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**The Relationship between the Teaching of Prepositions and  
Students' Misuses in Correspondence with their  
Communicative Competence  
The Case of Second Year Students of English at Larbi  
Tébessi University -Tébessa**

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## **Abstract**

In view of the dominating perspectives in the 1960 about the purposes of second and foreign language pedagogy, learners' abilities to communicate appropriately and accurately are of an essential concern. Accordingly, the focus has shifted from the supremacy of grammatical structures toward the major effects of the sociolinguistic dimension on learners' communicative competence. This perspective has been overwhelmingly adopted to direct the attention again to the importance of both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in second and foreign language instruction. Correspondingly, this study aims at investigating the role of the teaching of prepositions as one of the most problematic grammatical features, and students' deficiencies when using them to communicate in various situational settings, in relationship with the development of their communicative abilities. In this regard, the study utilized a correlational design applying a mixed method to investigate the relationship between the variables by means of two questionnaires, and a diagnostic test along with a qualitative conventional content analysis conducted on the lessons and exercise handouts. The necessary data was collected from 40 participants (33-second year students and 7 teachers) from the department of English, University of Larbi Tebessi. The results of the diagnostic test significantly evidenced that students fail to choose the correct prepositions even in context-based tasks, and the data gathered from both questionnaires implied that almost all students discard the context when learning or practicing prepositions. The teaching methods do not boost students' abilities to communicate accurately either and teachers do face hardships in implementing the notion of contextualization. These results corroborate our hypotheses and indicate that the sharp absence of practice using context-based materials and the inefficiency of students' learning and practicing habits are the prime reasons for their communicative deficiencies when using prepositions. Finally, the outcomes of this study and its methodological suggestions and guidance should be taken into consideration in the future.

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## Dedication

To my father...

This study is heartily dedicated to the man that taught me the lessons I have never found in books, my father, my guardian angel who stands by me when things look gloomy and depressing, to the man who made me the way I am now; "Thank you" is never enough for him.

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## **Dedication**

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My parents: even if I thank you for your efforts, it is too little to say about you;

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## List of Abbreviations

**BA:** Bachelor of Arts

**CC:** Communicative Competence

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**CP:** Communicative proficiency

**DP:** Difficulties to use preposition

**EFL:** English Foreign Language

**FonF:** Focus on Form

**GC:** Grammatical Competence

**GTM:** Grammar Translation Method

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**PPP:** Present, Practice, and Produce

**SC:** Sociolinguistic Competence

**SL:** Second Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**SLP:** Second Language Pedagogy

**TM:** Teaching Method

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# General Introduction

## 1. Background of the Study

In recent years, many questions have been asked about the adequacy of the teaching methods of foreign languages, mainly English. Howatt (1987) asserted that the teaching of language traditionally had adopted two main perspectives. The first one indicates that language is a system and that the central objective of teaching should consequently be to insure that the system is mastered. In other words, this view has mainly focused on the generality of the linguistic rules and the teaching of “language as a whole” (grammar translation methods) (Howatt, 1987, p. 14). The second view, however, considered language as a set of texts, discourses, and contexts that focused on the teaching methods that rely more on the learners’ needs and interests (situational and communicative language teaching). Throughout the history of English language development, so many applied linguists argued about the issue of language teaching and its objectives until the appearance of the notion of communicative competence, which gave considerable importance to language users’ abilities to communicate rather than to language as a set of structures (linguistic competence). Therefore, there has been a shift towards more communicative based approaches through innovative curricula (Howatt 1987). This change in perspective is based on the idea of how to use foreign languages to transmit and communicate messages effectively in different communicative situations (communicative competence), depending on a set of competencies of which linguistic competence is one but of minor importance compared to the sociocultural competence (and other competencies) (Hymes, 1972). However, the focus in second language learning and teaching should be on developing students’ abilities to function accurately, effectively, and appropriately using a number of competencies of which grammar is an essential concern (Canale and Swain, 1980).

In 1991, Celce-Murcia also emphasised the role of grammar in language teaching, claiming that “grammar interacts with meaning, social function, or discourse-or a combination of these-rather than standing alone as an autonomous system” (p. 459). Accordingly, it is very important and possible to integrate the supremacy of the grammatical rules with social function, discourse, and meaning. For example, the process of teaching the different extended meanings of prepositions necessitates the implementation of different meaningful contexts due to the difficulties and confusion that they may cause to foreign and second language learners if learnt in isolation. Thereby, in 2016, Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia stated that prepositions are notoriously difficult to learn due to their polysemous nature. Therefore, it is quite essential to implement a more context (meaning)-based approach to facilitate the learning of such problematic grammatical forms.

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

It is clearly noticeable that many second year students face multiple grammatical difficulties when they attempt to use English in different communicative settings, especially when they use prepositions in writing. As stated earlier, prepositions are problematic due to their multi-functional uses (Yule, 1998), which makes them a suffering spot for second year students of English at the University of Larbi Tebessi - Tebessa (the Department of English Language). For instance, students fail to decide whether to write *I am in the university* or *I am at the university*, in which their choice must totally depend on the presented context. They also fail to use many other confusing ones, including the most commonly used prepositions’ (in, on, at, to, by, from, of, with) extended meanings though they may know the uses of each preposition in theory.

The issue raised here is that despite the fact that students are acquainted with the rules in terms of theory, their grammatical communicative abilities remain questionable in practice. Therefore, in this research project, researchers are attempting to investigate teaching and

learning habits when it comes to prepositions to get a clear idea about their appropriateness and fitness to the learners' needs and deficiencies. They also aim at casting light on the necessity to bring a communicative context-based dimension to grammar teaching in order to improve students' skills and abilities in applying prepositions accurately in meaningful communicative contexts.

### **3. Research Questions**

To regulate and facilitate the investigation, the following questions are kept track of:

- 1) Are students aware of the importance of practicing prepositions in a more communicative, interactive setting?
- 2) Are students capable of linking the knowledge of the theoretical rules of prepositions with their applications in contextualized tasks?
- 3) Are the methods used in teaching prepositions at the Department of Foreign Languages Tebessa University effective in terms of practice in communicative situations?
- 4) Do students consider or discard the communicative purposes behind the exercises when they attempt to solve them?

### **4. Research Hypotheses and Assumptions**

This study project focuses on raising students' awareness about their misuses of prepositions and on the importance of teaching their theoretical rules in relation to various contexts. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- 1) If teachers and students depend on practice the same way they do on theory and use communicative-based methods to teach different prepositions, then students' communicative proficiency will be quite satisfactory.



- 2) If students are able to match the conceptual rules of prepositions with their corresponding applications in multiple situations, they will successfully achieve their communicative purposes.

To fulfill the objectives of this research, the assumptions are that:

- 1) The lack of practice considering real world situations and the ways in which prepositions are learned are the primary reasons behind students' failure in using them accurately.
- 2) When students try to practice prepositions' use, they consider only their notional rules and they overlook the communicative message of the task due to the absence of contextualization in theoretical sessions.

## **5. Aim of the Study**

In the present search, the aim is to raise the question of the ineffectiveness of the methods used in teaching prepositions and the absence of practicing prepositions' use in communicative contextualized settings. This research also aims at investigating students' ability to make the link between acquiring theoretical rules of prepositions, as a multi-function grammatical form, and applying them in real communicative written tasks. Its main purpose is to investigate the teaching and learning habits (the teaching of prepositions and students' practicing habits and missuses) and their relationship with the students' communicative competence.

## **6. Methodology and Research Tools**

In order to meet the aforementioned aims, this study utilized a mixed method that allies the analysis of statistical and narrative data so that the results of one assist in developing or informing the results of the other, in a non-experimental correlational design perspective. This design is adapted to investigate the relationship between the teaching of prepositions and students' misuses in correspondence with students communicative

proficiency. The data necessary for investigating the stated hypotheses and assumptions were gathered by means of two questionnaires and a diagnostic test designed, respectively, for teachers and a randomly chosen sample of thirty-three second year students in the Department of Letters and English Language, the University Larbi Tebessi, in addition to a qualitative content analysis of the lessons' documents about prepositions.

## **7. Population and Sampling**

The target population in this project is second year students of English at the University Larbi Tebessi, which approximates to 108 individuals, in addition to former and present-time teachers of Grammar and Written Expression at the Department of English of the same university, and they are eight teachers. The total sample size in this research work is 41 participants: 08 teachers and 33 second year, License degree students.

## **8. Structure of the Study**

This research was conducted to identify the main reasons behind the deficiencies in students' capabilities to use prepositions; it was also an attempt to investigate the relationship between those deficiencies and the instruction methods used to teach grammar, mainly prepositions, considering the students communicative skills. The study as a whole comprised two chapters. The first one is devoted to the review of the literature related to communicative competence, grammar, and prepositions, and it is divided into two sections. Section one is devoted to looking at the notion of communicative competence since it is closely related to the field of communicative language teaching. Some of the definitions of communicative competence are also considered, alongside the way in which this competence has been interpreted and implemented in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. This section also explores the role of communicative approaches in language teaching and learning. Section two focuses on grammar in general and the most problematic prepositions and their ambiguous uses in particular; examples and interpretations were provided.

The second chapter is dedicated to the description of the methodological procedures followed during the fieldwork of this research. It included two sections; the first one being a description of the research method and design followed and the investigation tools used to collect data from the targeted sample. The second section covers the results obtained, data analysis, and discussion. Finally, the researchers provided a general conclusion including a summary of the main findings and further recommendation that require future research.

# **Chapter One: Grammatical Competence as an Important Component in Communicative Competence and Language Instruction**

## **Introduction**

Language pedagogy has been developing since the 1940s owing to the contributions of many applied linguists. At first, it was a version of system-based structuralism that gives a total importance to the linguistic system of language. By the middle of the twentieth century, a new notion emerged and directed the focus of language pedagogy to communication, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the language used, giving grammatical structures a minor role. Later on, many applied linguists (Widdowson, 1978; Canale and Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) adopted the notion (communicative competence) to develop a language teaching approach that ensures both the accuracy and the appropriateness of the language used for communication. They asserted that structural forms are of essential role for learners to develop their communicative skills. Therefore, this chapter covers the development of the communicative approach to language instruction and its effects on the teaching of prepositions as multi-meaning grammatical forms. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the development of the notion of communicative competence along with the communicative approach. While the second section focuses on grammar, in general, and the most problematic prepositions and their ambiguous uses in particular; furthermore, examples and recommended communicative-based approaches to teach grammar will be provided.

## **1.1. Section One: Communicative Competence and Language Instruction**

### **1.1.1 Communicative Competence Defined**

In the 1960s, communicative competence has emerged in one of the applied linguistics' studies about language and communication. Since then the concept of

communicative competence (CC) has gained the attention of many applied linguists and pedagogues who tried to provide a refined version of the concept. The term first appeared in the anthropological linguist Dell Hymes's lecture presented at the Research Planning Conference on Language Development among Disadvantaged Children that was published as a paper entitled 'On Communicative Competence', in 1966. Later on, many scholars adopted his views to further develop them in order to fit or to be more applicable to second language pedagogy (SLP). In other words, his notion became the theoretical background of a new language teaching and learning approach.

Communicative competence is a two-part combination that denotes "a competence to communicate" (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007, p. 94). The central word in the combination is *competence*, which is a very tendentious term in the field of general and applied linguistics (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007, p.94). Chomsky (1965/2015) presented the term *competence* in his "fundamental distinction between competence (speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)" (p.4). This distinction is based on Chomsky's believed abstraction that linguistic competence is the basis of the methodology for studying language as he presented in his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (2015). Therefore, competence for him is the learners' intrinsic knowledge of language grammatical rules and structures (p.4).

Widdowson (1978) asserted that the ability to produce sentences is an essential feature but still it is not the only required ability. He proposed that one's knowledge of language should be all about how to comprehend and produce (written or spoken) sentences. More importantly, it should be about how to use those sentences to achieve an effective communication (p.1). Moreover, he stated that a competent user of English must not possess only the ability to build and understand correct sentences as isolated linguistic units but she/he should also possess the ability to determine the appropriate use of those sentences in

the target context (p.2). In other words, he believes that the learning of a language depends on both the ability to construct correct sentences (*usage*) -“knowledge of the grammatical roles” (p.3) and the ability to manifest the sentences in different situations (*use*) -“to achieve some kind of communicative purpose” (p.3).

Simply saying, Widdowson (1978) defined communicative competence with particular emphasis on language usage and use, where ‘usage’ refers to learners’ knowledge of the linguistic rules, and ‘use’ refers to learners’ ability to use their knowledge of the linguistic rules to develop their interactive skills and capacities so that they use language appropriately in different contextual communicative settings (p.3).

Hymes (1972) initiated the term *communicative competence* as a counteraction to Chomsky’s notion of ‘linguistic competence’ (the explicit knowledge of language grammatical patterns), in which he restricted competence to homogeneous community, perfect knowledge, and nearly neglected all the socio-cultural aspects related to language. Accordingly, he stated: “a major characteristic of modern linguistics has been that it takes structure as primary end in itself, and tends to depreciate use” (p.272). For Hymes (1972), communicative competence (CC) is the ability to use grammatical competence (GC) in a variety of communicative contexts with a mere assertion on the sociocultural dimension. In other words, it is the ability to use language to transmit and communicate messages appropriately in different situations and for different purposes without a total emphasis on grammar.

In 1972, Savignon also defined communicative competence as the ability to function accurately and effectively in truly communicative settings. She claimed that linguistic competence must be adaptive to the contextual features of a given piece of information with emphasis on both the linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of language. For her a persons’ ability to communicate in different occasions does not depend solely on grammatical

competence (GC); it also depends on the factors that govern the surrounding circumstances of a given communicative function (Savignon, 1972, as cited in Bagarić V & Mihaljević Djigunović J, 2007, p.96). According to Savignon and others (e.g. Canale and Swain, 1980), CC is not static but dynamic; it is more about the social and interactive relations between individuals than the internal knowledge within the mind of an individual. In simple terms, it is relative rather than absolute. Moreover, she believes that performance is the only way to enhance and measure competence (Savignon, 1972, as cited in Bagarić V & Mihaljević Djigunović J, 2007, p.96).

Canale and Swain (1980) asserted that communicative competence is the set of competencies used to achieve a successful and effective communication. In other words, it is the combination of knowledge and skills required for communication. They believe that knowledge is the basic systems of language and language use, and skill is the ability to use knowledge in actual communication. They divided their concept of communicative competence into (1) grammatical competence (the knowledge of grammatical rules of language), (2) sociolinguistic competence (SC) (the capability to use language in a social context in order to accomplish communication), and (3) strategic competence (verbal and non-verbal, and mental communication strategies). Canale (1983) further added to the concept a fourth competence, which is (4) discourse competence (the ability to combine grammar and meaning to write or speak for different purposes). With Swain, they attempted to clarify those components to facilitate their application in second language pedagogy (1980).

Based on the previously mentioned definitions, we understand that communicative competence is all about one's ability to communicate and to transmit messages effectively in different situations, depending on the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed for communication. Therefore, it is the whole set of competencies, rules, regularities, and

abilities that governs the accurateness, the effectiveness, and the appropriateness of an actual communication in real life situations (performance).

### **1.1.2 Communicative Competence in the Literature**

The appearance of this notion of communicative competence initiated a long-term debate between different applied linguists who are interested in the field of second and foreign language teaching and learning (Ahmed & Pawar, 2018). Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) modified and refined Hymes's notion of CC to create a theoretical framework that is clear, acceptable, and well-founded and to investigate its implication on second and foreign language teaching, learning, and testing. The development of this notion was and still is the main concern of many scholars due to its importance and role in the development of language pedagogy. In the following parts, we will discuss the different views related to CC and how it affected the instruction of different components of language.

