In short, every type of reading has particular characteristics and specific advantages for EFL learners.

## **3. Models of Reading**

The reading process involves the interaction between the reader and the text. Researchers described three main models of the way reading occurs: bottom-up, top-down and interactive reading.



### **3.1. Bottom-Up Model**

The bottom-up model considers the text as organised from the smallest linguistic units to the highest units as graphic, phonic, phonemic, syllabi, morphonic, words and sentences ( as cited in Yakoub and Lemzeri, 2020, p.10).The reader starts by the smallest units gradually to decode higher ones to understand the text (Dechart, 1991). This model requires readers to process the text at grammatical and structural levels and leads them to construct comprehensive semantic analysis of the text in order to construct meaning. Nunan (1991) stated that :

These letters or graphemes are matched with the phonemes of the language. These phonemes, the minimal units of meaning in the sound system of the language are blended to form words. The derivation of meaning is thus the end of the process in which language is translated from one represent action to another (p. 64).

Therefore, the bottom-up model refers to the ability to interpret what is seen in the text starting from letters, words, sentences. The reader derives the meaning of the whole text. It focuses on written or printed text. Therefore, it suggested from learners in the process of reading learn the language which means the letters to understand the whole text.

### **3.2. Top-Down Model**

According to Nuttal (2005, p.53), the Top-down model of reading pertains to "analysis with an eagle view of text". In other words, during the reading process, readers do certain hypotheses. Later on, when they finish reading, they are allowed to confirm or disconfirm these hypotheses. In this model, readers focus on the preliminary knowledge in the reading process. Therefore, Clark (1977) maintained that "the reader brings information, attitudes, experiments from the text, where this knowledge is attached by the capacity to produce linguistic prediction"(p.11).The goal of reading is to build meaning in

response to a text. The reader has to analyze and understand text information according to his prior knowledge and expectation.

### **3.3. The Interactive Model**

It is a reading model that recognises the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously throughout the reading process. It attempts to take into account the strong points of both models (as cited in Yakoub & Lemzeri, 2020, p.11). It is introduced to avoid the limitations of the two models because it contains the interaction of the bottom-up and top-down processes. Richard (1990) considered reading as " an integration of top-down process that utilizes the background knowledge and schema, as well as bottom-up processes that primarily text or data-driven " (p. 77). The interactive model can be perceived as the best because it covers the advantages of the two models.

In short, the above reading models contribute to comprehending the process of reading.

### **4. The Role of Text in Understanding Spatial Prepositions**

A text is any piece of writing which has a form and a meaning. It includes four types (narrative, perspective, expository, descriptive) Not just teachers that affect readers' comprehension, but also the text has a huge influence on the learner's comprehension. There are certain causes that contribute to the learner's comprehension, such as types, structures, vocabulary, background knowledge, and cohesion.

According to Klingner (2007)," the structure of the text refers to the form of sentences or how a text is ordered to guide the readers determine key information". (p.75). This means the simpler the structure is, the easier it for learners to comprehend the text is. When the structure is complex, however, learners would face difficulty in understanding the text in general. Thus, various kinds of text require different forms and structures like narrative text and expository text, so different types of text require different ways of thinking.

Barnett (1989, p.25) believed that "vocabulary is one of the most textual elements that interfere in the interpretation of the text, it contributes strongly on learners' comprehension ". That is to say, learners who have rich vocabulary will have a good reading comprehension of a text. Barnett took into account that "cohesion has also an impact in comprehending a text so when the ideas and their meanings in the text are organised and related to each other well, so it will be easy for learners to understand the text well" (1989, p. 26).The Background knowledge of learners means the prior knowledge that learners have in their mind which contributes to facilitating the learner's comprehension of the text (p.31).

In brief, the text has a big role in comprehending the meaning of words, sentences ... etc and to raise learners' knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, learning a foreign language includes mastering the four skills. Reading, as such represents a fundamental area inEFL learning. This section, therefore, presents a detailed overview of the reading skills including its definition, reading comprehension, types of reading, and modes of reading. Last but not least, this section sheds light on the role of text and its importance in deciphering meaning which is a crucial point in this study.

## **Chapter Two : Fieldwork**

## **Chapter two : Fieldwork**

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1. Population and Sampling

2. Data Collection Tool

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## **Chapter Two: Fieldwork**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reports on the procedures followed in collecting data. It, also, attempts to present, analyse and discuss the results obtained in this study. Therefore, it sets out a description of the sample selected and the data collection tool used to test the hypothesis of the research. The results are analysed and interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively and interpreted as well, based on the frequency of occurrence of the correct and wrong usages of these prepositions in each exercise of the test.

### **1. Population and Sampling**

A random sampling consists of sixty-seven students (nearly one fifth of the whole population) from a population of 272 second-year LMD students at the English department of Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University of Jijel. They are all native speakers of Arabic and they have been administered a test because they are supposed to have a certain level of mastery of the English language, in general, and English prepositions as they study them in their first and second years, in particular.

### **2. Data Collection Tool**

As stated above, the aim of this research work was to investigate students' understanding of the semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions and to check their knowledge about the different meanings of each preposition and whether their understanding is better while reading texts. Therefore, the suitable research tool for this topic is the Grammar test which is defined by Kitao (1996) as follows: " the testing of grammar is one of the mainstays of language testing. While such tests test the ability to either recognize or produce correct grammar usage, they do not test the ability to use the

language to express meaning. However, it can be argued that a basic knowledge of grammar underlies the ability to use language to express meaning, and so grammar test do have important part to play in language programs" . That is to say, Grammar test is a tool used for collecting data that is related to Grammar domain; it aims to test the accurate and correct usage of grammatical rules and parts of speech, as the case of this study which investigates the use of preposition.

### **3.Description and Administration of the Test**

The test was administered to second-year LMD students at the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. The aim was to check their understanding of the spatial prepositions " in, on, at, across, for, to, over, above, from " and to determine the major factors that cause semantic complexity. The students were given 45 minutes to answer the test. It was noticed, that many students claimed the difficulty of the test and their unfamiliarity with such types of exercises. The participants were given four exercises, each exercise was purposefully selected as each tackled an aspect in the understanding and use of prepositions. There was a balance in the distribution and selection of the prepositions throughout the test.

The first exercise contains fifteen sentences in which students were asked to fill in the gaps with the appropriate preposition " on, in, at, for, from, across, above, over". The aim of this exercise is to check the use of preposition. As for the prepositions to choose, they were distributed as follows:

- The preposition 'On' should be chosen in Sentences: four and thirteen.
- The preposition 'over' should be chosen in sentence: two.
- The preposition 'above' should be chosen in sentences: one and fourteen.
- The preposition 'at' should be chosen in sentences: three, seven and eight.