#### **1.1.2.1 Hymes's Notion of Communicative Competence**

The formal linguist Noam Chomsky (2015) claimed that the surrounding social factors are out of the considerations of linguistics, considering his view of linguistic competence. For Chomsky, linguistic competence is the set of rules and structures that describe sound systems, and combine sounds into morphemes and morphemes into sentences. These elements of the underlying system of linguistic competence are the pillar that allows persons to produce an unlimited number of accurate forms in a language. However, in 1972 Hymes gave a great importance to the social factors affecting language. He claimed that "social life has affected not merely outward performance, but inner competence itself" (Hymes, 1972, p.274). He also extensively stressed that individuals should take into account not only linguistic competence (grammar) but also the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts (sociolinguistic competence) because he simply believes that the rules of grammar are useless without the impact of socio-cultural factors on language use (p.278).



Another important support to Hymes previous claims is language acquisition and language use; he insisted that language rules are directly bond to context while Chomsky (2015) claimed that they are not. Namely, Chomsky had asserted that an innate mechanism is enough for first language acquisition (p.47). Simply saying, he insists on the idea that social environment and interaction are not essential in the process of language acquisition and he rather supports innateness and individuals' predisposition to learn language (p. 25).

According to Hymes (1972), a normal child does not only acquire knowledge of language as grammatical but also as appropriate: "He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277). In brief, Hymes (1972) confirms that knowledge of language structure and socio-cultural roles are both important in language acquisition due to his belief that linguistic competence alone is not sufficient to explain the child's competence to accomplish communicative needs (p. 287).

Another important factor that Hymes considered in his notion of CC is Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance in his linguistic theory. For Chomsky (2015) competence is the perfect knowledge that refers to the mastery of the abstract system of rules, which enables a person to understand and produce all kinds of well-structured sentences in his language while performance is the actual use of language affected by grammaticality and identified with the criterion of acceptability (p. 10-11). Accordingly, Hymes reviewed the notion of acceptability to suit all kinds of performances and communicative functions, considering different socio-cultural aspects. Furthermore, Hymes asserted that in CC there are several sectors to be assessed, one of which is grammaticality. He also believed that actual communication is a behavior that is governed by a system of rules "reflected in the judgments and abilities of those whose messages the behavior manifests" (Hymes, 1972, p. 281).

Based on the previously mentioned beliefs, Hymes (1972) concluded that “if an adequate theory of language users and language use is to be developed ... and if a linguistic theory is to be integrated with theory of communication and culture” (p. 281) judgments and abilities must be classified into four types and not only acceptability and grammaticality. In other words, in the process of assessing language as a communicative system, Hymes (1972) asks four questions (p.281):

- 1- Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
- 2- Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- 3- Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
- 4- Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails.

In sum, Hymes believed that there should be four main judgments or parameters to assess the effectiveness of language as a communicative system, which integrates both the linguistic and the cultural dimensions. These elements are explained in the following parts.

- **Grammaticality and Acceptability of Formal Possibility**

Grammaticality is the central concern of the linguistic theory presented by Chomsky. It is all about the awareness and the mastery of the rules of the underlying system of linguistic competence (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics). These rules are the parameters that allow a person to produce an unlimited number of well-formulated, acceptable statements in a specific language. Therefore, Hymes maintained that for the openness and potentiality of language and for its integration with culture, grammaticality is

essential. In addition, he assumed that if something is possible within a formal system as language then it is grammatical, cultural, or occasionally communicative (Hymes, 1972, p.284)

- **Feasibility**

Feasibility or feasibility is not limited to the set of structures and rules that enables a person to construct an unlimited number of grammatically correct sentences. Instead, it is related to psycholinguistic factors like memory limitations, perception, comprehension, and language properties, such as nesting, embedding, and branching (Hymes, 1972, p.285). For instance, a sentence like ‘I thought a thought but the thought I thought I thought was not the thought I thought I thought’ seems to be very grammatical but it can neither be easily uttered nor easily understood.

Hymes (1972) also believed that cultural and communicative levels (body features, surrounding environment, and communicative implications) are essential in order to consider something feasible. Namely, the mental, physical, and social statuses of an individual are important, when judging the feasibility of something (p.285).

- **Appropriateness**

The aspect of appropriateness is merely presented in the previously mentioned linguistic theory of Chomsky; it is slightly apparent under the notions of performance and acceptability. According to Hymes, appropriateness is used in relation to cultural anthropology and language. In other words, it is related to the conventions, norms, and regularities that govern the language used by individuals in a given society due to the fact that they have a lot in common, like experiences, cultural background, and linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. It is essential to highlight that in everyday life people are not always using well-structured sentences but meaning still is conveyed. By contrast, in a more formal context, well-structured sentences are required. Therefore, situations are the key element to

determine what is appropriate and what is not. For example, telling jokes in a family gathering is highly appropriate while in another situation such as a funeral, it may be quite grammatical, feasible, and may occur but it is hardly appropriate (Hymes, 1972, p. 285-286).

- **Probability and Actual Performance**

Hymes (1972) stated that the study of CC could not be totally bound to occurrences or totally free of its probabilities due to two reasons: first, structures change according to different situations and circumstances; second, language users' abilities do involve knowledge of properties of occurrences and shifts in them as markers of style and response. He stipulated that "something may be possible, feasible, and appropriate and not occur" (Hymes, 1972, p. 286). For instance, the expression "I sentence you to death penalty" may be actually performed by a judge in the court but not by an ordinary person in an everyday-life situation. It is simply not done. In brief, things do not occur haphazardly; they are strongly bound to the factors that dominate in different situations, like formality, politeness, and causality (p.286).

Hymes (1972) concluded: "In sum, the goal of a broad theory of competence can be said to be to show the ways in which the systemically possible, the feasible, and the appropriate are linked to produce and interpret actually occurring cultural behavior" (p. 286). He strongly asserts that a person who possesses the ability to manifest all the four aspects is competent and possesses the ability to produce possible, feasible, appropriate communicative acts that occur in different situations or contexts.

### **1.1.2.2 Canale and Swain's Notion of Communicative Competence**

As mentioned before, Canale and Swain (1980) proposed their framework of CC in an attempt to further develop Hymes's assumptions about the concept. They agreed with his notion of sociolinguistic competence because they also believed that social environment and cultural factors are important in the process of language acquisition and learning. However,

they paid more attention to the role of grammatical competence in the effectiveness of actual communication. Accordingly, they stated that “we have so far adopted the term 'communicative competence' to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use” (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.6).

Furthermore, they both asserted that grammatical competence (GC) is an essential component of CC regardless of the conflicting views about the issue. Since 1970, many applied-linguists disputed about the supposition that CC is exclusively bond to the capabilities related to the rules of language use and GC is merely related to the rules of grammar. However, many others like Munby (1978), and Canale and Swain (1980) proclaimed that CC includes GC (as cited in Canale and Swain, 1980, p.5).

Because of Hymes’s belief, (1972), that “There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p.278), Canale and Swain (1980) maintained that some rules of language use might be useless without the high command of grammatical rules. In other words, the effectiveness of communication cannot solely depend on sociolinguistic competence. For example, they declared:

One may have an adequate level of sociolinguistic competence in Canadian French just from having developed such a competence in Canadian English; but without some minimal level of grammatical competence in French, it is unlikely that one could communicate effectively with a monolingual speaker of Canadian French. (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.5).

Simply stated, they asserted that the study of CC should focus on the relationship between regularities in GC and regularities in SC. Therefore, the theory of CC would be stronger with the underlying set of competencies on which it is based (SC, GC, and others) (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.8). In addition, they emphasized the idea that utterances

produced in a certain communicative setting are combined, controlled, and evaluated via a set of strategies, which they called *strategic competence* (Canale and Swain, 1980). In sum, there is no doubt that CC cannot be only restricted to one of the embodied competencies under it because it is an interconnected system of regularities that operates together to achieve a successful and effective communication.

In the light of what is previously mentioned, Canale (1983) pointed that the language that is used for communication is the product of complex interactional processes. These processes are interrelated procedures of negotiation and evaluation (p.1). Consequently, CC is build up through different procedures that are responsible for the construction and evaluation of actual communication (the realization of the internal knowledge of CC in different real situations).

Canale (1983) seemed to believe that it is very important to distinguish between CC and actual communication so that a person can better understand how to manifest his or her abilities and capacities in real situations (p.6). Thus, CC is claimed to be “the underlying systems of knowledge and skills required for communication (e.g. knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the sociolinguistic conventions for a given language)” (Canale and Swain 1980, as cited in Canale, 1983, p.5). In other terms, this competence is a person’s internal stock of knowledge about the rules, structures, conventions, and skills or abilities that governs the system of his or her language while actual performance is the realization or the manifestation of that knowledge in real life situations, under the control of various psychological and environmental factors such as perception, comprehension, nervousness, and distraction (Canale, 1983, p.5). We definitely agree with the idea that a person’s ability to communicate using a given language is based on a set of components and it is not limited to an individual competence. Moreover, successful communication is the only proof of a well-developed abilities and competences

In 1980, Canale and Swain proposed an outline for communicative competence that is composed of three components: GC, SC, and strategic competence. In 1983, Canale extended the outline to a fourth component, which is discourse competence. Their framework is designed to describe the content and the boundaries of those components.

- **Grammatical Competence**

The essence of this competence is assumed to involve the mastery of the language code itself. Hence, it encompasses patterns and rules of the language system such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, and spelling (morphology, syntax, sentence grammar, semantics, and phonology). In simple terms, GC is all about the knowledge and skills needed for comprehension and the accurate expressions of literal meaning of utterances. Therefore, this competence is expected to be an essential aspect in the process of second language pedagogy despite the fact that there is still no accurate theory of grammar that is directed towards language pedagogy (Canale, 1983).

- **Sociolinguistic Competence**

According to Canale and Swain (1980, p.30), this competence contains both socio-cultural rules and rules of discourse. In 1983, Canale separated these sets of rules and focused on each one alone. For him the first mentioned set is concerned with the appropriateness of the utterances produced in different contexts. Appropriateness is directly linked to a set of contextual features including the topic, the participants' status, the surrounding circumstances, and the norms or conventions that govern the interaction. Moreover, SC is more precisely bond to the appropriateness of both meaning and form. First, the appropriateness of meaning is related to the extent to which specific communicative forces (promise, warning, prediction, and request), attitudes, and thoughts (politeness and formality) are suitable in a defined situation or occasion. For example, it would be inappropriate to ask a woman to stop crying in her husband's funeral no matter how the expression is formulated or

said. Second, appropriateness of form examines the suitability of a certain meaning (communicative function, attitude, register, and style) that is produced by a distinctive grammatical form in a particular situation. For instance, when greeting someone in an extreme formal situation, an employee in an official meeting might say “Hey, dude, whatcha been doing?” instead of “Good morning, Sir. How are you?” It will be a very inappropriate expression even if it is grammatical.

- **Discourse Competence**

In 1983, Canale added this component; it depicts a person’s ability to join both grammatical forms and meaning to create a unified spoken or written discourse in different genres. There are numerous types of genres including written narratives, instructional documents, business letters, political articles and speeches, and many other types of texts. The unity of any type of text is mainly dependent on both cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. First, Cohesion focuses on the structures by which utterances are linked to facilitate the interpretations of texts. For illustration, the function of the use of cohesion devices such as deixis, pronouns, synonyms, different pronunciation markers, and conjunctions is to connect single utterances and to facilitate the comprehension of the text. Second, coherence refers to the connections between different levels of meanings (literal meanings, communicative forces, attitudes, and inferences) within a single text. In sum the interaction of both GC (cohesion) and SC (coherence) is what preserves the unity of a specific discourse.

- **Strategic Competence**

In 1983 Canale introduced this competence as the indication of the mastery of the verbal, non-verbal, and mental strategies that are required in the communicative process, for two reasons: first, to face downfalls in communication due to the lack of capacities to manifest knowledge in actual communication or due to incompetency in one of the skills needed for communication. For example, a temporary inability to express certain thought due



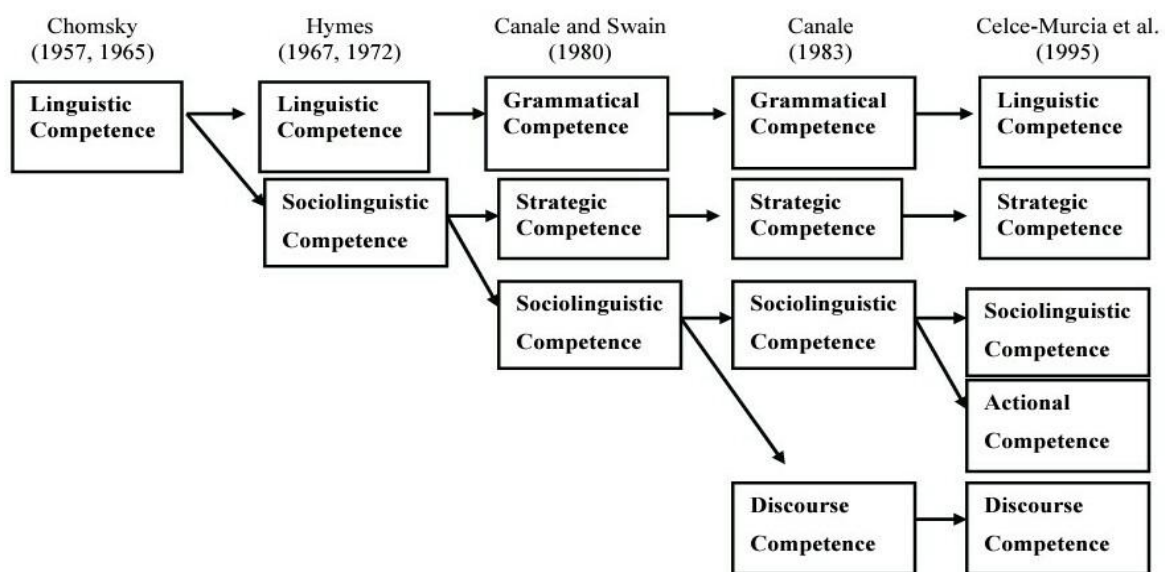
to lack of vocabulary or the inability to remember a certain grammatical form (the use of memory-related strategy may help the retrieval information). Second, this competence guarantees the successfulness of the communication, such as the use of slow and soft speech and different levels of intonation for rhetoric purposes or the use of simple language, purposely, when writing is very suitable to ensure the clarity of the written material. One effective strategy to use when a learner does not remember a specific rule or a suitable word to express an idea is paraphrase. For example if a learner does not know the expression ‘my journey back home’, he or she may use instead ‘the pathway to my hometown’. Such strategies are not only concerned with resolving grammatical problems. However, in actual communication learners need strategies to deal with problems of sociolinguistic nature (e.g. how to address strangers when unsure of their social status) and of discourse nature (e.g. how to achieve coherence in a text when unsure of cohesion devices). In sum, the strategies related to strategic competence are very essential to be implemented in the teaching-learning process. The mastery of these strategies assures the effectiveness of the communication process whether in written or spoken discourse; in addition, they enhance students’ confidence in their abilities to communicate.

### **1.1.2.3 Contributions to Communicative Competence**

Canale, Swain, and many other applied linguists adopted Hymes’s terminology and perspective about his notion of CC to develop a theoretical justification for a new language teaching approach and materials, which match the goal of second language (SL) teaching that is the development of learners’ ability to communicate. The previously explained framework is designed and elaborated to meet the regularities of language teaching and assessment (Celce-Murcia, 2008, p.42).