- The preposition 'In' should be chosen in sentences: five, six and fifteen.
- The preposition 'to' should be chosen in sentence: eleven.
- The preposition ' across' should be chosen in sentence: nine.
- The preposition ' from' should be chosen in sentences: ten and twelve.

The second exercise contains fourteen sentences and students were asked to give the meaning of each preposition. The prepositions tackled are: in, on, at, above, over, for, to, from, across" which aims at determining the meanings of prepositions. The meanings of the prepositions that are covered in this exercise are as follows:

- The meanings of the preposition 'at': it expresses a particular purpose from emphasis on the LM in sentence one. The second meaning expresses a vagueness about the exact place of the TR as in sentence eight.
- The meaning of the preposition 'across' is when there is a movement from one side to another side as a plus symbol which is expressed in sentence two.
- The meaning of the preposition 'on':it expresses the dimensional surfaces with a total and a direct contact between the the TR and the LM like in example three and four.
- The meanings of the preposition 'in': when the LM refers to countries and big states such as sentence five. The surrounding meaning refers to dimensional spaces like towns and lacks as sentence six.
- The meaning of the preposition ' from' is when it expresses a source of movement as sentence seven and nine.
- The meanings of the the preposition 'to': It expresses an end in itself such as sentenced seven and ten. The second meaning expresses a direct contact between the TR and the LM such as example fourteen.



- The meanings of the preposition 'over': It expresses an influence such as sentence eleven. The second meaning expresses a movement from place to another as sentence twelve.
- The meaning of the preposition 'above': when the TR is higher than the LM and there is total contact between them( not a direct contact) see sentence thirteen.

The third exercise contains fourteen sentences in which learners were asked to choose the appropriate preposition and provide its meaning. This exercise aims at checking if learners put prepositions randomly or according to their meanings.

- In the first and the second sentence, it is correct to use "in" because it refers to dimensional spaces like boxes, rooms.. etc.
- In the third sentence, it is correct to use "on" because in context "on" it refers to the surface of the pan.
- In the fourth sentence, it is more appropriate to use "over" because the TR (birds) are higher than the LM (bridge) with a contact between them.
- In the fifth sentence, the correct answer is "on" because this expression is an idiomatic expression which means extremely happy.
- In the sixth sentence, it is correct to use "at" because it emphasizes on the LM (he/she) for particular purposes which is covering pain in the first and showing angry in the second.
- In the seventh sentence, it is appropriate to use "across" because it expresses a movement forming a plus symbol.
- In the eighth sentence, it is correct to use "to" which expresses that the LM (London) is an end for itself where he or she visits the family.
- In the ninth sentence, it is correct to use "for" because it expresses a purpose which is studying in a planned and a calculated way.

- In the tenth sentence, it is correct to use "over" which means a movement from one side to another.
- In sentence eleven it is appropriate to use "above" because when the TR ( bird) is higher than the LM (bridge) without a contact between them.
- In sentence twelve, "in" occupies a volume in the pan.
- In sentence fourteen, it is correct to use "on" because it refers to the TR (a shadow) and the LM (floor) and no support between them and the context between them is not real.

The last exercise is a short paragraph (extract from a story) where students are asked to give the meanings of four prepositions ( in, on, to, from ) according to the context. It aims at diagnosing the participants' ability to determine the meanings of prepositions in reading texts. The first meaning of the preposition 'to' means an end for itself ( bed). The second meaning of the preposition 'on' means a dimensional surfaces with a direct and total contact between the TR ( new shoes) and the LM ( workbench). The third meaning of the preposition 'in' means that when the TR ( rich women) is located inside the LM ( shoemaker shop). The last meaning of the preposition ' from' expresses a surface of movement which is here the place of leaving.

#### 4. Analysis and Interpretation of the Obtained Results

##### 4.1. Analysis of the Obtained Results per Exercise

###### Exercise One

**Modal Answer of Exercise one:** Choose the appropriate preposition in the following sentences (at, in, on, across, for, above, over, from, to).

1. It's a plane hovering above the window.
2. Cover the bed; put the blanket over the bed.
3. The party is at his house.
4. Why are all those papers on the floor?
5. The flowers are in the vase.
6. The president Barak Obama lived in America.
7. He is at the kitchen table.
8. She is at the corner.
9. We took a ferry across the river.
10. We live ten miles from the beach.
11. I went to their house.
12. You can see the island from here.
13. She had a ring on every finger.
14. The nearest bridge is about half mile above the fall.
15. The child in the Crowd.

**Table.1. Sum of Students' Answers to Exercise One**

Sent	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	5	7,46%	60	89,56%	2	2,98%
2	9	13,43%	58	86,57 %		
3	16	23,88%	51	76,12%		
4	44	65,67%	23	34,33%		

<b>5</b>	36	53,73%	31	46,27%		
<b>6</b>	58	86,56%	9	13,44%		
<b>7</b>	12	17,91%	55	82,09%		
<b>8</b>	21	31,34%	46	68,66%		
<b>9</b>	24	35,82%	39	58,21%	4	5,97%
<b>10</b>	32	47,76%	35	52,24%		
<b>11</b>	52	77,61%	15	22,39%		
<b>12</b>	40	59,70%	27	40,30%		
<b>13</b>	18	26,86%	49	73,14%		
<b>14</b>	3	4,47%	62	92,55%	2	2,98%
<b>15</b>	12	17,91%	20	29.86%	35	52,23%

From the above table, it is revealed that most students face difficulty in detecting the meanings of the spatial prepositions "above, over, at". , To illustrate, in the first sentence, 'It is a plane hovering ..... the window', the spatial preposition **Above** is the correct answer which expresses something in a higher position without contact between the TR and the LM. However, only five (7.46%) participants answered correctly while 89,56% (60) of them gave wrong answers. As for the preposition **Over**, 86,57% of students gave a wrong answer, as in the sentence 'cover the bed; put the blanket ..... the bed'. In the sentence 'He is .... the kitchen table', the students should select the spatial preposition **at** as a correct answer which expresses a purpose and a space in the same time. However, 82,09% of the participants gave wrong answers, Students' miscomprehension of the spatial prepositions can be attributed to their lack of knowledge.

## Exercise 2

**Modal Answer of Exercise two:** Explain the meaning of each preposition in bold.

1. She has been **at** her book all the morning.

It means that she is sitting on the table for the purpose of reading

2. She swims **across** the river.

It expresses a Movement from one side to another side.

3. The book is **on** the table.

It expresses dimensional surface like tables.

4. She had photos of all her family **on** the wall.

It expresses dimensional surface like wall.