In 1995, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell also proposed a new component that should be included in the notion of communicative competence, which is actional

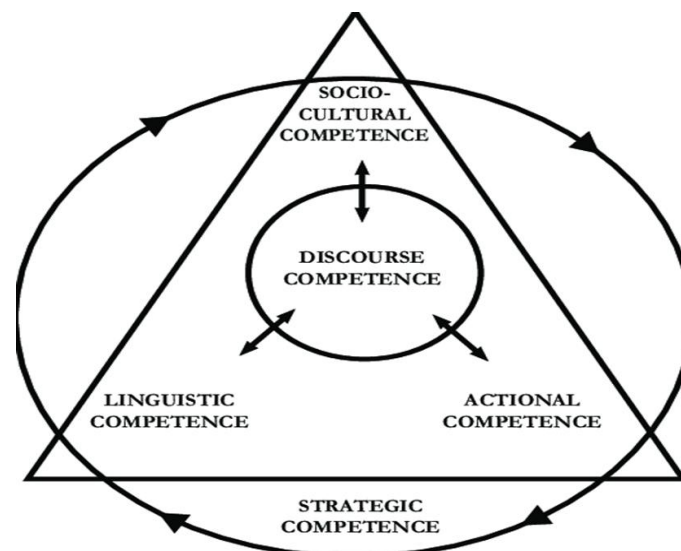
competence. According to Celce-Murcia et al., actional competence “is conceptualized as competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent by performing and interpreting speech acts and speech act sets ” (p.9). They also modified the names of two of the components proposed in Canale’s framework. First, they changed sociolinguistic competence to be socio-cultural competence (ones’ knowledge of how to transmit messages appropriately in different social and cultural contexts of communication, in relation to the pragmatic features associated with the variations of language use.). Second, they re-labeled grammatical competence to be linguistic competence again so that they can denote unambiguously that this component involve phonology, morphology, and syntax (p.11). This historical development of the notion of CC is summarized in the following figure:



**Figure 1: Chronological Evolution of Communicative Competence (Celce-Murcia, 2008, p. 43)**

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) also emphasized the role of CC in language teaching. They also supported the idea that the components of CC are interrelated and it is very important to understand each component and to properly describe the nature of the relations between these components. For this purpose, they presented “Figure 2” below.

The model is a pyramid including a circle and enclosed by another one. The circle inside the pyramid is the main or the core competence. In the three angles of the triangle, we find the top-down socio-cultural competence and the bottom-up linguistic competence and actional competence. The arrows demonstrate the interactional process between the components of CC. This construct allocated discourse competence in the central position to show how the lexico-grammatical resources, the actional organizing skills, and the socio-cultural context formulate the discourse. The circle enclosing the pyramid is strategic competence, which is described by Celce-Murcia as an inventory of communicative, cognitive, and meta-cognitive strategies that permit interlocutors to transmit meaning and face obstacles or compensate for deficiencies in any of the other competencies. Therefore, it guaranties the effectiveness of communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p.9)



**Figure.2: Schematic Representation of Communicative Competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 10)**

### **1.1.3 Communicative Competence and Language Pedagogy**

#### **1.1.3.1 The Nature of Communication**

The main goal of the previously presented framework of CC is to understand the basic skills and abilities that facilitate actual communication. Therefore, it is very essential to

understand the nature of communication and its characteristics. Breen and Candlin (1980), Morrow (1977) and Widdowson (1978) believe that communication has the following characteristics (as cited in Canale, 1983, p.3-4):

- a. It is a kind of social interaction and it is consequently learned in social interaction.
- b. Communicated forms and messages include a high level of unpredictability and creativity.
- c. It comes in a form of discourse and socio-cultural contexts that provide restrictions on appropriate language use and hints that stimulate correct interpretations of utterances
- d. It is affected by internal and external factors such as memory limitations, fatigue and distractions.
- e. It holds a specific function, for example to make social relations, to request, or apologies.
- f. It is based on authenticity as opposed to textbook-contrived language. Moreover, authenticity reduces uncertainty.
- g. It is judged as appropriate and successful or not on the basis of the message delivery and actual outcomes.
- h. It is the transmission and the negotiation of information through the use of different mechanisms and processes such as verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual modes, and production and comprehension.
- i. Ruesch (1951), Haley (1963), and Hymes (1972) supposed that the communicated information comprises conceptual, socio-cultural, affective compositions of ideas and thoughts. Moreover, Haley (1963) asserted that this information is regularly changing and developing due to the effect of specific factors like the surrounding circumstances, the choice of language patterns and non-verbal behavior (as cited in Canale, 1983, p.4).

### 1.1.3.2 Guiding Principles for a Communicative Approach

The above-discussed perspectives about CC are intended to be operated on second language teaching and testing, considering the following five guiding principles:

- a. Coverage of competence areas:** CC mainly includes four sectors of knowledge and skill, namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. It is clearly notable that there is no proof for the supposition that grammatical competence is very essential and necessary for effective and successful communication than it is sociolinguistic, discourse or strategic competence. The main objective of a communicative approach should be to encourage the integration of these classifications of knowledge for the learner throughout a second language-teaching program, without a total emphasis on one competence over the other (Canale, 1983, p.18).
- b. Communication needs:** Learners' communicative needs and interests are the main concern of the communicative approach. These needs must be specified according to the components of communicative competence, for example the degree of grammatical correctness (grammatical competence). The needs related to the topic, situation or circumstances, and communicative forces (sociolinguistic competence), the different types of texts (discourse competence), and the verbal and non-verbal compensatory communication strategies needed to face fall down in the process of communication (strategic competence). Moreover, it is very important to base the communicative approach on the second language aspects that are particularly common to the students' interests and wants (Canale, 1983, p.18).
- c. Meaningful and realistic interaction:** The learners of a second language must have enough chances to take part in meaningful interaction with quite capable speakers of the language, in response to the needs and concerns of genuine communication in

lifelike second language situations. This essence is essential not only to the classroom activities (competence) but it is also very crucial to the testing process (performance) (Canale, 1983). In other words, it is demanded to test students' skills in a realistic communicative settings (Carroll, 1961 as cited in Canale and Swain, 1980). Accordingly, Clark (1972) highlighted the disadvantages of measuring communication skills through indirect pencil-and-paper, tape-recorded listening and speaking tests, claiming that it does not permit learners to use their communicative abilities. He also claimed that those types of tests do not provide the required psychological and instructional impact, as do the authentic and meaningful communicative-based testing tasks (as cited in Canale, 1983, p.18-19).

- d. The learner's native language skills:** the learners' communicative skills that are required through the constant use of their native language are very important to be used at the early stages when learning a second language (SL), especially if they are common ones to the second language communication skills. It is very consequential that the more arbitrary and less universal features of communication in the second language (e.g. grammatical forms and vocabulary) should be delivered and exercised in the context of less arbitrary and more universal features, for example the basic sociolinguists' conditions like appropriateness and politeness in making a request or greeting a peer (Canale, 1983, p.19).
- e. Curriculum-wide approach:** it is believed that a curriculum-wide approach is crucial in the process of second language teaching because it facilitates the integration of the knowledge of second language, the knowledge of language culture, and the knowledge of language in general. Therefore, the principle goal of a communication-oriented second language programme should be based on the experiences required to construct and develop their communicative abilities and needs in the second language.

Furthermore, in the first language, programme learners are taught mainly about language (although not exclusively). For instance, they are taught basic grammatical categories, communicative functions, appropriateness conditions, rules of discourse, and registers. Another important factor to be considered in the SL learning and teaching programme is the cultural dimension. Therefore, learners should learn about the sociocultural knowledge of the second language nation so that they can draw inferences about the different meanings and significations of different verbal and nonverbal signs (Canale, 1983, p.19).

## **1.2 Section Two: Communicative Approaches and Grammar Teaching**

### **1.2.1. Grammar as a Language Component**

Grammar and language are inseparable units because they have an intrinsic relationship in which they complete each other. Language, as Sweet (2014) defines it, is the transformation of thoughts from humans' minds into phonemes, morphemes, and sentences. He defines grammar from two different perspectives, theoretical and practical, as "the science of language" (p. 1) and as "the art of language" (p. 4). It is quite sure that language is one of the most prominent features of human nature, mainly the ability to communicate using language. Brown, in 2004, stated that grammar is the science that enables speakers to realize the correct speech form and the wrong one by following certain rules. Ideas can be expressed by sounds, words, or sentences, which are connected together according to rules (Brown, 2004).

Sweet (2014) assumed that the main role of grammar is to describe facts of language, which is the so-called "descriptive grammar" (p. 1). For example, the verb 'make' is in the present simple while 'made' is in the past simple. Sweet (2014) stated that the clarity and correctness of language is explained through what is called "the explanatory grammar" (p. 2); he assumed that this latter goes through three main methods to explain language. The first is

“historical grammar” (p.2), which explains language by relating it back to its development throughout time, taking the example of the verb ‘went’ which is originated in the Old English by the verb ‘wend’. The second is “comparative grammar” (p.2), and he referred to it as the comparison between languages that are from the same family tree in terms of grammar rules (Sweet, 2014, p. 2). The last one is “general grammar” (p.3) that is subjected to the universal principles of grammar that govern all languages. He gave an example of reduplication of words like ‘small-small’ that means ‘very tiny’. Furthermore, Sweet emphasized that the aim of grammar is to master speaking and writing of other languages but mother tongue (Sweet, 2014). This leads us to say that in order to communicate effectively in any foreign language, there must be a mastery of its grammar.

#### **1.2.1.1. The Concept of Grammar**

Grammar is a broad concept that has been developed throughout time; many scholars have defined it differently. Huddleston (1984) referred to the notion of grammar as a combination of ‘form’ and ‘meaning’, which can be obtained and analyzed from language. According to him, grammar is the description of language. Thornbury (1999) defined grammar as the study of the linguistic rules and conventions mainly phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics that build up sounds, words, sentences, and meanings. The same idea was discussed by Williams (2005), who stated that “grammar is the formal study of the structure of language and describes how words fit together in meaningful constructions” (p. 3).

The second view did not oppose the previous definitions, but it added a missing or a neglected point, which is the context or the situation in which those forms and structures are constructed; Larsen-Freeman (2009) assumed that grammar is a matter of pedagogy. In other words, all theories of grammar should be included in teaching any language. She added: “It is a system of meaningful structures and patterns that are governed by particular pragmatic



constraints” (p. 521). The three main constructions of grammar that are form, use, and meaning need to be communicated in a felicitous written or spoken context that is the so-called *pragmatics* (Larsen- Freeman, 2009). Grammar is more than a collection of rules and it is more than description; it is the key to master a foreign language, especially if it is taught via a communication-based atmosphere.

#### **1.2.1.2. Grammar Instruction**

“Grammar instruction is a part of language teaching” (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 459). From this quote, one can understand that grammar rules of any language should be learned through instruction. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to follow certain methods of teaching grammar; these instructions vary from one teacher to another.

Thornbury (1999) claimed that there are two main approaches to teach grammar; the Deductive Approach, which is teaching grammar based on rules, and the Inductive Approach, which is teaching grammar based on examples. Larsen-Freeman (2009) referred to them as the explicit and the implicit methods of teaching. Thornbury (1999) also stated that teachers who use the former approach introduce the rules first, and then they give illustrations related to them. For example, a teacher may present the following rule ‘the preposition ‘for’ is used to express purpose’ then provide the following illustration ‘we go to a library for the sake of knowledge’. However, in the second approach, the teacher presents the examples first then he gives the learners a chance to indicate the regulations from them. In the previous example, ‘we go to a library for the sake of knowledge’, learners may ask the question: “What does ‘for’ express?” It indicates purpose. Thornbury (1999) declared that the Deductive Approach has a relation with Grammar Translation Method, through which teachers in EFL classrooms present the rules using the mother language to explain them. He also maintained some of the negative and positive sides of both methods. For the Explicit Approach, it is helpful to teach many rules in a short time; in addition, teachers are going to tackle the main patterns of

language so that learners will be able to use them later on. The most problematic issue in the Deductive Approach is that learners will rely only on teachers as a language source without involving their mental abilities. Another negative point is that learners are no longer interacting with each other. Moreover, it raises the assumption that rules are of greater significance than meaning. Moving to the Implicit Method, it helps students to use their cognition and discover the rules by themselves, and it encourages them to solve problems. However, students will consume time and effort to infer the rules and they neglect the meaning; this is the major disadvantage of the Inductive Approach (Thornbury, 1990).

Teaching instructions, according to Celce-Mercia, are more interesting and helpful for learners to grasp the grammar as well as to use language appropriately; she proposed many methods, but the most sophisticated ones are teaching grammar as meaning, as social function, and as discourse (Celce- Murcia, 1991). First, teaching grammar as meaning implies that teachers use multiple examples of meaning of each rule, such as prepositions of space (*in* and *on*) as used in the following examples: ‘The book is in the box’ and ‘The book is on the table’ (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p 467). She also emphasized that this method will help learners to analyze and obtain meaning; they can also realize similar situations to remember the rules (1991). The second instruction, that is teaching grammar as a social function, helps students to know how to use grammar in speech acts, for example knowing the modal auxiliaries used in polite and non-polite requests. The formulation of speech acts is responsible for making the communication act successful or not (Celce-Murcia, 1991). The best way to learn grammar in EFL, she added, is dialogues and role-plays. The last but not the least way of teaching grammar according to Celce- Murcia (1991) is presenting grammar as discourse, in other words, how to analyze language in spoken or written texts, taking the following example of discourse, which is a definition of *thermometer*: the thermometer is an instrument that measures temperature. This example can be used in another structure like when saying

*What do we call an instrument that measures temperature?* (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

There are three other instructions that are proposed by Larsen-Freeman (2009), the PPP, which is the acronym of present, practice, and produce. Teachers who use this method start by presenting and explaining the regulations by showing the distinction between students' first language and EFL, then providing them with adequate activities, and concluding with learners' production of language in a communicative setting. Learners of English are usually confused between its forms and rules and the ones of their mother tongue, so teachers use the input processing to avoid this problem by developing students' input about the distinction between L1 and L2 (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). Finally, focus on form, as proposed by Long (1991), is the use of grammar in an appropriate context rather than focusing only on the phonological, morphological, and syntactical aspects of language (as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2009).

#### **1.2.1.2.1. Traditional Approaches vs. Communicative Approaches**

EFL teachers tend to use different methods of teaching the language according to certain factors such as time, learners' needs, and subject matter. Before the twentieth century, learners were trained to learn a second or foreign language via imitation and memorization using only their reading and rarely writing skills (Celce-Murcia, 1991). After the twentieth century, there were other useful approaches from that time until today.

The traditional approaches started first with analyzing and translating the Latin and Greek languages; their grammars were divided into noun, and verb (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002). Therefore, the Grammar Translation Method appeared; it is an approach through which teachers use learners' mother tongue to teach rules of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) with a little interference of the target language. In addition, they pay much more attention to form, and seek correctness (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Savage, Bitterlin, and Price (2010) added that whoever uses the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) focuses on reading non-authentic

materials and translating them. Celce-Murcia (1991) explained that the second approach that came as a revolution against the GTM is the Direct Method, presenting slight differences between the two; the Direct Method's principle is to not involve the native language when learning another one. Moreover, in the Direct Method grammar is taught inductively by providing exercises. The following one is called the Audio-Lingual Method, which came as a reaction to the previous approaches; teachers in this case teach language structure via listening and speaking; the lessons are usually based on contrastive analysis (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002). Savage et al. (2010) claimed that it is almost related to the Direct Method, but it focuses on students' pronunciation and repetition drills. The Audio-lingual Method was criticized by the advocates of the Cognitive Method, which was against the behavioristic view about language; the Cognitive Method emphasizes learner's centeredness as a source of creativity (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Hinkel and Fotos (2002) stated that the Cognitive Approach appeared during the graduation of Chomsky's view of universal grammar; they added that the grammar rules need not only learning skills, but also mental processes. The following method is the Affective Humanistic or the Natural Method as Savage et al. (2010) referred to it, which they claimed to focus on the four skills with paying much more attention on language comprehension than production. Celce-Murcia (1991) assumed that this method is effective because it is about the contribution of the teaching-learning environment, and its affective side helps to develop the learning process, taking as an example motivation and attitudes towards learning. All of these methods have limitations; one of them is the ignorance of talking about communication and using language effectively in different communicative settings.

In the 1960s, the notion of communicative competence appeared and was studied by many applied linguists. The study and the development of the components of this notion focused on its application on language teaching and learning. Consequently, a new approach

emerged; this approach focused on the effective use of language in different communicative situations and contexts, which is a neglected factor by the old traditional approaches.