5. For the best food **try** the restaurants **in** Morocco.

Expresses for countries and big state.

6. She swims **in** the lack.

It expresses dimensional spaces like towns and lacks.

7. He took five days to cycle **from** London to Edinburgh.

It expresses Movement from one place to another.

8. I will meet you **at** the beach.

This meaning expresses vagueness about the exact place of the TR which is the house.

9. I am **from** the U. S; we just got home from work.

It expresses a starting point in the first and in the second it expresses a place some one is going to.

10. The captain **sailed** to the closest port.

Expresses a movement from one place to another place.

11. The plane flew **over** the city.

It expresses an influence on the inhabitants of the city.

12. The boy jumped **over** the fence.

It expresses a movement from one side to another side.

13. Give me the box just above the one you are touching now.

It means the box is higher than another and there a total contact between the TR and the LM ( not a direct contact) .

14. Apply the medicaments directly to the wound so that it heals.

When the medicaments and the wound are in direct contact so the wound is not an end for the medicaments.

**Table.2.Sum of Students' Answers to Exercise Two.**

Sent	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	20	29,85%	42	62,69%	5	7,46%
2	26	38,80%	36	53,74%	5	7,46%
3	14	20,89%	48	71,65%	5	7,46%
4	10	14,92%	49	73,14%	8	11,94%
5	9	13,43%	49	73,14%	9	13,43%
6	10	14,92%	47	70,16%	10	14,92%
7	43	64,18%	16	23,88%	8	11,94%
8	4	5,97%	52	77,62%	11	16,41%
9	30	44,77%	30	44,79%	7	10,44%
10	11	16,41%	44	65,68%	12	17,91%
11	12	17,91%	43	64,18%	12	17,91%
12	18	26,86%	33	49,26%	16	23,88%
13	3	4,47%	62	92,55%	2	2,98%
14	5	7,48%	55	82,08%	7	10,44%

In sentence eight, '*the party is .... his house*', **at** is the correct answer which expresses vagueness about the exact place. However, 4 participants (5.97%) answered correctly while 52 of them (77.62%) gave wrong answers as for the preposition 'for'. As for the preposition "on" as a correct answer which expresses a direct contact between the TR (the

Book) and the LM (table). 71,65% (48) of participants gave wrong answers. Similar for " in "which is when the LM refers to countries and big states as in sentence five 13, 43% participants ( 9) answer correctly. However, 73,14% (49) participants gave a wrong answers students' misunderstanding of spatial prepositions "in,on" can be attributed to the lack of prepositional knowledge and at may be related to its polysemous nature.

### Exercise 3

**Modal Answer of Exercise three:** In each sentence below, fill the gap with the appropriate preposition (on, in, at, across, over, above, for, to, from), then explain its meaning.

1. There is nothing in the fridge.

Expresses a dimensional spaces like boxes, rooms.

2. Where is Joe? In the kitchen.

Dimensional spaces like boxes, rooms.

3. Wipe the pan with the kitchen roll to removed excess fat ;there is oil on it.

In this example on It refers to the oil on the surface

4. The sight of birds on the bridge is fantastic; the birds are over the bridge

"Over "expresses that the TR which is the birds is higher than the LM bridge with a contact between them.

5. Maria was on cloud nine to see her husband back from a long business trip.

It expresses an idiomatic expression which is extreme some one happy.

6. He threw the ball at him and he looked at her.

He and she emphasis on the LM for particular aims which is causing pain in the first and showing anger in the second.

7. He walked across the street.

Movement from one side to another.

8. I am traveling to London to visit my family in\_law.

It expresses that the LM is an end in itself.

9. I am leaving for London I got a scholarship to study at Birmingham university.

It expresses a purpose in a planned or calculated way.

10. He jumped over the wall.

It expresses movement from one side to another side

11. Is there anything interesting in the paper?

It expresses

12. The bird is flying above the bridge.

It means that the TR the (bird) is higher than the LM ( the bridge) without a contact between them.

13. We don't need to buy oil to fry potatoes; there is oil in the pan.

In this sentence the oil occupies a volume in the pan.

14. A shadow on the floor.

When there is no support between the TR and the LM and the contact between them is not real.

#### a. The Correct Prepositions

**Table. 3. Sum of Students' Answers to Exercise Three (Correct Prepositions).**

Sent	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	33	49,25%	31	46,26%	3	4,49%
2	45	67,16%	20	29,85%	2	2,99%
3	33	49,25%	27	40,29%	7	10,46%
4	20	29,85%	40%	59,70%	7	10,45%
5	21%	31,34%	36%	53,73%	10%	14,93%
6	20	29,86%	21	31,34%	26	38,80%
7	23	34,32%	39	58,20%	5	7,48%
8	50	74,62%	11	16,41%	6	8,97%
9	10	14,92%	44	65,67%	13	19,41%
10	39	58,20%	23	34,32%	5	7,48%
11	28	41,79%	32%	47,76%	7	10,45%



<b>12</b>	10	14,92%	50	74,62%	7	10,46%
<b>13</b>	22	32,83%	35	52,23%	10	14,94%
<b>14</b>	13	19,40 %	43	64,17%	11	16,43%

This table shows that sentence (12) "the birds are flying above the bridge" is the most difficult one for learners, 74,62% answer wrongly and 14,92% of students answer correctly whereas 10,46% of students did not answer. This reveals that the majority of learners face a difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition "above", maybe because learners think in their mother tongue so instead of putting above as the correct one, they put "on, over in" which refers to the interference of the mother tongue.

### b. Their Appropriate Meanings

**Table. 4. Sum of Students' Answers to Exercise Three (Appropriate Meaning).**

Sent	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1</b>	17	25,37%	35	52,25%	15	22,38%
<b>2</b>	12	17,91%	43	64,18%	12	17,91%
<b>3</b>	18	26,86%	33	49,26%	16	23,88%
<b>4</b>	8	11,94%	25	37,32%	34	50,74%
<b>5</b>	19	28,35%	19	28,35%	29	43,30%
<b>6</b>	21	31,34%	21	31,34%	25	37,32%
<b>7</b>	35	52,35%	13	19,20%	19	28,45%
<b>8</b>	8	11,94%	45	67,16%	14	20,90%
<b>9</b>	23	34,32%	17	25,37%	27	40,31%
<b>10</b>	33	49,25%	27	40,29%	7	10,46%
<b>11</b>	21	31,34%	21	31,34%	25	37,32%
<b>12</b>	7	10,44%	43	64,17%	17	25,39%
<b>13</b>	23	34,32%	17	25,37%	27	40,31%
<b>14</b>	50	74,62%	10	14,92%	7	10,46%

This table shows that 67,16% of students did not answer. In this sentence, 8 students should select the spatial preposition "to" which expresses a movement to a place with a planned goal. Similar to the Preposition "above" in which 64,17% of students gave a wrong

answers and 25,39% did not answer. In this sentence, (12) students selected the spatial preposition "above" which means that the TR is higher than the LM and there is no contact between them.