#### **1.2.1.2.1.1 The Communicative Approach**

In the 1960s linguists, most of which were European, tried to look for new approaches that could be helpful for learners to use foreign languages appropriately; it first started with the British who wanted to replace the old methods of British language teaching by more effective ones (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Linguists at that time presented what is called the Situational Language Teaching, through which language structures are presented in different contexts. This method developed to be named the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The CLT or what is known as the Notional-Functional Approach. It is defined as one of the essential features of language that is assistant for learners to develop their use of language in communicative settings. It is a reaction to the traditional approaches, which focused only on language structure. CLT emphasizes not only grammar and vocabulary, but also the different types of meanings in communication (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). CLT is a kind of innovation that is discussed to be applied in pedagogy; its major goal is to enhance learners' communicative competence and to develop new materials that improve their skills of communication (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

#### **1.2.1.2.1.2. Major Features of the Communicative Approach**

Celce-Murcia (1991) emphasized that activities and tasks are around social issues and real life circumstances in CLT for the learners to be familiar with language. She stated that CLT encourages students to think in the target language in order to develop their capacity of its appropriate use, but it is acceptable to use the native language or translate into it if necessary. Richards and Rodgers (1986) discussed similar characteristic of CLT, claiming that mistakes are allowed in learning. More precisely, they are the basis of developing learners' communication through trying different times until it becomes correct. The concept of

contextualization is another prominent feature of CLT, which means that learners infer the meaning according to the context presented not via memorization and drills. Savage et al. (2010) emphasized two main aspects of CLT that are related to materials presented. From one hand, they assumed that they are designed according to students' needs and interests or authentic materials of several contexts. From the other hand, they talked about the importance of the concentration on both fluency and accuracy as another essential aspect of CLT, in which fluency should be developed at the very beginning, but accuracy is inferred from the context.

The following are the main characteristics of the Communicative Approach presented by Finocchiaro and Brumfit in 1983 (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986, p.68):

1. Meaning is paramount.
2. Dialogs, if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
3. Contextualization is a basic premise.
4. Language learning is learning to communicate.
5. Effective communication is sought.
6. Drilling may occur, but peripherally.
7. Any device which helps the learners is accepted - varying according to their age, interest, etc.
8. Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
9. Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible
10. Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.
11. Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired.
12. The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate

13. Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e. the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately). Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology.
14. Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function, or meaning which maintains interests
15. Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
16. Language is created by the individual often through trial and error.
17. Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.
18. Students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings.
19. The teacher cannot know exactly what language the students will use.
20. Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

#### **1.2.1.2.2. Formal Grammar VS Functional Grammar**

##### **1.2.1.2.2.1. Formal Grammar**

Grammar, as it was defined before, is the study of the formulation of words and their relations within sentences, from one hand. From the other hand, it studies the meaning of language. Based on this perspective, grammar has been seen as a description of language that consists of two types: formal and functional grammar (Larsen-Freeman, 2001).

In the mid-twentieth century, formal grammar was basically related to the school of structuralism and behaviorism, which neglected talking about meaning and focused only on the structure of language that is learned by repetition and imitation. After that time, particularly from 1959 to 1965, Chomsky made a linguistic revolution by presenting his theory of Transformational Generative Grammar when he stated that learners can formulate

an infinite number of structures from a finite number of rules (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). For Chomsky the main interest in formal grammar is the syntactic and the semantic meaning, but not the pragmatic meaning. Larsen-Freeman supported this idea as she said, “a central aim of formal grammars is to explain syntactic facts without resource to pragmatics” (2001, p. 35). Huddleston (1984) added that formal grammar is related to traditional grammar via which native speakers describe these conventions. For example, a native speaker of English would say: “If I was president”, but for non-natives it is unacceptable unless ‘was’ is replaced by ‘were’ (Berry, 2012). Berry also informed that formal grammar has two types. When the taught rules are simple and easy then it is the pedagogic grammar, but when they are difficult to grasp, it is defined as scientific grammar (2012).

#### **1.2.1.2.2.2. Functional Grammar**

The second kind of the descriptive view is the functional grammar, which is concerned with using language in different contexts even if the same idea is presented in various structures. Functional grammarians emphasized the justification of why writers or speakers have chosen certain structure and not others (Larsen-Freeman, 2001), taking the example below:

‘The girl ate the pizza.’

‘The pizza was eaten by the girl.’

Although both sentences fit the same action, they are chosen on several purposes (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Jones and Lock (2011) gave a similar example to explain this assumption: ‘George chopped down the tree’; this statement is about George and the new information is the chopping of the tree. However, in the second statement, ‘The tree is chopped down by George’, the idea is about the tree and the new information is that George is the one who chopped the tree. Lock (1996) defined functional grammar as “an approach to understanding grammar that focuses on how language works to achieve a variety of different



functional communicative purposes” (p. ix). Unlike formal grammar, which is related only to sentence structure, functional grammar deals with using rules while communicating (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Lock (1996) explained that language use needs both form and meaning in order to make the message clear; thus grammar components should be connected within language. In order to raise students’ awareness about using grammar in context, mainly in written texts and to develop their performance in English language, teachers need to use procedures like gap filling, elaborating, and transforming (Jones and Lock, 2011). It is claimed that a communication act could be achieved when communicators write or speak related sentences, which means that separated sentences cannot transmit a message (Jones and Lock, 2011). In other words, learners can understand when to use the plural or singular, the masculine or feminine, etc. via previous or following utterances related to the topic being discussed. This is what is called *textual meaning* (Jones and Lock, 2011, p.3). Halliday and Hasan (1976) agreed with the previous scholars that the main difference between formal and functional grammar is that the latter is used much more in written discourses and concentrates on the combination of ideas rather than isolated components.

### **1.2.2. Prepositions in the English Language**

Prepositions are functional words used to connect other parts of speech to each other. Achit (2008) believes that “preposition serves to connect its object with the rest of a sentence” (p. 326), which means that prepositions are followed by objects that could be pronouns, nouns, or gerunds (Yule, 1998).

Yule (1998) asserted that there are two main types of prepositions: simple ones (like: at, by, for, etc.) and complex ones that consist of two or more words (like: in order to; in relation with, etc.). Linguists claimed that there are about 90 English prepositions used in daily life conversations or even in writing and most of them are simple and short (Lindstromberg, 2010). Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) added that those short

prepositions are problematic in their use. Therefore, users find them hard to use in a correct way due to several reasons. First, the English prepositions are uninflected, unlike the ones of other languages like German. The second factor is that using different prepositions in the same context leads to different meanings. For illustration, in English, ‘in the water’ is not the same as ‘on the water’, but in Spanish, they are the same. Prepositions are difficult because they make the user confused about choosing the right preposition in a given context (such as saying *a reason of* or *a reason for*) (Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia, 2016, p. 416).

### 1.2.2.1. The Polysemous Nature of Prepositions

Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) claimed that the most frequently used prepositions are the following: at, on, in, of, for, to, with, from, and by. Prepositions relate two entities: the entity that comes before and the one that comes after them (Yule, 1998). These entities are named the “trajector and the landmark” by Lindstromberg (2010) as well as Tayler and Evans (2003). Yule (1998) assumed that the function of the preposition is determined by the relationship between the trajector and the landmark. He also stated that there are three basic meanings of prepositions (p.164):

1. Location in space: most of the common prepositions indicate locations in which they locate their objects in space; Yule talked about the three known prepositions of place (at, on, in):
  - a. **At:** refers to a specific point of space. For example: *She lives at 625 Royal Street.*
  - b. **On:** is used to indicate surface. For example: *There is a small boat on the ocean.*
  - c. **In:** indicates general areas and volumes. For example: *She lives in a large house.*
2. Location in time: Yule (1998) stated that the commonly used prepositions have an extended meaning when they locate actions in time:
  - a. **At:** used with a specific point of time. For example, *at 12:00.*
  - b. **On:** used with restricted units of time like dates and days. For example, *on*

*Monday, on 20 March.*

c. **In:** used with longer periods like seasons, years, and months. For example, *in 1999, in the summer.*

3. Location in metaphor; Yule (1998) explained this type of meaning as non-physical locations and it is related to abstract ideas and senses in addition to feelings and emotions. For example, *He is in bad mood; with naked eye; of one's free will.*

These and the previously mentioned prepositions have other extended meanings; Achit (2008) presented a list of functions of *at, on, and in:*

1. **At** can express:

A condition, as in *at war* (They fight each other).

An activity: *Her father is at the farm.*

Towards something: *Do not look at that picture.*

Point of focus: *Look at the stars; Do not stare at strangers.*

2. **On** refers to:

A state of condition: *We will meet each other on holiday.*

About: *Students received a course on manufacturing.*

By means of: *as it is shown on TV.*

3. **In** indicates:

A state of condition: *She is in danger.*

A member of: *She is in the secret organization.*

By means of: *Speak in Spanish.*

Wearing: *the girl in the red robe*

State: *in love, in frustration.*

Taylor and Evans (2003) gave the multiple meanings of the following prepositions:

4. **Of:** the core meaning is to express a part of a whole or possession: *citizens of Algeria.*

The non-spatial meanings of the preposition *of* can be:

Concerning or about: *a movie of a beast*.

Derived or coming from: *the king of the jungle*.

Having something of another: *a father of three*.

5. **For:** Tayler and Evans (2003) presented the three main uses:

Purpose: *She goes to school for studying*.

Intended recipient: *Anna bought the book for her sister*.

Benefit: *She raised money for charity*.

6. **To:** the central meaning is a goal for movement, as in 'reach to the top'. Other polysemous senses are the following:

Location: *The cat stands to my right*.

Attachment: *The writer added a title to the chapter*.

Event: *She travelled to America*.

Comparison: *The design is superior to the previous one*.

Contact: *Add an egg to the mixture*.

7. **With:** Its literal meaning is proximity, like *He is with you* (Tayler and Evans, 2003).

Here is the list of extended meanings of *with*, presented by Tayler and Evans (2003):

Part: *a pet with a long tail*.

Possession: *a mother with two girls*.

Material: *working with a metal*.

Device: *He cuts the tree with a chainsaw*.

Manner: *to talk with pride*

Ingredient: *a cake with strawberry and chocolate*.

Lindstromberg (2010) explained the two remaining prepositions as follows:

8. **From:** the literal meaning is to express place of origin, as in 'she moved from

university to the campus '. However, the extended meanings are the following:

Period: *from 11:00 to 12:00.*

Start of range: *from ten to twenty students.*

A result of: *He struggled from a disease.*

Source: *I read an article from a journal.*

9. **By:** the core meaning is proximity: *a house by the sea.* Other meanings of "by" are:

Passing time or gradual increase: *step-by-step, or hour-by-hour.*

Deadline: *You need to finish the dissertation by the end of May.*

Means or manner: *She travels by airplane.*

Amount of change: *fell by 10 %.*

#### **1.2.2.2. Common Misuses of the English Prepositions**

Foreign English language learners usually commit mistakes while trying to use prepositions in their right place. Fitikides (2000) stated that one of the possible common types of mistakes committed by students is using the wrong preposition instead of the right one; here is a list of examples presented by Fitikides (2000) about misusing prepositions:

**Wrong:** *The woman was absorbed at her work.*

**Right:** *The woman was absorbed in her work.*

**Wrong:** *The police officer accused the girl for murder.*

**Right:** *The police officer accused the girl of murder.*

**Wrong:** *She is accustomed with hot weather.*

**Right:** *She is accustomed to hot weather.*

**Wrong:** *She aimed on the target.*

**Right:** *She aimed at the target.*

**Wrong:** *Her mother was angry against her.*

**Right:** *Her mother was angry with her.*

**Wrong:** *I travelled with the train yesterday.*

**Right:** *I travelled by train yesterday.*

**Wrong:** *They congratulate him for his job.*

**Right:** *They congratulate him on his job.*

Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) assumed that students may delete prepositions in some cases like when to express a span of time. For example, *I have studied sociology (for) five years*, which is called incorrect omission. In another example, they should say *knock at the door*, but not *knock the door*. Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) added that in other cases it is obligatory to omit prepositions when they come before a temporal noun phrase that contains a determiner, for example *She was angry on last night*; ‘on’ should be omitted in this case. Fitikides (2000) claimed that students in some situations make an incorrect omission of prepositions, taking the examples below:

**Incorrect:** *She asked my help.*

**Correct:** *She asked for my help.*

**Incorrect:** *Dora will get rid her old clothing.*

**Correct:** *Dora will get rid of her old clothing.*

**Incorrect:** *Explain me the reason behind your success.*

**Correct:** *Explain to me the reason behind your success.*

**Incorrect:** *Knock the door twice and they will open it.*

**Correct:** *Knock at the door twice and they will open it.*

**Incorrect:** *Share the information your friends.*

**Correct:** *Share the information with your friends.*

Learners usually get confused when using prepositions because, on the one hand, they have nearly the same meaning, like *by*, *to*, and *within*; on the other hand, several English prepositions used to refer to the same preposition as the native language (Alexander, 1988).

Fitikides (2000) supported this idea by giving illustrations concerning the most confusing prepositions in different cases:

**To/At:** it is logical to say:

‘We come to school every morning’ not ‘we come at school.’

‘Someone is standing at the door’ not ‘someone is standing to the door.’”

**In/At:** it is logical to say:

‘Liza has a flat in Paris’ not ‘Liza has a flat at Paris’

‘My friend is staying at 66 Argyle Street’ not ‘my friend is staying in 66 Argyle Street.’

**For/At:** it is logical to say:

‘I bought a book for fifty pence’ not ‘I bought a book at fifty pence.’

‘I cannot buy it at such a high price’ not ‘I cannot buy it for such a high price.’

**By/With:** it is acceptable to say:

‘She cuts the carrot with a knife’ not ‘she cuts the carrot by knife.’

### **1.2.2.3. Communicative Approaches to Teaching Prepositions**

#### **1.2.2.3.1. Teaching Prepositions through Texts and Contexts**

Language is an interrelated system of rules, structures, and meanings, which are better learned through contexts and coherent texts but not through isolated utterances, sentences, and entities. Speakers or writers should communicate language in context; otherwise, their intended meaning will be hard to recover (Thornbury, 1999).

Thornbury (1999) argued that context has three basic types; the first is named *the co-text*, which is about the preceding and the following passages of the given text that convey the meaning of each single linguistic item. The second is called *the situational context*, which is basically related to the factors affecting the meaning of the whole text, such as the degree of intimacy between interlocutors, the mood of communication, and the surrounding

circumstances. The last type is known as *the cultural context*, which is concerned with norms and conventions that are based on the culture demission of a given society. Learners of English must have an idea about all kinds of contexts for successful communication.

Prepositions, as parts of speech, need to be learned in a communicative setting for better distinguishing their various functions and meanings. They need to be practiced through several sources of texts like stories, articles, and real life situations (Thornbury, 1999). Yule (2006, p.137) provided an authentic text as an illustration to prepositions' use:

*Whenever I see a newspaper lying **on** the ground beside a door, I think **of** Fred, a few years ago; Fred had to travel **to** a meeting and his flight was deleted **for** several hours because **of** bad weather. **By** the time, he got **to** his hotel it was past midnight. Once **in** his room, he felt really tired so he just undressed and got **into** bed. **At** some point during the night, he had to get up and go **to** the bathroom. He was not really awake and it was very dark, but he could see a light under the bathroom door. So he walked towards the light. He opened the bathroom door and went **in**. the bright light blinded him **for** a moment. As the door closed behind him he vaguely wondered why there was a doormat **on** the bathroom floor, facing him was another door with a number **on** it. It was number 325. That was strange. Then he realized he was not **in** the bathroom. He was **in** the corridor. He turned to go back **into** his room, but the door was locked. And he was naked. He heard voices coming **from** the far end **of** the corridor. What was he going to do? Then he noticed a newspaper **on** the floor beside the door **of** number 325. He quickly gapped the newspaper and held it **in** front of him as a man and a woman **in** dark uniforms come along the corridor towards him. The man said, 'Good morning, sir. Having bit of trouble? They were security guards. Fred explained his embarrassing situation and they unlocked the door **for** him.*

#### **1.2.2.3.2. Focus-on-Form by Michael Long**

Focus on Form (FonF) is a grammar teaching approach proposed by Long in 1991 as a reaction to the traditional instruction methods that are based solely on form and structures and to the great emphasis that the communicative approach put on meaning. Long (1991) stated that FonF aims to combine both perspectives through focusing on grammatical forms in communicative contexts. He believes that this approach “overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (as cited in Nassaji and Fotos, 2002, p.11).

Larsen-Freeman (2001) also claimed that FonF grammar instruction attempts to join



the teaching of communication and grammar structures. She also provided some of the advantages of this approach: it helps students to differentiate between the properties of their native language and the target one. Particularly, it allows learners to know the gap between prepositions of the English language and the ones of the mother tongue; that is to say, it develops their metacognitive awareness. Moreover, FonF encourages students to correct themselves. Therefore, it develops their monitoring capacities when they perform in different communicative tasks. In addition, it helps them to generalize grammatical rules to other structures. In sum, this approach is an essential one in communicative language teaching, which facilitates and guaranties the successful learning and teaching of grammar and communication at the same time.

#### **1.2.2.4. The Teaching Materials in Communicative Approaches**

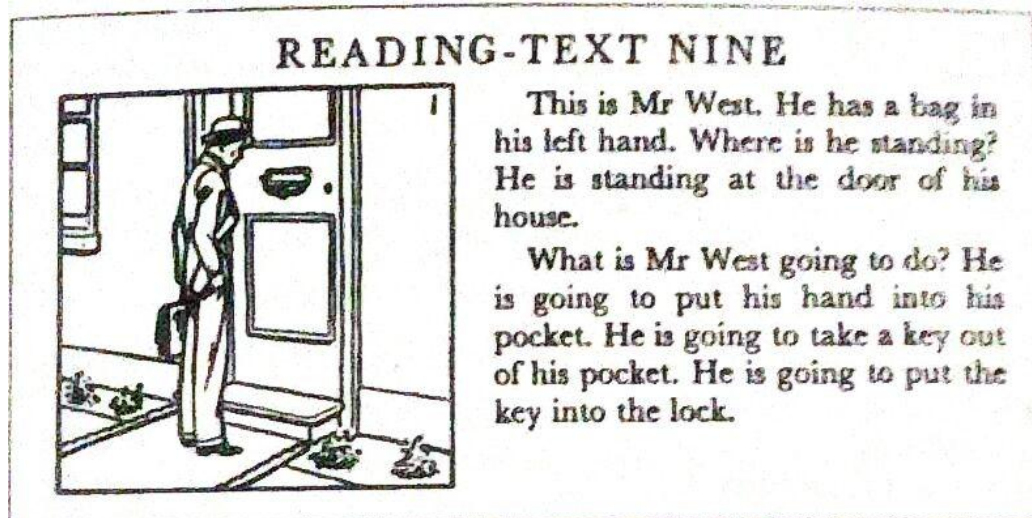
Users of the English language must use prepositions correctly in order to transmit correct messages to their interlocutors and to let them understand their intentions. In a teaching-learning environment, teachers should use practical materials to develop learners' ability to use prepositions properly, and learners as well need to follow these materials when practicing outside the classroom. Richards and Rodgers (1986) stated that many linguists had agreed upon three main types of materials related to CLT that are workable to teach grammar in context, they are mainly text-based, task-based, and realia.

##### **1.2.2.4.1. Text-Based Materials**

This type of materials includes textbooks that demonstrate instructions about how to use prepositions in context; the texts are varied according to the situation, which can be a description, narration, or any other type of texts. They may be used as exercises when they include gaps (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Here is an extract about the use of prepositions given by Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy (2000, p.132) as an example of text-based material that is an instruction of transplanting:

*Soak the seed **in** warm water. Sow **on** edge **in** pots **of** moist seed compost. Transplant **into** permanent pots 12 inches **in** diameter. Keep growing conditions moist and humid. Train **on** horizontal wires **in** late May. Fertilize once a week with a high potash food.*

The following picture, as it is presented by Thornbury (1999), is another example of a text-based material (p.72):



**Figure 3: A Text-Based Material (Thornbury, 1999, p.72)**

#### **1.2.2.4.2. Task-Based Materials**

They include a variety of activities like cue cards, activity cards, pair or group communication, in addition to conversations and role-plays (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). This type of material encourages learners to learn prepositions through communicating in multiple contexts communicative environment; here is a task-based materiel, which is a dialogue provided by Yule (1998, p.165) in which he focused on the choice of the preposition and the extended and fixed periods of time.

*Ann: what are you doing **on** Monday?  
 Jim: I am teaching **from** 9 to 12.  
 Ann: How about getting together **in** the afternoon.  
 Jim: I am free **at** one o'clock.  
 Ann: Em, no, I meant later, like 2 **from** to 4.  
 Jim: No, I have to leave **at** 2:15.  
 Ann: Okay. How about **on** Tuesday morning?  
 Jim: **In** the early, part maybe. I am always here **at** 7:30.  
 Ann: Oh, No, I am still asleep **at** that time!  
 Jim: Okay, some time on Wednesday 29th.  
 Ann: I have a doctors' appointment **on** the 29th*

*Jim: Okay, what about **on** early October?*

*Ann: This year or the year **after** next?*

*Jim: The year **after** next? So far, I am free **during** the whole year*

*Ann: Okay. Let us mention 9 o'clock **on** October 1st, the year **after** next.*

#### **1.2.2.4.3. Realia**

It is the use of authentic, from-life materials to learn prepositions in various contexts in the classroom, such as newspapers, articles, advertisements, signs, pictures, graphs, etc. It can also be models or objects about what exists in reality, like models that indicate the functions of prepositions (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Parrott (2000) gave this extract from an article of real life situation to illustrate the use of prepositions:

*Children should be forced **to** take **in** Chinese-style exercise drills to teach them discipline **at** school, a leading head teacher said today. Anthony Seldon praised the militaristic tradition **in** which children **form** lines and spend 15 minutes exercising to music while a teacher barks orders **on** a loudhailer... (p. 103).*









The previously mentioned text presented by Yule in 2006 is a suitable illustration of realia because the context of that text is a real life situation that may have happened to anyone.

#### **1.2.2.5 The Importance of Contextualization in Teaching Prepositions**

Foreign language instruction still depends on long lists of words to be memorized, and sentence structures and grammatical forms to be practiced via context-free tasks and drills. However, in the cutting-edge pedagogy (e.g. communicative approach), language instructors must use materials that are well contextualized and related to learners' needs and interests. Moreover, the teaching objectives should be embodied in some sort of real world discourse such as a story, a dialogue/conversation, a cartoon strip with a text, a radio broadcast, a video/film clip, an e-mail message, a letter, a recipe, etc. Therefore, learners will be able to explicate and produce a meaningful discourse. They will also be able to learn and practice the sound system, word and sentence formation, and grammatical forms, which are salient in the content of the discourse. Another important aspect is the accuracy and authenticity of the content presented. This aspect is mainly based on the integration of language and culture.

Accuracy and authenticity of the discourse used in the lessons or tasks would help the instructors to avoid criticism of artificiality (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2008). Simply speaking, contextualization is very important and essential in language learning and teaching.

Evans (2005) also focused on the role of contextualization claiming that every single word has a context by its own, which means that it has multiple interpretations according to interpreters when it is isolated (as cited in Winters, Kirby, and Smith, 2014). Prepositions as words do have meanings when they stand alone; for example, the preposition ‘at’ may be interpreted as an indication of a point of time by some people; others may interpret it as an indication of place; this variety of assumptions should be tested to know which one of them is the intended meaning. In order to test interpretations of prepositions, they should be put in a specific context to see which interpretation is the target one. For example, with the sentence: *She is at university*, now it is clear that the preposition ‘at’ in this context refers to place, which is ‘university’ and the girl is working or studying at the university. Context is very essential because it contributes to increase certainty and decrease ambiguity, and it facilitates the indication of the structure to be used (Pinker and Bloom, as cited in Winters et al, 2014). The following is a task based on a collection of pictures that shows the context in which the prepositions (at, in, on) are used. The pictures also facilitate the choice of the preposition.

<p><b>They have a house</b> ..... <b>the mountains.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>I saw him .....</b> <b>the station.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>Do you take sugar</b> ..... <b>your coffee?</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>There was a girl</b> ..... <b>the window.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 
<p><b>My mother is .....</b> <b>the hair-dresser's.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>What was there .....</b> <b>the radio?</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>There are many</b> <b>rooms .....</b> <b>my house.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 	<p><b>All fishermen are</b> ..... <b>sea.</b></p> <p>a) In b) On c) At</p> 

**Figure 4: Prepositions of Place: in, at, on, (Kawyte (2011))**

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter was developed to gather enough information about the emergence of the notion of communicative competence (the importance of the underlying competencies of the notion) and its impact on the establishment of a new language teaching approach. In addition, further consideration was given to the essential role of grammar (grammatical competence) as a language component in the building of learners' abilities and skills to accomplish successful communication. Accordingly, prepositions were highlighted as major problematic features of grammar, considering their confusing nature and the most common misuses committed by SL learners' when learning or practicing them. Different views were taken into consideration to support the need for an approach and teaching materials that consider both form and meaning to teach grammar, more specifically prepositions, to overcome the confusions and uncertainty that their polysemous nature cause to the learners of English as a foreign language and to better develop their communicative competence.

## **Chapter two: Research Methodology, Data Analysis, Summary and Limitations**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researchers attempted to investigate the relationship between the teaching of prepositions as one of the most problematic aspects of the English language's grammar and students' learning and practicing habits, in correspondence with the development of their communicative skills. In so doing, a special attention is drawn to some of the most commonly used prepositions (*in, on, at, to, by, from, of, with, and for*) and to teachers' (of grammar and written expression) methods and approaches to teach grammar (particularly prepositions). In order to gather the data required to answer the research questions related to this study, two questionnaires were designed and handed to teachers of Grammar and Written Expression (former and present-day teachers) and second year students along with a diagnostic test, and teachers' lessons content analysis. In the previously developed chapter, the literature related to this study was reviewed thoroughly while this chapter describes the methodology and the procedures used in this study to answer the targeted questions and to achieve the objective behind each question, besides having the largest part wholly devoted to the description, analysis as well as interpretation of the results obtained from the research tools utilized. It is composed of two sections in which the researchers discuss the research design and methodology, analysis of the results, interpretation, summary of the findings, and conclusion.

### **2.1 Section One: Research Design and Methodology**

#### **2.1.1 Research Method**

In this research work, based on the data collection tools used, a mixed method has been adopted because the mixture between the quantitative and qualitative research methods allows the researchers to provide a complete understanding of the investigated problem. The

mixed-method research includes both methods' data collection tools and analysis techniques (Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun, 2012). The quantitative method favors numerical data and statistical analysis, whereas qualitative research prefers in-depth information, relying more on categorization and interpretation. Fraenkel et al. (2012) also believed that "mixed-method research can help to clarify and explain relationships found to exist between variables" (p. 558). In this study, with a concurrent form of data collection, the investigators adopted the qualitative research to conduct a content analysis of the lesson and exercise documents dealing with prepositions to investigate the teachers' implementation of the notion of contextualization in their classes.

The qualitative research method was adopted to provide additional supportive information to expound and elaborate the results obtained by the quantitative method (Fraenkel et al., 2012). In simple words, the researchers conducted a quantitative study in which they used two questionnaires and a diagnostic test to answer the research questions and to investigate the relationship between the teaching of prepositions and the inability of students to use them accurately in different contexts, in accordance with the development of their communicative capabilities (using a correlational design). Later on, the fieldworkers utilized a qualitative data analysis technique (content analysis) to investigate the extent to which former and present-time teachers of grammar and written expression implement the aspect of contextualization as an important feature of the Communicative Approach to teach prepositions, which they thought is the missing key element that would develop students' ability to use prepositions as well as their communicative skills. The majority of the teachers approached were not able to help collect the lessons, so only those obtained from a teacher of written expression and a teacher of grammar were used. The former submitted one lesson that was recently presented to first year students in their first semester while the later submitted a

collection of lessons presented in different years for second year students, from which the investigators chose the suitable ones to fulfill the requirements of this study.

### **2.1.2 Research Design**

Research methods and designs are no more than the tools used for the trade; therefore, it is quite crucial to possess the ability to select the tools (research designs) that better suit the objectives of any type of research. In other words, the knowledge that the researchers possess about research methods and designs is useless unless they are able to choose the appropriate design for a specific research topic (Moore, 1983, p. 9). Hence, with regard to the research questions and objectives in this study, the design selected is the correlational design. Correlational research is considered as a type of descriptive research because it provides a description of a potentially existing relationship between two or more variables; however, this sort of description is distinct from other types of research works. It is also referred to as *associational research* by Frankel et al. (2012), who added: "Correlational study describes the degree to which two or more quantitative variables are related" (p. 331). In this type of research, the variables are not experimentally manipulated; instead, the relationship between those variables is tested by the 'correlational coefficient' ( $r$ ). This coefficient is a value, and it is usually around 0, -1, or +1. If the value equals to 0, then there is no relation between the variables; if it is about -1 or +1, it means that there is a relationship, either strong or weak. Concerning signals (- or +), they reflect the type of relationship being positive or negative (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 340).

Kumar (2011) also clarified the function of the associational research design, claiming that "The main emphasis in a correlational study is to discover or establish the existence of an interdependence between two or more aspects of situation" (p. 30). In other words, the main purpose of the correlation design is to clarify our understanding of an important phenomenon by identifying relationships among variables. This design was selected to investigate the



relationship between the teaching of prepositions and students' inability to use prepositions correctly in different communicative settings, in correspondence with their communicative proficiency. Accordingly, it is assumed that the teaching methods followed by teachers, at the Department of English at the University of Larbi Tebessi, are the main reason behind the difficulties that students face when using prepositions in writing for different communicative purposes. For this reason, it is assumed that it is very important to follow a more communicatively oriented method to enhance students' abilities to communicate successfully using prepositions, in particular, and grammar, in general, in any communicative setting.

### **2.1.3 Population and Sampling**

Before a deep explanation of sampling, it is better to define what 'a sample' is and what 'a population' is. Dörnyei (2003) mentioned that the "sample is the group of people whom researchers actually examine" (p. 70); in other words, it is the group of individuals from which information is obtained and on whom conclusions are based. The *population* is the larger targeted group of interest to the researcher; it is the group to whom the results of the study can be generalized (representative) (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 338). The determination of the sample size is very important in all kinds of research; hence, it is very essential to carefully decide about the sample size based on the research type, questions, and objectives. The sample size in correlational research should be no less than 30 subjects to ensure that the sample is representative to the population (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 337). The population in the current study includes second year students of English at the University of Larbi Tebessi, in addition to former and present-time teachers of grammar and written expression. Concerning students, a sample of 33 students was randomly selected from the whole population (108-second year License degree students); it comprises 5 males and 28 females, and their age ranges between 19-24 years. These students were chosen due to the deficiency in their capabilities to use prepositions unanimously observed by their teachers;

thereupon, a diagnostic test was designed to support the current claim and to answer other research questions. Along with that, teachers were selected based on the module they currently teach (or previously taught), which makes them 8 teachers (1 male and 7 females). The teachers were chosen to be asked about their grammar teaching habits in order to investigate the reasons behind the students' deficiencies when using prepositions in different situations. In sum, the total number of participants in the sample of this study is 41.

Kumar (2011) holds that “sampling is the process of selecting a few (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling)” (p. 177). The sampling strategy followed in this research is the Cluster Random Sampling; its rationale is to divide the population into groups or clusters, then to select individuals from each one (Kumar, 2011). In this case, the population is already divided into three clusters (administrative grouping), and then these groups numbers were written in small pieces of paper for a random draw. The cluster selected is group N°3. It was not manageable to have all groups at the same time and place because of time limitations, which led to the selection of one group rather than members from each one of the three groups. The cluster method was used due to the difficulty of using the simple and the stratified method (Fraenkel, et al., 2012); moreover, it was much more workable with a small population, as what happens in schools or universities (Kumar, 2011). One more reason for choosing the cluster sampling strategy was that it saves time and effort (Fraenkel et al., 2012), which was a more appropriate practice in the context of this study, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **2.1.4 Research Instruments**

### **2.1.4.1 The Questionnaires**

In order to answer the questions addressed in this project and collect data about the teaching of prepositions and students learning and practicing habits in accordance with their communicative competence, two questionnaires were designed for teachers and students.