This revealed that most of students could not understand the spatial preposition "above " may be due to the interference of the mother tongue. Most of students put the meaning correct and put the wrong preposition because they thought in Arabic in interpreting prepositions. Similar to the preposition "to" in which most of students could not comprehend it, may be because of the sheer number of prepositions in English, it is well-known that most beginners use their mother tongue to understand meaning of words that is the case in this sentence, so they consider " ila " as for, to, in this case it is appropriate to use the for because there is a calculated goal beside the movement to London and there are more than one preposition in English, to expresses " ila" this revealed that students couldn't select the appropriate preposition may be because of the sheer number of prepositions and interference of the mother tongue.

#### **Exercise 4**

**Modal Answer of Exercise four:** Read the following extract and explain the meaning of each preposition in bold.

Once upon a time there lived a very poor shoemaker in little shop. He made shoes on his workbench. Before he went to (1)bed, he put leather beside his tools. The next morning, when he woke up, he was surprised to see a pair of new shoes on (2)the workbench. A rich woman went in (3)their shoemaker's shop. The Elves came into the shop by walking under the table .The Elves came in light night because they didn't want the shoemaker went out to see them working on the shoes. When the dawn came, they were already out of the shop ...One night, the shoemaker decided to see who made the shoes, so he hid behind the curtain. The shoemaker's wife sew some clothes for the Elves and she put it on the table. The Elves put in the clothes made by the shoemaker's wife .They were happy and went out from (4)the shop and never came back.

**To (1) :** it expresses an end in itself (bed).

**On (2) :** expresses a direct contact between the TR (shoes) and the LM ( workbench).

**In (3)** : when the TR ( rich woman) is inside the LM (shoemaker shop).

**From (4)** : it expresses place of leaving (shop).

**Table. 5.Sum of Students Answers to Exercise Four.**

Sent	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	23	34,32%	32	47,76%	12	17,92%
2	13	19,40%	43	64,17%	11	16,43%
3	8	11,94%	40	59,70%	19	28,36%
4	14	20,89%	42	62,68%	11	16,43%

In exercise four, it is clearly assumed that learners encountered a difficulty in understanding the following spatial prepositions " on , from". The table below shows that 64,17% of students answered in a wrong way, in this sentence (2): ' new shoes on the workbench ' students should select the spatial preposition " on " as a correct answer which refers to something / someone in the surface of an object.Thus, the findings revealed that most of students failed to determine the meaning of spatial preposition "on". Similar to the Preposition"from" in which 62,68% of students answered wrongly and 16,43% ignored to answer. In this sentence (4), 'they were happy and went out from the shop', students should select the spatial preposition" from " as a correct answer which means the source of movement or the starting point (place). Thus, it revealed that most of students failed to determine the prepositional sense of " from" may be due to lack of knowledge.

#### 4-4-2- Analysis of the Meanings of Each Preposition

##### The preposition "On"

**Table. 6.Sum of the Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'On'**

Meanings	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%

1- It Expresses a dimensional surface with the LM	14	20,89%	48	71,65%	5	7,46%
2- when there is no support between the TR and the LM and the contact between them is not real	50	74,62%	10	14,92%	7	10.46%

Concerning the first sense which is when there is no support between the TR and the LM and the contact between them is not real. The above table shows that **14,92%** of students answered wrongly and **10,46%** did not answer, this reveals that most students find a difficulty in understanding this sense may be because that learners did not know all the rules and senses of the preposition " **on**". Thus, it may be related to their ignorance about the prepositions.

### The Preposition " For "

**Table. 7. Sum of Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition " For"**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
It Expresses that the LM is not an end in itself , in other word it refers that the LM as means to another end . Also it means to get another purpose in a planned or calculated way	23	34,32%	17	25,37%	27	40,31%

The percentage of correct answer is very low even though it contains just one sense which refers to the LM as a means to another side such as "Iam leaving **for** London, I got a scholarship to study at Birmingham University ", the above table shows that **25,37%** of students answer wrongly and **40,31%** do not answer. This revealed that the majority of learners face a difficulty in understanding the meaning of " **for**"because most of them ignore the semantic meaning of prepositions.

### The Preposition " To"

**Table.8.Sum of Students'Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'To'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1-</b> It Expresses that the LM is an end in itself	8	11.94%	45	67,16%	14	20.90%
<b>3-</b> when there is a relationship between the TR and the LM entails a direct /near contact.	5	7,48%	55	82,08%	7	10,44%

Concerning the following sense which is when there is a relationship between the TR and the LM entails a direct contact, the above table shows that **82,08 %** of students answer in a wrong way and **10,44%** of students did not answer, this reveals that most of students find difficulty in comprehending this sense.

### The Preposition " From "

**Table.9.Sum of Students Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'From'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1-</b> It Expresses the source and the origin at the same time	30	44,77%	30	44,79%	7	10.44%
<b>2-</b> It Expresses a starting point	43	64,18%	16	23,88%	8	11.94 %
<b>3-</b> It Expresses the place of leaving	14	20,89%	42	62,68%	11	16,43%

The above table shows that **62,68%** of students answered wrongly and the **16,43%** did not answer, that the majority of learners encountered difficulty in comprehending that sense which expresses place of leaving such as "they were happy and went out **from** the

shop and never came back", this can be related to the insufficient knowledge of prepositions.

### The Preposition " Above "

**Table.10.Sum of Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'Above'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1- It expresses something in a higher position without contact between the TR and the LM .	5	7,46%	60	89,56%	2	2,98%
2. It Expresses the notion of contact / total contact between the TR and the LM .	3	4,47%	62	92,55%	2	2,98%
2- Itexpresses when the TR and the LM is both from the same place.	3	4,47%	62	92,55%	2	2,98%

The percentage of the wrong answer and no answer is very high especially in the following senses. Concerning the first sense which expresses something in a higher position without contact between the LM and the TR, the above table shows that 89.56 % of students answered wrong and 2,98 did not answer. Thus, this reveals that the majority of students can not understand the prepositions meaning may be this related to the interference of the mother tongue because most of answers are wrong for filling gaps such as on, over instead of putting above and their meanings are correct which reveals that learners are knowledgable by this sense.