Fraenkel et al. (2012) defined the questionnaire as the collection of written questions developed to the subjects of the study who are going to answer them through writing (a subject-completed instrument) (p. 125). There are three main types of questions used in questionnaires; first, there are the 'open-ended' questions, in which subjects are asked to give their opinions without being restricted to options. The second type is the 'closed-ended' questions, which are followed by options being multiple choices, scales, or yes/no questions. The third type is the 'semi-opened' or 'semi-closed' questions: a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions (Kumar, 2011, p. 138). In this research, the three types of questions were utilized in both questionnaires (teachers and students' questionnaires). As for how they were administered, Kumar (2011) also stated three ways to administer a questionnaire, claiming that it can be administered through mail, in a collective group (group administration), and one-to-one administration. In this research, online administration was used with teachers because it was inconvenient to find them all at the department. The questionnaires were delivered electronically and answers to them were received the same way; as for the students, the researchers opted for group administration. Dornyei (2003) stated that it is the most common method of having questionnaires completed. The questionnaire was chosen in this project as an instrument to collect data for several reasons; the most prominent ones, as stated by Dörnyei (2003) and Kumar (2011) are that (1) it saves time, money, and energy; and (2) it is workable with a diversity of topics in different fields and methods of research.

#### **2.1.4.1.1 Piloting the Questionnaires**

It is very essential for researchers to focus on the smallest details when constructing questionnaires because the slightest differences in the wording of the questionnaire items may affect the response pattern. Therefore, it is very important to conduct a field test in which the questionnaire is piloted through the process of its development on a sample of individuals

from the target population who possess the same characteristics as the target sample that the data collection instrument has been designed for. The main function of the piloting process is to allow the researchers to gather feedback and remarks about how the tool functions and whether it fulfills the required objectives. On the basis of the gathered data, the researchers can modify, adjust, and refine the final version of the questionnaire to ensure its effectiveness (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 63). The piloting phase is very critical because it answers many questions like:

- Which item wording is ambiguous?
- Which items are too hard for the participants to answer?
- Which of the questionnaire items should be ejected due to their ineffective function?

In addition, the valuable feedback received in the piloting process allows the researchers to take decisions about the instructions and the appearance of the questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 64).

In this research project, two questionnaires were designed for both teachers and students to investigate the teaching and learning habits related to prepositions as a critical grammatical form and to investigate the relationship between the teaching and the learning of prepositions and students' communicative competence. The questionnaires were piloted to ensure their effectiveness and to ensure the success of the research project as a whole.

The students' questionnaire was piloted with 25 % (27 students) of the target population; the students who participated in the pilot test were chosen randomly from the same classroom (the whole population is administratively divided into three groups) due to their availability (group administration). The pilot test sample received the questionnaire in one of their regular sessions, and it took them about 20 minutes to answer it. Some of them faced difficulties with the terminology of the answer choices proposed for some of the questions due to their unfamiliarity with the concepts (*interactive communicative*

*environment, the situational use of prepositions, tasks that focus on the context*), so they needed clarifications (Questions 8, 10, and 14; see Appendix C). Accordingly, brief explanations were added between brackets to clarify the concepts. Moreover, the reaction of the students towards some of the questionnaire items led to a change in the answering choices, mainly into Likert-type scale response anchors (Questions 4, 6, and 15; see Appendix C). The students' answers also helped add more choices including the 'Others' option (Questions 3 and 5; see Appendix C). Moreover, the questionnaire items were reviewed and reformulated to be clearer in accordance with the supervisor's remarks; the constant reformulation helped spot redundancy with one of the questions, so it has been removed.

The teachers' questionnaire was piloted online; it was sent through e-mail to former and present-time teachers of grammar and written expression. Only four teachers, already members of the target sample (which comprised eight teachers), participated in the pilot study; this was necessary due to the limited number of teachers who taught the said modules. The teachers who took part in the field test were asked not only to answer the questions but also to send remarks and feedback about the general appearance of the questionnaire, the instructions, the questions' structures, and any remarks about unclear or ambiguous items. As a result of the pilot study, some questions were reformulated, brief clarifications to some concepts were added in the close-ended question choices, questions also were reordered, and some choices were added on the bases of the teachers' answers and remarks. Finally, the conducted field test did help the investigators to "screen out any items that have not worked properly... and to fine-tune and finalize" (Dornyei, 2003, p. 68) the questionnaires.

#### **2.1.4.1.2 Students' Questionnaire**

Designed to gather data from second year students at the Department of English, the questionnaire was developed to fit the purpose of the study and help answer the research

questions. It started with a brief introduction, in which the purpose of the study was clarified, and the instructions of answering the questions were clearly presented. This questionnaire was divided into three sections and consisted of 17 questions, the majority of which were closed-ended questions and multi-item scales; yet some of the items required alternative suggestions and justifications.

The first section of the questionnaire was about the background information related to the participants; it comprised five questions including age, gender, purpose of choosing English as study field, and the level of familiarity with English speakers' culture in order to investigate students' degree of familiarity with the *context* and the real life situations of the native English speakers. Celce-Murcia (2008) claimed that it is very important to integrate the social structure of the culture associated with the target language community in language instruction to develop the ability to communicate effectively in different settings. Therefore, it was quite essential to investigate the degree of familiarity of students with the target language culture.

Section two was devoted to prepositions and their uses; it contained seven questions (Questions 6 through 11; see Appendix C) in which subjects were asked how often they do fail to use prepositions appropriately when writing in different contexts and the reason for which they do so. Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) asserted that prepositions are difficult to learn even if "students have achieved a high level of proficiency in English" (p. 415). In the same section, the students were also given a set of different teaching methods and they were requested to choose the ones that they think better suit the learning of prepositions; the methods were presented in a simple, clarified way. In addition, they were asked if they have enough time to practice prepositions in the classroom. The last two items of the section focused on students' habits when solving tasks about prepositions; they aimed to investigate whether students focus on the functions of prepositions and the presented context of the task

at the same time or not due to the importance of contextualization in language learning and teaching (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2008).

The final section was related to the Communicative Approach and students' communicative competence; it consisted of six questions (Question 12 through 17; see Appendix C). In this section, questions were developed based on the communicative approach's characteristics to investigate whether it was really implemented in the department or not. It also focused on students' awareness about the effects of their level of proficiency in grammar on their communicative skills. The questions that followed were concerned with the nature of the tasks presented for practicing prepositions, whether they are interesting for students or not, and whether they enhance their ability to use prepositions appropriately.

#### **2.1.4.1.3 Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire consisted of 19 questions, each of which holds a specific objective. It was divided into two sections and the majority of the questions were closed-ended questions, yet some necessitated a relative amount of justifications. The questionnaire was delivered to investigate teachers' instruction habits; it was addressed to teachers of first year and second year students (License degree, i.e. Bachelor of Arts) due to the limited number of teachers who teach grammar and written expression. The teachers of written expression were chosen because the lesson about prepositions is part of the syllabus and is included in the 'Parts of Speech' lesson, which they present to first year students.

The initial section of the questionnaire included six questions. The goal of this section was to gather information about the teachers' degree, experience in teaching English (Questions 2, 3, and 4; see Appendix B), the module they are/were in charge of, and their awareness about the native speakers' cultural and daily life aspects (Questions 5 and 6; see Appendix B). The second section was titled 'Methods of Grammar Instruction and the Teaching of Prepositions' and included 13 questions (Question 7 through 19; see Appendix

B) of which the main aim was to obtain information about the teaching methods, the techniques, the notions, the tasks implemented, or the ways that teachers follow when teaching grammar, mainly prepositions. It was also meant to investigate the students' practicing habits and more importantly their deficiencies when using prepositions for different communicative purposes. The final part of this section was concerned with the possibility of teaching grammar following a Communicative Approach in the Department of English at the University of Larbi Tebessi.

#### **2.1.4.2 The Diagnostic Test**

Harmer (2007) stated that “diagnostic tests can be used to expose learner difficulties, gaps in their knowledge and skill deficiencies during a course” (p. 380); he believed that the only way to solve problems is through investigating what they are. In other words, diagnostic tests are developed to diagnose how much students know, what they know, and more importantly, what their lacks and needs are in order to find and implement solutions in the process of teaching a specific language component. The diagnostic test in this research project was handed to the same students who answered the questionnaire to investigate the types of mistakes they make and to support the claims and assumptions stated for this research. This test was essentially planned to examine the students' abilities to use some of the most commonly used prepositions (for, at, on, to, in, of, with, from, by). The main aim of this test was to shed light on the type of mistakes that students commit when using or practicing prepositions and to investigate the extent to which they paid attention to the context of the provided tasks. The test was composed of four exercises destined to verify whether students use the wrong preposition or use an extra preposition and also check if they could indicate the right place of a preposition. The allocated time for the test was of 30-45 minutes. The first task contained five sentences in which students were asked to fill in the gaps using: *for, on, of, with, to, and by*. In the second activity, students were required to place



the following prepositions: *for, at, on, to, in, of, with, from, by* in the right place in ten sentences; some of the sentences in this exercise did not necessitate any of those prepositions, and this was meant to check whether students know that sometimes it is obligatory to omit the preposition. The sentences in this task did not include any blanks or gaps to test students' ability to determine the prepositions' placement. The third exercise included nine pairs of sentences in which students were asked to choose the correct form. Finally, the last task contained two parts: first, they were required to fill in the blanks with one of the following prepositions: *on, at, in*. then they were asked to combine sentences from "Box A" with their corresponding parts from "Box B".

As mentioned earlier, the diagnostic test is composed of four exercises, and each one of them was adopted from a specific grammar book or a collection of books; the first task comprises a set of examples taken from *Basic English Grammar: for English Language Learners*, by Howard Sargeant (2007). The examples were purposefully chosen simple, taking into consideration the regular uses of prepositions studied in this research. The second exercise was designed according to the work of George Yule (2008), *Oxford Practice Grammar*, and Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016), *The Grammar Book: Form, Meaning, and Use for English Language Teachers*. This exercise was also a collection of examples chosen carefully to meet the extended uses of the prepositions *in, on, at, to, by, from, of, with, and for* in order to investigate students' ability to choose the correct prepositions and to examine whether they are able to decide when to omit or add a certain preposition. Moreover, the pairs of sentences implemented in the third task were adopted from T.J. Fitikides's (2000) book: *Common Mistakes in English*, aiming at investigating students' capabilities to use the previously mentioned prepositions with the surrounding words (context). The last task was wholly taken from Yule's book also (cited above), and it

was chosen because it is a context-based task that aims at directing students' attention the presented context.

#### **2.1.4.3 Content Analysis**

Downe-Wamboldt (1992) declared: "The objective of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study" (p. 314). Researchers who use qualitative content analysis consider the characteristics and features of language, such as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (verbal, print, or electronic form). Qualitative content analysis is explained as the analytic method used for the subjective interpretation of text data, following a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes, patterns, and categories (Hsieh and Shannons, 2005, p. 1278). It includes three different techniques of data analysis: *conventional*, *directed*, and *summative*. The difference between the three lays in coding schemes and origins of code (Hsieh and Shannons, 2005, p. 1277). The technique used in this research is the *conventional content analysis*, in which the coding categories and themes are obtained directly from the analyzed document. Categorization in content analysis is based on the purpose of the analysis; the targeted text is divided into categories and units, depending on previous knowledge, theory, and/or experience (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 480). The analyzed texts in this research project were lesson and exercise documents about prepositions collected from present-time teachers and ex-teachers of grammar and written expression. Some of the lessons from this year were not available, except one that was successfully obtained from a written expression teacher; the rest are lessons of a former teacher of grammar.

#### **2.1.5 The Importance of Valid Instrumentation**

It is important to give a very careful attention to the quality of the instruments used in any type of research because the conclusions that researchers draw are based only on the information they obtain using those instruments. The *validity* of an instrument "refers to the

appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 147); accordingly, the investigators in this research had conducted a pilot study, on a sample that possess the same characteristics of the targeted sample, to insure the validity of the questionnaires designed. Moreover, the results obtained from the field test indicated a notable consistency in the answers when compared to the results obtained from the targeted sample answers, which signaled that the instrument is reliable. Fraenkel et al. (2012) stated that *reliability* “refers to the consistency of scores or answers from one administration of an instrument to another” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 147).

In terms of diagnostic testing, this research relies on *Content Validity* to verify the representativeness of the test. In 2007, Harmer stated that for a test to be valid, it is very important that its content tests what it is supposed to test. For example, he claimed that doing a writing test with an essay question that requires a specialized knowledge about the history of medicine is appropriate only if it is known that all the students possess the required knowledge before they do the test. In this respect, Bolarinwa (2015) believed that “Content validity pertains to the degree to which the instrument fully assesses or measures the construct of interest” (p. 197); in other words, the instrument should fully represent the field or domain of the investigated topic. In this case, the tasks implemented in the diagnostic test are adopted from a collection of books closely related to the field (grammar) and authors who are renowned, authoritative scholars in the field of grammar and language instruction. Additionally, a content-valid instrumentation is mainly acquired by a rational analysis of the instrument by experts familiar with the targeted topic or experts on the research, which explains why the supervisor was designated to guarantee that the test is clear, comprehensive and meets the requirements of the research topic on account of her experience in grammar instruction.

It is very critical not only to ensure the validity of an instrument but also to test its reliability and confirm the generalizability of the results obtained. Reliability is the extent to which any measurement procedure produces the same results on repeated trials. However, it is not obligatory to conduct different administration trials to insure the stability of scores obtained; instead, it is preferable to conduct an internal consistency test. Internal consistency reliability “concerns the extent to which items on the test or instrument are measuring the same thing” (Bolarinwa, 2015, p. 199). In this work, reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha index, which is the most used formula to test internal reliability as it is very easy to calculate using statistical analysis software. The alpha coefficient is a value that should be equal to or higher than 0.70 for the instrument internal reliability to be acceptable and Table 1 indicates its value related to the internal reliability of the diagnostic test. The value for the items included in the test is 0.752 ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ), which testifies that it is an acceptable internal consistency reliability.

<b>Crobach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
<b>.752</b>	<b>50</b>

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

## **2.2 Section Two: Analysis of the Results and Discussion**

### **2.2.1 Data Analysis**

#### **2.2.1.1 Response rate**

The initial sample selected for this research was 41 participants (33 student and 8 teachers), but only 40 had responded. To reach the objectives of this study, thirty-three questionnaire copies were handed to students of second year, and all of them were answered and returned. While 8 teachers were selected to answer the second questionnaire, unfortunately, only 7 teachers participated, giving a response rate of 87.5% for teachers and a total response rate (100%) for students.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
a-Questionnaires Handed	33	100%
b-Questionnaires Returned	33	100%

**Table 2: Students' Response Rate**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
a-Questionnaires Handed	8	100%
b-Questionnaires Returned	7	87.5%

**Table 3: Teachers' Response Rate**

### 2.2.1.2 Teachers' Questionnaire Results

#### Section One: General Information

The questions in this section were mainly designed to collect data about teachers' teaching experiences, taking into consideration the degree(s) they hold, the module(s) they teach (grammar, written expression), and the extent to which they are exposed to the socio-cultural aspects of the English speaking society. The only aim of gathering data about their gender was to provide statistical and descriptive information of the sample.

#### Questions 1-3: Gender, Degree, and Targeted Modules

It can be noted from the answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 that questionnaire respondents were 06 females (85.7%) and 01 male (14.3%); they also clearly indicated that 42.9% of the teachers have a PhD degree and another 42.9% of the subjects possess a Magister degree, while only 14.3% hold a Master degree. Moreover, the collected data demonstrated that 42.9% of the participants currently teach or previously taught grammar and another 42.9% indicated the number of participants that taught or teach written expression, and only 14.3% represented the teachers who teach or taught both grammar and written expressions.

**Question 4:** How long have you been teaching English at University?

Subjects	Years
Subject 1	4.5
Subject 2	10
Subject 3	13
Subject 4	5
Subject 5	5
Subject 6	1
Subject 7	2

**Table 4: Teaching Experience**

Table 4 highlights the teaching experience of the subjects, which ranges between 1 and 13 years. The foregoing analysis of questions 2, 3, and 4 gives a glimpse of teachers' working experience, which has an essential role in the process of teaching prepositions in regards of the method used and the procedures taken to deal with students' deficiencies at different levels of the learning process

**Questions 5 and 6:** Are you personally aware of the native speakers' cultural and everyday-life aspects? If yes, say how?