## The Preposition " Across "

**Table.11. Sum of Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'Across'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1-</b> It indicates that the TR is facing LM and represent a movement from one place to another, it is used when the way of movement is a plus symbol (+) with street sentence	24	35,82%	39	58,21%	4	5,97%

The percentage of wrong and correct answers, it reveals that students find the preposition across easy to understand and to use the meaning maybe because the preposition across it has just one meaning which indicates that the TR is facing the LM, plus a movement from one side (A) to side (B) like forming a plus symbol.

## The Preposition " Over "

**Table. 12.Sum of Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition 'over'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1-</b> It Expresses a covering sense	9	13,43%	58	86,57%		
<b>2-</b> It Expresses a movement from one side to another side	18	26,86%	33	49,26%	16	32,88%
<b>3-</b> when the TR is higher than the LM and expresses an influence / contact	12	17,91%	43	64,18%	12	17,91%
<b>4-</b> when there is a contact between the TR and the LM and the TR is higher than the LM and its scope	8	11,94%	25	37,32%	34	50,74%

The percentage of the wrong answers is very high especially , concerning the first sense which refers to the covering sense, the above table revealed that **86,57%**of the students answered wrongly this phases that the majority of students faced difficulty in

comprehending the meaning of " **over** "can be attributed to the multiplicity of its meanings which make learners unable to predict or determine the exact sense.

### ThePreposition " At "

**Table. 13. Sum of Students' Answers to the Meanings of Preposition'At'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1- when there is vagueness on the exact place.	4	5,97%	52	77,62%	11	16,41%
2- When there is much emphasis on the LM for a particular response	21	31,34%	21	31,34%	25	37,32%
3- when there is an emphasis on the TR as a place for a specific purpose	12	17,91%	55	82,09%		
4- when the location is as a point of maps and roadsand the TR and the LM are close to each other	21	31,34%	46	68,66%		

The percentage of correct answers is very weak especially in the following senses, covering the senses which is when there is emphasis on the TR as a place for a specific purpose such as "he is **at** the kitchen table ", the above table shows that **82,09 %** of students were wrong. This revealed that most students encounter difficulty in understanding that sense due to its polysemous nature.

### The Preposition " In "

**Table. 14.Sum of Students' Answers to the Meaning of Preposition 'In'**

Meaning	CA		WA		NA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1- When the TR is in the LM, the LM is perceived as three-dimensional entity.	17	25,37%	35	52,25%	15	22,38%
2- When the TR is a part of the LM.	36	53,73%	31	46,26%		
3- When it refers to dimensional	9	13,43%	49	73,14%	9	13,43%



spaces such as countries						
4- When the TR is surrounding by many numbers of the same entity.	12	17,91%	20	29.86%	35	52,23%

The percentage of the correct answer is very weak, especially in some meanings. Concerning the first sense which is when the TR is in the LM, the LM is perceived as a three-dimensional entity such as "there is nothing **in** the fridge ", the above table shows that **52,25%** of students answered wrongly and **22,38 %** did not answer, this reveals that students encounter a difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition " **in** "sense maybe because of its polysemous nature.

**4-4-3- Students' Answers to Each Preposition**

**The Preposition " On "**

**Table. 15. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'On'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
On	30,96%	59,32%	9,72%

The above table shows that 59,32% of students answer wrongly and 30,96% correctly and 9,72% ignore to answer. This revealed that the majority of students face difficulty in understanding the spatial preposition "**on**". That may be associated with the sheer number of prepositions they understand the meaning but they didn't put the appropriate preposition.

### **ThePreposition "for "**

**Table. 16. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'For'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
For	14,92 %	65,67 %	19,41 %

The above table shows that 65,67% of students answer wrongly and 14,92% correctly and 19,41% do not answer, this reveals that the majority of students face a difficulty in understanding the spatial preposition " for ". This can be attributed to lack of preposition knowledge because all answers are irrelevant.

### **The Preposition " Above "**

**Table. 17.Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition ' Above'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
Above	7,83%	87,32%	4,85%

The above table shows that 87,32% of students answered wrongly and 7,83% of them answer correctly and 4,85% do not answer.This revealed that most students face difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition "above".This can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue because they know the meaning but they put the prepositions wrongely sugc as putting on, over, instead of putting above.

### **The Preposition "Over"**

**Table. 18. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'over'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
Over	29,25%	58,80%	11,95%

The above table shows that 50,80% of students answer wrongly and 29,25% of them answer correctly, 11,95% do not answer this revealed that most of students face difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition "over", may be because the interference of the mother tongue like " he jumped over the fence ", the majority of learners answer by choosing the spatial preposition preposition "on" instead of "over".

### **The Preposition " Across "**

**Table.19. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition ' Across'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
Across	36,31%	56,71%	6,98%

The above table shows that 56,71% of students answer wrongly and 36,31% of them answer correctly, 6,98% do not answer, this revealed that the answers of wrong and correct answers are close to each other, maybe because this preposition has just one meaning.

### **The Preposition "To"**

**Table. 20. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'To'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
To	51,48%	37,31%	11,21%

The above table shows that 37,31% of students answer wrongly and 51,48% correctly and 11,21% do not answer. This revealed that most students could comprehend this preposition well. This can be explained by its familiarity with learners.

### **The Preposition "In"**

**Table. 21. Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'In'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
In	38,95%	46,86%	14,19%

The above table shows that 46,86% answer wrongly and 38,95% correctly and 14,19% do not answer. This revealed that most learners find difficulty in understanding the spatial preposition " in" maybe because there is numerous close preposition in the English language in comparison to other languages like the Arabic language.

### **The Preposition "At"**

**Table. 22.SumStudents' Answers to Preposition ' At'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
At	23,13%	66,42%	10,45%

The above table shows that 66,42% answer wrongly and 22,13 % answer correctly, 10,45% do not answer, this revealed that most learners encounter a difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition "at". This can be attributed to polysemous nature of the preposition.

### **The Preposition "From"**

**Table.23.Sum of Students' Answers to Preposition 'From'**

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>NA</b>
From	39,4%	52,83%	7,77%

The above table shows that 52,83 % answer wrongly and 39,4% answer correctly, 7,77% of learners do not answer this revealed that most learners encounter difficulty in comprehending the spatial preposition " from". This may be because learners do not have enough knowledge of prepositions.

#### 4-4-4- The Overall Performance per Exercise

##### The percentage of exercise 1

**Table.24. Sum of Students' Answers in Exercise one**

CA	WA	NA
38,67%	57,12%	4,21%

The above table shows that 57,12% of Students answer wrongly and 38,67% of them answer correctly and 4,21% ignore to answer. This revealed that the percentage of wrong and correct answer are close to each other that can be associated to the easiness as the question which is filling the gaps.