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. Traveling	5	71.4%
2. Watching movies	5	71.4%
3. Via Skype or any other social media	3	42.9%
4. British council events	1	14.3%
5. Native teachers (colleagues in Algerian universities)	1	14.3%
6. Reading (books, magazines, blogs...}	5	71.4%
7. Other	1	14.3%

**Table 5: Teachers' Mode of Familiarity with Native Speakers' Socio-Cultural Aspects**

The responses to Question 5 indicate that all the participants are familiar with the English native speakers' cultural dimension and life aspects. As the table above shows, traveling, watching movies and reading (71.4%) are the most frequently selected modes of exposure to the native speakers' social and cultural aspects. It also indicates that 42.9% of the participants are exposed through social media while only 14.3% have experienced the British council events and encounters with native speaking teachers (colleagues) in Algerian

universities. However, only one of the respondents stated that she worked with natives in an English speaking country.

## Section Two: Methods of Grammar Instruction and the Teaching of Prepositions

The collection of questions in this section was essentially designed to obtain information about the techniques, the methods, the notions, and the tasks implemented in a grammar or a written expression course about prepositions.

**Question 7:** What method do you follow when you teach grammar?

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. Grammar translation method	1	14.3%
2. Explicit deductive (starting with rules, then examples)	4	57.9%
3. Functional grammar (grammar in context)	3	42.9%
4. Grammar as formal structures (focus on form, but not meaning)	5	71.4%
5. Direct method (giving examples leading to rules)	5	71.4%
6. The communicative approach (Context, interaction, meaning, competencies-based method)	5	71.4%

**Table 6: Methods of Grammar Instruction**

In fact, it is clearly noticeable that the most used methods are the Direct Method (71.4%), Grammar as formal structures (focus on form, but not meaning) (71.4%), and the Communicative Approach (71.4%). The Explicit Deductive Method is said to be applied at 57.9% and the Functional Grammar Method at 42.9% while only one teacher used the GTM (14.3%).

**Question 8 and 9:** When teaching prepositions, do you focus on the notion of contextualization (language items put in context instead of being treated in isolation.). If “No”, what prevents you?

The data gathered from Question 8 denoted that all the teachers implement contextualization when teaching prepositions rather than presenting them as isolated theoretical entities. Question 9 is obviously left unanswered because all teachers use the notion of contextualization.

**Question 10:** Do you focus on learners’ needs and interests when teaching? Please justify

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	85.7%
No	/	/
Missing	1	14.3%

**Table 7: Teachers’ Focus when Teaching**

The results displayed here show that 85.7% of the teachers integrate and focus on students’ interest in the process of teaching; the percentage 14.3% indicates that one of participants skipped the question.

- **Justifications:**

All the teachers that justified their answers to the previous question (57.9%) believed that the focus on students’ needs and interests is an essential aspect that guaranties the success of the teaching procedure (in terms of methodology, illustrations, explanation, etc.). Accordingly, some of the teachers stated that it is very crucial to request feedback from students about their interests and opinions to insure their involvement in the explanation process and more importantly to give them more chances to interact inside the classroom. The teachers also asserted that exercises, examples or illustrations, which are based on learners’ interests, make the meaning clearer and more accessible.

**Questions 11 and 12:** Do you think that students face problems when learning or practicing prepositions? If “Yes”, what kind of difficulties do, they face.

The data collected here indicated that all the respondents agreed (100%) on the fact that students face difficulties when learning or practicing prepositions.



The responses to Question 12 revealed that the total number (100%) of teachers participating in this study asserted that students fail to choose the correct prepositions when practicing; 57.1% declared that students confuse prepositions with adverbs while only 28.6% asserted that students omit or add unnecessary prepositions when practicing.

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. They fail to choose the correct preposition	7	100.0%
2. They add unnecessary prepositions	2	28.6%
3. They omit the necessary preposition	2	28.6%
4. They confuse preposition with adverbs	4	57.1%

**Table 8: Difficulties that Students Face when Practicing Prepositions**

**Question 13:** Why do you think they face difficulties?

Table 9 shows that 71.4% of the teachers agreed that there are three reasons behind students' failure to use prepositions. First, they do not have enough time to practice in the classroom; second, they do not practice outside the classroom and, third, they do not focus on the situational use of prepositions. Another important reason is that they fail to understand the extended meanings of prepositions, which was selected by 57.1% of the participants. Furthermore, one of the teachers had a different opinion that their failure is due to language transfer.

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. They fail to understand the extended meanings of prepositions	4	57.1%
2. They don't focus on the situational use of prepositions	5	71.4%
3. They do not have enough time to practice preposition	5	71.4%
4. They do not practice prepositions outside of the classroom	5	71.4%

**Table 9: The Reasons of Students' Failure to Use Prepositions**

Another inference that can be drawn from the data gathered from questions 11, 12, and 13 is that teachers are one hundred percent sure that students are facing difficulties due to

two main reasons. First, it is difficult for them to choose the correct prepositions and, second, they do confuse them with adverbs because they do not understand the extended meanings of prepositions. Besides, they do not have enough time to practice prepositions. Therefore, teachers are required to allocate the appropriate time for practice in the classroom even though it is obvious that students do not practice outside the classroom. More importantly, students do face difficulties because they do not focus on the situational use of prepositions, which is a critical aspect in their nature.

**Question 14:** Activities about prepositions are designed according to:

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. Formal structures and rules	4	57.1%
2. Real life situations (authenticity)	3	42.9%
3. The different uses of prepositions	4	57.1%
4. Contexts, which are based on learners' interests	2	28.6%
5. A mixture between theory and situational use	3	42.9%

**Table 10: The Characteristics of the Activities about Prepositions**

The table clearly indicates that teachers mainly depend on the formal structures and rules and the different uses of prepositions to design their tasks (57.1%); they also use authenticity-based tasks (42.9%) but only 28.6% of the informants make sure that they provide contexts, which are based on learners' interests, while only three teachers (42.9%) consider providing a mixture between theory and situational use of prepositions in their tasks.

The data displayed here indicates that less than the half of the investigated teachers do implement a mixture between theory and situational use of prepositions and authenticity-based tasks when they design activities about prepositions.

**Question 15:** Does your method motivate students to study grammar, and more particularly prepositions?

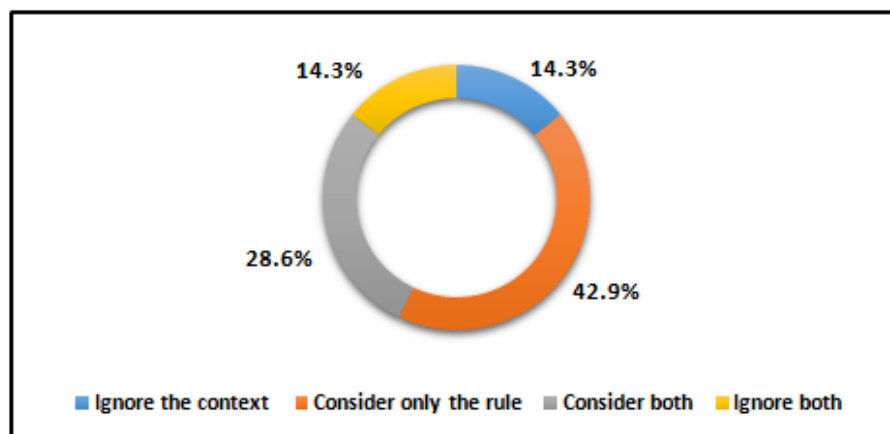
According to the data gathered here, 57.1% of the teachers of grammar and written expression believe that their teaching methods motivate students to study grammatical forms, especially prepositions, compared to 42.9% who do not know whether their methods motivate students when learning grammar.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	57.1%
No	/	/
I do not know	3	42.9%

**Table 11: The Effect of the Method Used on Students' Learning**

**Question16:** When students practice prepositions, do they ignore the context of the presented task and only care about applying their theoretical knowledge

The data collected through this question, as it is presented in the figure below, signals that 42.9% of the respondents believe that students usually consider only the rules when practicing prepositions and 14.3% asserted that they ignore the context. Another 14.3% of the teachers claimed that students ignore both the context and the rules. The figure also shows that only 28.6% of the teachers believe that students consider both context and the rule when they deal with tasks.



**Figure 5: Students' Focus when Practicing Prepositions**

**Question 17:** Please indicate how far you agree with each item (put the corresponding number in front of each item in the box)

Respondents were assessed for their opinions about a set of characteristics related to the teaching of grammar and prepositions using the communicative language teaching approach and the results show the following:

<b>Options</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1. Learners better learn prepositions when they know how they function in contexts rather than learning the theoretical rules only	71.4%	28.6%	/	/
2. Both accuracy and fluency have the same degree of importance in language teaching.	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	/
3. Grammatical competence is essential in enhancing students' communicative skills.	28.6%	71.4%	/	/
4. Success in solving tasks about prepositions depends on the student understating of the tasks context.	71.4%	28.6%	/	/
5. Good performance of students is the manifestation of different competences.	42.9%	57.1%	/	/
6. Practicing is more important than the mere memorization of rules.	100%	/	/	/
7. The linguistic system is better learned through communication	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	/
8. Implementing the notion of contextualization is important to help students develop their abilities to use prepositions effectively and appropriately.	57.1%	42.9%	/	/
9. Prepositions are polysemous, and the best way to teach them is to showcase them in various situations.	85.7%	14.3%	/	/
10. The focus on both form and meaning will improve learners' ability to use prepositions appropriately.	57.1%	42.9%	/	/

**Table 12: Teachers' Opinions about a Set of CLT Characteristics**

On the scale provided, 71.4% of the participants strongly agreed that learners better learn prepositions when they know how they function in contexts rather than learning the theoretical rules only and 28.6% simply agreed upon the same perspective. As many as 57.1% agreed that both accuracy and fluency have the same degree of importance in language

teaching; 28.6% strongly agreed, while only 14.3 disagreed. Furthermore, 71.4% agreed that grammatical competence is essential in enhancing students' communicative skills and 28.6% strongly agreed on the idea. In terms of task solving, 71.4% strongly agreed that the success in solving tasks about prepositions depends on the student understating of the tasks' context, and 28.6% of the participants simply agreed. With regard to performance, 57.1% agreed that good performance of students is the manifestation of different competences and 42.9% strongly agreed on that. Most importantly, the total number of the participants strongly agreed that Practicing is more important than the mere memorization of rules. Next, 42.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that the linguistic system is better learned through communication and the same percentage showed that three teachers agreed while only 14.3% disagreed. Moreover, 57.1% strongly agreed that the notion of contextualization is important to help students develop their abilities to use prepositions effectively and appropriately, while 42.9% agreed. Subsequently, 85.7% of the participating teachers strongly agreed that prepositions are polysemous, and the best way to teach them is to showcase them in various situations and 14.3% simply agreed. Finally, 57.1% strongly agreed that the focus on both form and meaning would improve learners' ability to use prepositions appropriately, and just 42.9% agreed on the same statement.

**Questions 18 and 19:** Is it possible to teach grammar following a Communicative Approach at our department? (The approach takes into consideration the concept of contextualization, interaction, linguistic variation, authentic devices, and any helpful learning materials.). Would you please justify your answer?

The table below reports teachers' opinions about the possibility to implement the Communicative Approach in our department. It indicates that 74.1% of the teachers believe that it is possible to use this approach while only 28.6 think that it is impossible to use it.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	74.1%
No	2	28.6%

**Table 13: The Implementation of the Communicative Approach at the Department**

According to the teachers' justifications, there is severe lack of appropriate infrastructures that facilitate the use of the communicative approach features (e.g. no equipment or specialized rooms, no encouraging atmosphere for interaction). Besides students are aware of this huge lack that affected their learning experience and habits; accordingly, some of the teachers believed that it would only be possible to use a communicative approach to teach grammar if they start working more seriously on providing the necessary means to achieve this objective. They also believed that this objective is a cooperative task between the administration and the teachers in charge of such modules as Grammar, Written Expression, and Oral Expression.

### 2.2.1.3 Students' Questionnaire Results

#### Section One: Background Information

##### Questions 1 and 2: Age and Gender

The assessment of the questions 1 and 2 demonstrated that the age range of the participating students is 19 to 24 years. It also indicated that the majority of them are females (84.8%) and only 15.2% are males.

##### Question 3: Why are you studying English?

Option	Responses	Percentages
1. For communication with native/nonnative speakers	14	42.4%
2. For business or getting a job	23	69.7%
3. For attending conferences and lectures	2	6.1%
4. For writing in different occasions	4	12.1%
5. For mastering and developing my English language	26	78.8%
6. Other	2	6.1%

**Table 14: Students' Purpose for Studying English**

The results above summarize students' purposes behind choosing English as a subject matter; the largest percentage of the subjects (78.8%) chose to study English for the sake of mastering and using the language appropriately while the second large percentage (69.7%) represents those who chose to study English in order to get a job. The following faction (42.4%) shows students' desire to learn the language as a mean of communication; however, only 12.1% of the students chose to study English for writing. Additionally, 6.1% of the subjects are learning English to attend conferences and lectures.

**Questions 4 and 5:** Are you familiar with the native speakers' cultural and everyday-life aspects? If “Yes”, in what way?

Table 15 exhibits students' extent of familiarity with English native speakers' culture and daily life aspects; it shows that almost all students have an idea about how English speakers live and speak. Based on the collected data, about 42.4% of the students are somewhat acquainted with natives' cultural dimension, and 27.3% are slightly familiar with their culture. However, only 15.2% of the subjects are very familiar with the socio-cultural aspects of the target language. In addition, the students who are quite acquainted with natives' culture represent approximately 12.1% of the whole sample and only 3.0% of them are not familiar at all with native speakers' daily life circumstances.

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. I read about them	9	27.3%
2. I watch movies	31	93.9%
3. I have native English speaking friends on social media	13	39.4%
4. I watch the news on English speaking channels (media)	11	33.3%
5. I use YouTube channels	22	66.7%
6. Other	/	/

**Table 15: Students' Mode of Familiarity with Native Speakers' Socio-Cultural Aspects**

Question 5 was designed to gather data about the ways in which students became familiar with natives' socio-cultural aspects; mainly 93.9% of them watch movies to learn

about English speaker's life and 66.7% use YouTube channels for the same purpose. In addition, about 39% of the participants have native English speaking friends on social media while 33.3% of them watch the news on English speaking channels (media), and the remaining 27.3% prefer to read about them. It is also quite noticeable that the total percentage of the cases is 97% because of the missing answers of those students who answered *not at all familiar* to the previous question.

## Section Two: Prepositions and their Uses

**Question 6:** When writing in different contexts, do you fail to use prepositions appropriately?

The aim behind this question is to investigate the extent to which students use prepositions correctly when writing in different situations. The results connoted that most of the participants (51.5%) claimed that sometimes they fail to use prepositions in an appropriate way whereas 36.4% answered that they rarely fail to use prepositions correctly; a small percentage (6.1%) of the participants claimed that they often misuse prepositions when writing and others with the same percentage assumed that they never face difficulty in using prepositions appropriately. The results indicate that indeed prepositions are difficult to use, but the degree of difficulty defers from one student to another.

**Questions 7:** Why do you fail to use prepositions appropriately when writing in different contexts?

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. Each preposition has more than one meaning	22	66.7%
2. They occur in various different contexts	16	48.5%
3. Because of their placement in the sentence	10	30.3%
4. They are hard to memorize	3	9.1%
5. The teacher does not give us precise rules for each	2	6.1%

**Table 16: The Reasons of Misusing Prepositions in Context**



The table explicitly indicates that there are two main reasons for students' failure to use prepositions. First, their failure is due to the fact that each preposition has more than one meaning (66.7%); the second reason is that prepositions may occur in various different contexts (48.5%). Some other subjects (30.3%) asserted that the placement of the prepositions in the sentence is the reason of their deficiencies in using prepositions while only 9.1% believed that prepositions are hard to memories and 6.1% blamed the teachers' imprecise rules. It is also quite noticeable that the total percentage of the cases is 97% because of the missing answers of those students who answered *never* to the previous question.