##### The percentage of exercise 2

**Table. 25. Sum of Students' Answers in Exercise two**

CA	WA	NA
22,91%	64,61%	12,48%

The above table shows that 64,61% of students answer wrongly and 22,91 % of them answer correctly while 12,48% of learners do not answer. This revealed that wrong answers are higher than the correct ones may be because the way of asking the question which is explaining the meaning is a bit difficult for learners because they didn't have enough knowledge to answer.

The above tables shows that the most difficult prepositions are " at, above, for " may be because of the polysemous nature of the preposition, interference of the mother tongue

and the lack of the prepositional knowledge whereas the easiest prepositions are " to, from " that revealed that different meanings of each preposition are familiar to EFL learners.

**The percentage of exercise 3**

**The percentage of Meaning**

**Table. 26. Sum of Students' Answers in Exercise 3 ( Meaning )**

CA	WA	NA
31,45%	39,32%	29,23%

**The percentage of preposition**

**Table. 27 . Sum of Students' Answers in Exercise three ( Preposition)**

CA	WA	NA
39,12%	48,18%	12,70%

The above table shows that 39,32% of students answer the meaning wrongly and 48,18% they choose the preposition wrongly 31,45% put the meaning correctly and 39,12% choose the preposition appropriately. This revealed that most of learners succeed to choose the preposition and they failed to determine the meaning that can be refers to lack of the prepositional knowledge, It is more clear in the percentage of the no answers in which the percentage of choosing the preposition is less than the percentage of determining the meaning.

#### The percentage of exercise 4

**Table 28. Sum of Students' Answers in Exercise Four.**

CA	WA	NA
21,63%	58,58%	19,79%

The above table shows that 58,58% of learners answer wrongly and 21,63% of them answer correctly while 19,79% of students do not answer. This revealed that wrong answers are higher than the correct ones, so students are not knowledgeable by English spatial prepositions.

#### 4-4-5- Overall Analysis

The table below is a summary of the students' performances in all exercises.

**Table 29. a summary of the students' performances in all exercises.**

Exercises	CA	WA	NA
Exercise one	38,67 %	57,12%	4,21%
Exercise two	22,91%	64,61%	12,48%
Exercise three	31,45%	39,32%	29,23%
meaning / preposition	39,12%	48,18%	12,70%
Exercise four	21,63%	58,58%	19,79%



The table revealed that there is a slight difference in students' performances in the given exercises which vary between choosing the appropriate preposition and determining the meanings of prepositions in isolated statements or in-text readings. In the first exercise, the wrong and correct answers are close to each other. This can be explained by the easiness of the question in which the participants were asked to fill in the gaps without providing any explanation. Percentages of correct answers are much less than the wrong ones. In the second exercise, the percentages of the wrong answers are higher than the correct ones. This indicates the difficulty of comprehending the English spatial prepositions and the participants' inability to decipher the meanings of the prepositions given. The results obtained in the third exercise confirm what has been mentioned above that choosing the appropriate prepositions was easier for the participants than determining the meanings. The learners did not have any small idea of how to answer. In exercise four, where the participants were asked to provide the different meanings of four prepositions while reading a passage, the wrong answers were higher than the correct ones even when putting these prepositions in context. Thus, learners face difficulty in comprehending the meaning of prepositions, regardless of their demonstration in reading passage. The learners have the same problem of insufficient knowledge about prepositions.

Thus, learners have incomplete learning of English prepositions. It is noticed also that EFL learners face difficulties in all types of English spatial prepositions (movement, position and movement and position). The results obtained did not confirm the hypothesis put forward and which states that second-year students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University Jijel will better understand the semantic meanings of English spatial prepositions while reading texts. In addition, the major factors that cause the difficulty in comprehending the above English prepositions such as the polysemous nature and the lack of knowledge of these prepositions. When dealing with prepositions, the majority of

learners did not know the different senses of each spatial preposition, as well as, the central meaning of certain prepositions. Moreover, EFL learners misunderstand English spatial prepositions either while reading in a context as in the fourth exercise or separately as in the first three exercises of the test. Thus, in all cases, learners have the same problem.

### **Pedagogical Recommendations**

Based on the reported findings that investigated the semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Despite their sheer number, teachers are required to provide learners with ample and detailed instructions about the English spatial prepositions, their various meanings, as well as the different usages of each preposition in different contexts.
- Teachers should adopt different teaching approaches and techniques that facilitate students' comprehension of prepositions and their meanings.
- Since students are not able to grasp the central meaning of English spatial prepositions and have poor knowledge of the fact that prepositions have a polysemous nature, they fail to understand them. Thus, EFL learners should make extra efforts to develop knowledge of prepositions outside the classroom.
- Students should think and interpret prepositions in English, not Arabic to avoid the interference of the mother tongue and the effect of the negative transfer because both languages have different structures that account for dissimilar equivalence.

## **Limitations of the Study**

While conducting this research, certain obstacles were confronted:

- The grammar test requires fifty sentences to be analyzed individually which make the analysis longer and time-consuming.
- Insufficient resources about the complexity of English spatial prepositions.
- The limited number of participants.
- Because of the current situation (COVID 19 pandemic), the researchers opted for only one research tool, as it could have been much suitable and reliable to design a questionnaire or an interview with teachers.

## **Conclusion**

According to the obtained results and to conclude understanding English spatial prepositions that represent a remarkable problematic issue for EFL learners, it can be stated that sophomores are not able to detect the appropriate meanings of the English spatial prepositions " in, on, at, across, over, above, for, from, to", This misunderstanding is related to two major features: the polysemous nature of prepositions and the students' lack of the knowledge of the various meanings of prepositions. Moreover, based on the obtained results from the grammatical test, students show their poor knowledge of the English prepositions as they didn't decipher either the central meaning of the above English spatial prepositions or the other meanings which cause semantic complexity. Reading texts revealed no special effect on facilitating students' comprehension of the semantics of these prepositions.

## **General Conclusion**

This study investigated students' understanding of English spatial prepositions in reading texts. This research work dealt with nine prepositions which are "at, in, on, to, from, across, for, above, and over". The main aim of this research was to spotlight the major factors that account for the difficulty in comprehending English spatial prepositions, in addition to highlighting the most difficult prepositions for EFL learners as well as to check whether providing reading texts will facilitate the understanding of these prepositions.

This research was divided into two chapters, a theoretical and a practical one. Chapter one comprised two sections; the first section focused on the main concepts that relate to the semantic complexity of English spatial prepositions, as defining English prepositions, in general, and English spatial prepositions, in particular, and giving their characteristics. Additionally, it provided the different meanings of the spatial prepositions: "at, in, on, across, for, from, to, above, over", and shed light on semantic complexity and its major factors. The last part was devoted to present the different approaches to teaching English prepositions. The second section dealt with the reading skill. First of all, it provides definitions of reading, reading comprehension, the reading process and its four types. Secondly, it spot light on the models and theories of reading as well as the role of the text.

Correspondingly, the second chapter was concerned with the fieldwork of the research. The data was gathered through the use of a grammar test for the second year (LMD) of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. This was followed by an analysis and interpretation of the results. Hence, the findings obtained through the grammar test showed that EFL learners failed to determine the exact meaning of each

spatial preposition. The results revealed the most difficult spatial prepositions which are: 'above, at, for'. This difficulty was explained or attributed to students' inadequate knowledge of the English prepositions and their meanings or the polysemous nature of the spatial prepositions. More importantly, the participants' performances were nearly the same in all the exercises given; this entails that they had the same difficulties in deciphering the meanings of prepositions either in context while reading or in isolation. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected, in the sense that there is no effect of reading texts on students' comprehension of the semantics of the English spatial prepositions.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendix A: The Students' Test

The present test is a part of a Master dissertation. You are kindly requested to answer the following exercises with full attention. Your answers will be of great significance to bring this research to its end.

*Thank you, in advance, for your collaboration*

**Exercise One:** Choose the appropriate preposition in the following sentences (at, in, on, across, for, above, over, from, to).

1. It's a plane hovering ..... the window.
2. Cover the bed; put the blanket ..... the bed.
3. The party is ..... his house.
4. Why are all those papers ..... the floor?
5. The flowers are ..... the vase.
6. The president Barak Obama lived ..... America.
7. He is..... the kitchen table.
8. She is ..... the corner.
9. We took a ferry ..... the river.
10. We live ten miles..... the beach.
11. I went ..... their house.
12. You can see the island..... here.
13. She had a ring ..... every finger.
14. The nearest bridge is about half mile ..... the fall.
15. The child ..... the Crowd.

**Exercise Two:** Explain the meaning of each preposition **in bold**.

1. She has been **at** her book all the morning.

.....  
2. She swims **across** the river.

.....  
3. The book is **on** the table.

.....  
4. She had photos of all her family **on** the wall.

.....  
5. For the best food try the restaurants **in** Morocco.

.....  
6. She swims **in** the lack.

.....  
7. He took five days to cycle **from** London **to** Edinburgh.

.....  
8. I will meet you **at** the beach.

.....  
9. I am **from** the U. S; we just got home from work.

.....  
10. The captain sailed **to** the closest port.

.....  
11. The plane flew **over** the city.  
.....

12. The boy jumped **over** the fence.

.....

13. Give me the box just **above** the one you are touching now.

.....

14. Apply the medicaments directly **to** the wound so that it heals.

.....

**Exercise Three:** In each sentence below, fill the gap with the appropriate preposition (on, in, at, across, over, above, for, to, from), then explain its meaning.

1. There is nothing..... the fridge.

.....

2. Where is Joe? ..... the kitchen.

.....

3. Wipe the pan with the kitchen roll to removed excess fat ;there is oil.....it.

.....

4. The sight of birds on the bridge is fantastic; the birds are ..... the bridge

.....

5. Maria was .....cloud nine to see her husband back from a long business trip.

.....

6. He threw the ball ..... him and he looked ..... her.

.....

7. He walked ..... the street.

.....

8. I am traveling..... London to visit my family in\_law.

.....

9. I am leaving.....for I got a scholarship to study at Birmingham university.

.....

10. He jumped ..... the wall.

.....

11. Is there anything interesting ..... the paper?

.....

12. The bird is flying ..... the bridge.

.....

13. We don't need to buy oil to fry potatoes; there is oil ..... the pan.

.....

14. A shadow ..... the floor.

.....

**Exercise Four:** Read the following extract and explain the meaning of each preposition **in bold**.

Once upon a time there lived a very poor shoemaker in little shop. He made shoes on his workbench. Before he went **to (1)** bed, he put leather beside his tools. The next morning, when he woke up, he was surprised to see a pair of new shoes **on (2)** the workbench. A rich woman went **in (3)** their shoemaker's shop. The Elves came into the shop by walking under the table. The Elves came in light night because they didn't want the shoemaker went out to see them working on the shoes. When the dawn came, they were already out of the shop ... One night, the shoemaker decided to see who made the shoes, so he hid behind the curtain. The shoemaker's wife sew some clothes for the Elves and she put it on the table. The Elves put in the clothes made by the shoemaker's wife. They were happy and went out **from (4)** the shop and never came back.



- To (1) : .....
- On (2) : .....
- In (3) : .....
- From (4) : .....

## **Appendix B : Model Answer of The Students' Test**

**The present test is a part of a Master dissertation. You are kindly requested to answer the following exercises with full attention. Your answers will be of great significance to bring this research to its end.**

**Thank you, in advance, for your collaboration**

**Exercise one:** Choose the appropriate preposition in the following sentences (at, in, on, across, for, above, over, from, to).

1. It's a plane hovering above the window.
2. Cover the bed; put the blanket over the bed.
3. The party is at his house.
4. Why are all those papers on the floor?
5. The flowers are in the vase.
6. The president Barak Obama lived in America.
7. He is at the kitchen table.
8. She is at the corner.
9. We took a ferry across the river.
10. We live ten miles from the beach.
11. I went to their house.
12. You can see the island from here.

13. She had a ring on every finger.

14. The nearest bridge is about half mile above the fall.

15. The child in the Crowd.

**Exercise two:** Explain the meaning of each preposition in bold.

1. She has been at her book all the morning.

It means that she is sitting on the table for the purpose of reading

2. She swims across the river.

It expresses a Movement from one side to another side.

3. The book is on the table.

It expresses dimensional surface like tables.

4. She had photos of all her family on the wall.

It expresses dimensional surface like wall.

5. For the best food try the restaurants in Morocco.

Expresses for countries and big state.

6. She swims in the lake.

It expresses dimensional spaces like towns and lakes.

7. He took five days to cycle from London to Edinburgh.

It expresses Movement from one place to another.

8. I will meet you at the beach.

This meaning expresses vagueness about the exact place of the TR which is the house.

9. I am from the U. S; we just got home from work.

It expresses a starting point in the first and in the second it expresses a place some one is going to.

10. The captain sailed to the closest port.

Expresses a movement from one place to another place.

11. The plane flew over the city.

It expresses an influence on the inhabitants of the city.

12. The boy jumped over the fence.

It expresses a movement from one side to another side.

13. Give me the box just above the one you are touching now.

It means the box is higher than another and there a total contact between the TR and the LM ( not a direct contact) .

14. Apply the medicaments directly to the wound so that it heals.

When the medicaments and the wound are in direct contact so the wound is not an end for the medicaments.

**Exercise three:** In each sentence below, fill the gap with the appropriate preposition (on, in, at, across, over, above, for, to, from), then explain its meaning.

1. There is nothing in the fridge.

Expresses a dimensional spaces like boxes, rooms.

2. Where is Joe? In the kitchen.

Dimensional spaces like boxes, rooms.

3. Wipe the pan with the kitchen roll to removed excess fat ;there is oil on it.

In this example on It refers to the oil on the surface

4. The sight of birds on the bridge is fantastic; the birds are over the bridge

"Over "expresses that the TR which is the birds is higher than the LM bridge with a contact between them.

5. Maria was on cloud nine to see her husband back from a long business trip.

It expresses an idiomatic expression which is extreme some one happy.

6. He threw the ball at him and he looked at her.

He and she emphasis on the LM for particular aims which is causing pain in the first and showing anger in the second.

7. He walked across the street.

Movement from one side to another.

8. I am traveling to London to visit my family in\_law.

It expresses that the LM is an end in itself.

9. I am leaving for London I got a scholarship to study at Birmingham university.

It expresses a purpose in a planned or calculated way.

10. He jumped over the wall.

It expresses movement from one side to another side

11. Is there anything interesting in the paper?

It expresses

12. The bird is flying above the bridge.

It means that the TR the (bird) is higher than the LM ( the bridge) without a contact between them.

13. We don't need to buy oil to fry potatoes; there is oil in the pan.

In this sentence the oil occupies a volume in the pan.

14. A shadow on the floor.

When there is no support between the TR and the LM and the contact between them is not real.

**Exercise four:** Read the following extract and explain the meaning of each preposition in bold.

Once upon a time there lived a very poor shoemaker in little shop. He made shoes on his workbench. Before he went to (1)bed, he put leather beside his tools. The next morning, when he woke up, he was surprised to see a pair of new shoes on (2)the workbench. A rich woman went in (3)their shoemaker's shop. The Elves came into the shop by walking under the table .The Elves came in light night because they didn't want the shoemaker went out to see them working on the shoes. When the dawn came, they were already out of the shop ...One night, the shoemaker decided to see who made the shoes, so he hid behind the curtain. The shoemaker's wife sew some clothes for the Elves and she put it on the table. The Elves put in the clothes made by the shoemaker's wife .They were happy and went out from (4)the shop and never came back.

To (1) : it expresses an end in itself (bed).

On (2) : expresses a direct contact between the TR (shoes) and the LM ( workbench).

In (3) : when the TR ( rich woman) is inside the LM (shoemaker shop).

From (4) : it expresses place of leaving (shop).

## Résumé:

Cette étude est une analyse pour comprendre la complexité sémantique des prépositions spatiales anglaises (in, on, from, above, to et through). Pour les étudiants de deuxième année de langue anglaise. L'objectif de la présente étude est de connaître les principaux facteurs qui entraînent des difficultés à comprendre les prépositions mentionnées ci-dessus, en plus de vérifier si la lecture facilite et améliore la compréhension et l'utilisation des prépositions par les étudiants. De plus, il met en lumière les prépositions les plus problématiques, et il est supposé que les étudiants de deuxième année du département de Muhammad Al-Siddik Ben Yahia à l'Université de Jijel comprennent mieux la signification sémantique des prépositions spatiales anglaises pour lire les voleurs. Pour tester les hypothèses, la méthode associative a été adoptée en utilisant le test de grammaire pour collecter des données, et le test de grammaire a été distribué à 67 étudiants de la deuxième année. Les données recueillies ont été analysées qualitativement et quantitativement. Les résultats obtenus indiquent que les élèves ont des performances insuffisantes dans la résolution des significations des prépositions spatiales anglaises. La complexité sémantique est causée par

Deux raisons principales sont le manque de connaissance des prépositions et leur nature multi-sens où les étudiants ne peuvent pas identifier le sens approprié et certains autres étudiants ne connaissent pas le sens sémantique de chaque préposition, étant donné ces résultats, les enseignants d'anglais devraient fournir aux apprenants des instructions détaillées sur les différentes significations de chaque préposition dans différents contextes. De plus, les étudiants doivent faire des efforts et des pratiques supplémentaires pour maîtriser les significations et les utilisations appropriées des prépositions.

**Mots-clés :** prépositions spatiales, difficulté du sens sémantique des prépositions, sens sémantique, nature de la polysémie.

## ملخص:

هذه الدراسة عبارة عن تحليل لفهم التعقيد الدلالي لحروف الجر المكانية الإنجليزية (في ، على، من ، فوق ، إلى وغير). لطلاب السنة الثانية لغة انجليزية. الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو معرفة العوامل الرئيسية التي تسبب صعوبة فهم حروف الجر المذكورة أعلاه، بالإضافة إلى التحقق مما إذا كانت القراءة تسهل وتحسن من فهم واستعمال المتعلمين لحروف الجر. علاوة على ذلك، فإنها تسلط الضوء على أكثر حروف الجر إشكالية، ويفترض أن طلاب السنة الثانية في قسم محمد الصديق بن يحيى في جامعة -جيجل- يفهمون المعنى الدلالي لحروف الجر بالانكليزية المكانية أحسن في قراءة اللصوص. لاختبار الفرضيات، تم اعتماد الطريقة الارتباطية من خلال استخدام اختبار القواعد لتجميع البيانات، وتم توزيع الاختبار النحوي على 67 طالبًا من السنة الثانية. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها نوعيا وكميا. تشير النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها إلى أن التلاميذ لديهم نقص الأداء في حل معاني حروف الجر المكانية الانكليزية التعقيد الدلالي ناتج عن سببين رئيسيين هما الافتقار إلى معرفة حروف الجر وطبيعتها متعددة المعاني حيث لا يستطيع التلاميذ تحديد المعنى المناسب وبعض الطلاب الآخرين لا يعرفون المعنى الدلالي لكل حرف جر، نظرا لهذه النتائج يجب على معلمين اللغة الانكليزية أن يزودوا المتعلمين بتعليمات وافرة حول المعاني المختلفة لكل حرف جر في مختلفة السياقات إضافة إلى هذا يجب على المتعلمين أن يبذلوا جهودا وممارسات إضافية لإتقان المعاني والاستخدامات المناسبة لحروف الجر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** حروف الجر المكانية، صعوبة المعنى الدلالي لحروف الجر، المعنى الدلالي، طبيعة تعدد

المعاني.