**Question 8:** How do you prefer to learn prepositions?

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. In explicit direct rules and structures	21	63.6%
2. Implicitly/in an indirect way	4	12.1%
3. In an interactive communicative environment. ( debates, interaction in classroom)	13	39.4%
4. Using multiple real life situations and experiences	18	54.5%
5. By translating them into your mother tongue	3	9.1%

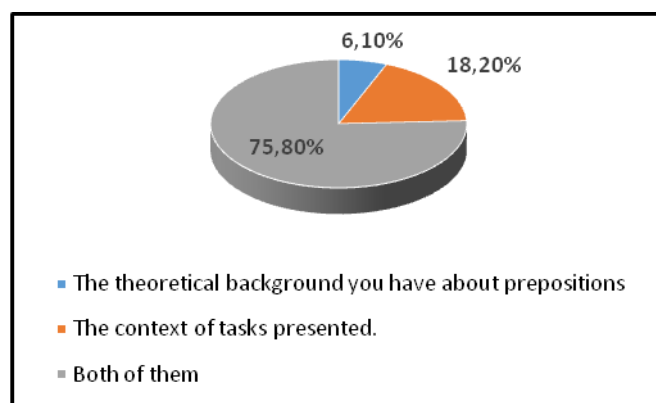
**Table 17: Students' Preferred Method to Learn Prepositions**

The results obtained through question 8 indicate that a high proportion of students (63.6%) prefer to learn prepositions in a direct way, over the explanation of the rules explicitly while 54.5% prefer to learn prepositions using multiple real life situations. In addition, 39.4% of them think that debates and discussion in the classroom are suitable to learn prepositions. The table implies that 12.1% of the participants consider learning them from exercises and examples (indirectly), and the other 9.1% prefer to translate them into their mother tongue. From the provided answers, it is concluded that most students like to learn the rules of use explicitly, then to apply these rules in context.

**Question 9:** Do you think that you have enough time to practice prepositions in the classroom?

This question examined whether students have adequate time to practice prepositions in the classroom or not. The majority of the subjects (78.8%) believe that they do not have enough time for practice, and only 21.2% think that they do have enough time to practice inside the classroom.

**Question 10:** When you try to solve tasks, what do you focus on?



**Figure 6: Students' Focus when Practicing**

This question is designed to investigate students' focus during task solving; the data gathered from the subjects indicates that 75.8% of the participants focus on both the theoretical background that they have about prepositions and the context presented in the tasks. The percentage 18.2% represents the students that consider only the context presented in the exercises; however, only 6.1% consider the inner knowledge they have about prepositions when they solve tasks. In sum, students mainly pay attention to the context presented while solving tasks, in addition to rules of use.

**Question 11:** While solving exercises about prepositions, do you take into consideration (a) the meaning of the preceding and the following words, (b) the meaning of prepositions, (c) the structural and the grammatical uses, or (d) the situational use of prepositions?

This question is mainly designed to examine students' considerations when solving tasks about prepositions; the gathered data revealed that 51.5% of the students consider the theoretical structures and rules and 48.5% consider the meaning of the preceding and the following words. However, 45.5% of the total number of subjects focuses on the meaning of prepositions themselves, and almost 40% of them consider the situational use of prepositions. From these results, it is concluded that the majority of students focus on the grammatical rules of prepositions more than context and more importantly the data presented here indicates that the answers displayed in the previous question (8) are biased.

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. The meaning of the preceding and the following words	16	48.5%
2. The meaning of prepositions	15	45.5%
3. The structural and the grammatical uses	17	51.5%
4. The situational use of prepositions	12	36.4%

**Table 18: Students' Considerations in Practice**

### Section Three: Communicative Approach and Students' Communicative Proficiency

**Question 12:** Your level of proficiency (skillfulness) in grammar affects your communicative skills:

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	60.6%
Agree	8	24.2%
Strongly disagree	/	/
Disagree	5	15.2%

**Table 19: The Effect of Grammatical Competence on Students' Communicative Skills**

This question is designed to explore the students' opinions about the effect of their level of proficiency in grammar on their communicative skills; a high proportion of the cases (60.6%) strongly agreed upon the idea that grammatical competence is crucial in the

development of the students' communicative competence, and 24.2% just agreed. Conversely, 15.2% disagreed with this perspective.

**Questions 13 and 14:** Are the tasks in which you practice prepositions interesting? What type of tasks do you receive when practicing prepositions?

Answers to question 13 implied that 23 participants think that the presented tasks are interesting, yet 30.3% of the involved subjects in the study think that tasks are not interesting.

Options	Responses	Percentages
1. Tasks that focus on the rules	17	51.5%
2. Tasks that focus on the context (sentences, paragraphs, texts)	20	60.6%
3. Tasks inspired by real life situations ( like objects, models, and pictures about what exists in reality )	7	21.2%

**Table 20: Types of Tasks Presented**

As the data tabulated above demonstrates, the majority of students (60.6%) answered that they receive tasks in the form of paragraphs, sentences, and texts, allegedly highlighting the context, and 51.5% answered that they receive tasks that focus on rules of use, while 7 students (21.2%) assumed that the tasks involve situations from reality. It is inferred, based on the analyzed results, that the tasks that the students receive about prepositions are varied according to the context and the rules of use (sentences, paragraphs, and texts).

**Question 15:** Do you feel that the types of tasks used in class enhance your capacity of using prepositions?

The table below summaries students' opinions about the tasks that they receive when practicing prepositions in class in relation to their grammatical capacities (capacity of using prepositions). The answers show that 66.7% of the subjects' think that the received tasks sometimes help enhance their ability to use prepositions and 18.2% think that the tasks are effective because the tasks enhance their abilities to use prepositions almost every time they practice. In addition, 6.1% believe that the tasks help them every time they practice while the

same percentage indicates that some students believe that the tasks almost never help them to improve and only 1 student (3%) thinks that the activities are never helpful.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Never	1	3.0%
Almost never	2	6.1%
Sometimes	22	66.7%
Almost every time	6	18.2%
Every time	2	6.1%

**Figure 21: Task Types and Students Ease at Using Prepositions**

**Question 16 and 17:** When teaching or learning prepositions, teachers and students focus on a) structure and form more than meaning, b) meaning more than form, or c) both the grammatical rules and their uses in context?

Question 16 investigated teacher's focus when teaching prepositions. The results denoted that 75.8% of subjects believe that teachers focus on both the structure and the context of using prepositions and less than 19.0% of the students claim that their teachers care about meaning more than form. By contrast, a small faction (6.1%) indicated that teachers neglect the meaning and focus more on form.

Based on the results collected from question 17 (Table 20), most of the students (81.8%) consider the rules and the context of use as their strategy to learn prepositions whereas 12.1% of them emphasize the use of meaning more than form and 6.1% focus only on structures and grammar.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
1. Structure and form more than meaning.	2	6.1%
2. Meaning more than form	4	12.1%
3.Both the grammatical rules and their uses in context	27	81.8%

**Table 22: Students' Strategies of Learning Prepositions**

### 2.2.1.4 The Diagnostic Test Results

In order to check whether students' performances when practicing prepositions are satisfactory or not, a diagnostic test seemed to be the most suitable instrument. In order to analyze students' performances, the data was summarized in the following tables.

#### Task 01

Students' Answers	Correct choice of the preposition	Incorrect choice of the preposition
Statement		
I bought a bag <u>of</u> rice and a quart <u>of</u> milk.	39.4%	60.6%
Is there room <u>for</u> me <u>on</u> this seat?	57.5%	42.4%.
I would like a new computer <u>for</u> Christmas.	63.6%	36.4%
Would you like to come <u>with</u> us <u>to</u> the arcade?	36.4%	63.6%
I am becoming more familiar <u>with</u> American history <u>by</u> reading about the civil war.	54.5%	45.5%

**Table.23: Students' Performance in Task 01**

In this exercise, students were asked to fill in the gaps using the following prepositions: *for, on, of, with, to, by*. As shown in the table, students do fail at high rates to choose the correct prepositions when practicing; the following are some examples of the mistakes committed by the students: for the first statement the answers were *I bought a bag **for (with)** rice and a quart **on (with, for)** milk* instead of *I bought a bag **of** rice and a quart **of** milk*. They also tended to write *I would like a new computer **on** Christmas* instead of *I would like a new computer **for** Christmas*. It is obvious that students do not focus on the situation displayed in each statement before they chose; for example some of them answered the last statement as *I am becoming more familiar with American history **to (on or for)** reading about the civil war* instead of *I am becoming more familiar with American history **by** reading about the civil war*. Moreover, there was clear evidence that the students kept deleting answers as if they were confused about which preposition to select.

### Task 02:

In this task, students were asked to place the suitable prepositions (for, at, on, to, in, of, with, from, by) in each sentence but the sentences did not have any gaps, and students were also notified about the fact that some sentences do not take any preposition. The students faced problems answering this task as some of them left the sentences unanswered while 66.6% of the students added an extra preposition to the sentences that did not necessitate any prepositions (sentences 1-4 in the table below). They (75.4%) also failed to choose the correct preposition and place it correctly in the sentences; statement number 5 in the table shows a correct placement with a wrong choice of prepositions while in the following one (statement number 6) there is a wrong placement in the performance of 3.03%,

Correct Answers	Wrong Answers
1. We went home.	<i>We went <b>to (at, at)</b> home</i>
2. I was busy last Friday.	<i>I was busy <b>at (in, on)</b> last Friday</i>
3. We stayed in Provo all week.	<i>We stayed in Provo <b>in (for)</b> all <b>for (of)</b> week</i>
4. Philips walks here every day.	<i>Philips walks <b>in (from, to)</b> here <b>for</b> every day</i>
5. He tried to remove the old broken handle of the door with a screwdriver.	<i>he tried to remove the old broken handle <b>on (to, from)</b> the door <b>of (by, for)</b> a screwdriver</i>
6. You can either stand at the bar or sit at a table in most pubs in Britain.	<i>you can either stand the bar or sit a table <b>most of</b> pubs Britain</i>

in which students added only the preposition *of*.

**Table 24: Examples from Students' Answers to Task 02**

### Task 03:

Students, in this task, were required to choose the correct sentence in each pair, in which the students' choice must depend on the words preceding the preposition (context). The most notable thing in the table above is the total correctness of students' choices in sentences (1, 3, and 6); one of the male students even noticed that in the pair number 6 both sentences are correct due to the suitability of the context presented in the sentences to his interests (football), which is expected to be the same reason that directed all the students'

attention to find similar cases (1 and 3). Despite the fact that the students answered some of the sentence correctly due to the suitability of the contexts to their interests, they committed mistakes when using the following prepositions: *to* (69.7%), *of* (54.5%), *with* (51.5%), and *from* (42.5%). In addition, 27.3% of the students chose *we believe to God* instead of *we believe in God*. Moreover, 72.7% of the students chose the correct sentence in the second pair of sentences due to their familiarity with the context (*I spend a lot of time on my computer*).

Students' Answers Pairs of Sentences	Correct choice of the preposition	Incorrect choice of the preposition
1. A. The bank manager was sitting on his desk. B. The bank manager was sitting <u>at</u> his desk.	100%	/
2. A. I spend a lot of time <u>on</u> my computer. B. I spend a lot of time for my computer.	72.75	27.3%
3. A. I hope he will succeed <u>at</u> his work. B. I hope he will succeed <u>in</u> his work.	100%	/
4. A. I am quite sure <u>of</u> her honesty. B. I am quite sure for her honesty.	45.5%	54.5%
5. A. Are you satisfied from your marks? B. Are you satisfied <u>with</u> your marks?	48.5%	51.5%
6. A. He plays regularly <u>for</u> that team. B. He plays regularly with that team.	100%	/
7. A. My book is different of yours. B. My book is different <u>from</u> yours.	57.5%	42.5%
8. A. We must conform <u>to</u> the rules. B. We must conform with the rules.	30.3%	69.7%
9. A. We believe <u>in</u> God. B. We believe to God.	72.7%	27.3%

**Table 25: Students' Performances in Task 03**

**Task 04:**

This task contained two parts: first students were asked to fill in the gabs using *on*, *at*, *in* then they were asked to combine the sentences from 1-4 with sentences from a-b displayed in two different boxes in order to direct their focus to the context of the task. The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are some of the most problematic prepositions with a wide variety of meanings for each; therefore, students misuse those prepositions even when solving a context-based



task. In this task student faced a lot of difficulties with the prepositions *in* and *at*, for example: (1) *he was concentrating at the task of counting the money at his wallet*, instead of *he was concentrating on the task of counting the money in his wallet*; (2) *they believe on negotiating quietly rather than shouting on each other*, instead of *they believe in negotiating quietly rather than shouting at each other*. Moreover, some of the students (03) thought that the adverb *then* in the instructions of this task is a preposition and used it to fill in the blanks, for example: *there are restrictions then travel on some parts of the country*, instead of *there are restrictions on travel in some parts of the country*; *he was concentrating at the task of counting the money then his wallet*, instead of *he was concentrating on the task of counting the money in his wallet*.

Students' Answers	Correct choice	Incorrect choice	Students' Answers	Correct choice	Incorrect choice
Sentence			Sentence		
1. on	27.3%	72.7%	a. at	27.3%	72.7%
2. at	54.5%	45.5%	b. in	51.5%	48.5%
3. in	27.3%	72.7%	c. in	39.3%	60.7%
4. on	57.5%	42.5%	d. in	30.3%	69.7%

**Table 26: Students' Performances in the Distribution of Prepositions**

Concerning the second part of the task (sentence matching), 51.5% of the students were able to match the sentences correctly and 33.4% of the participants were able to match only some of the sentences correctly while 15.1% did not answer the second part. These percentages show that students were able to combine the parts of each sentence, but still they faced problems when they solved the task.

### 2.2.1.5 Content Analysis Results

The conventional type of qualitative content analysis technique was adopted to analyze two lessons and two tasks prepared by a Grammar teacher in addition to a lesson prepared by a Witten Expression teacher. This technique was chosen because it depends only

on the data taken from the analyzed documents, in which the document is divided into categories (here, representing different major parts of the lesson) and units of analysis (individual words and phrases) to facilitate the analysis process. The documents were analyzed to investigate the implementation and the utilization of the notion of contextualization, as the main theme, when teaching prepositions. The lessons were chosen on the basis of their content, considering mainly the most commonly used prepositions. The main aim here is to examine the types of exercises and examples used to illustrate and clarify the theoretical functions of prepositions, giving more attention to the ones related to the extended meaning of the most frequently used ones.

#### **Document N°1:**

The lesson was about the common prepositions *at*, *in*, *on* and their uses, presented in 2015; it was displayed in the form of tables; each one falls into two main categories (common occurrences and extended occurrences) explained by their units. The first category in the first table was about the basic uses of the prepositions *at*, *in*, *on*. For each unit (preposition), the teacher indicated the main functions, which were time and location. She explained the rules briefly along with three examples for each function while the second category dealt with some other extended uses of each unit with some illustrative examples. Despite the fact that the teacher mentioned some of the extended uses of the prepositions tackled, she did not implement a variety of contexts to explain the extended meanings. The following example is taken from the lesson in which the teacher presented the other uses (second category) of the preposition *on*:

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b><i>With devices and machines:</i></b><br/><i>On televisions; on the radio; on the computer</i></li><li>○ <b><i>The state of something:</i></b><br/><i>On fire; on sale</i></li><li>○ <b><i>In common expressions:</i></b><br/><i>On the way; on a business trip; on a diet; on antibiotics; on loan; on vacation</i></li></ul> |
|---|

The teacher depended on the same format for the second table, which was related to prepositions of directions (to, into, onto), she listed their main uses only, with two examples for each use and no diversity in the situations used. For example, the teacher presented the first unit (the preposition *to*) as follows

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b><i>Moving toward a specific place:</i></b><br/><i>He will be flying from Algiers to Tunisia.</i><br/><i>She walks to her work.</i></li></ul> |
|---|

**Document N°2:**

The document contained three tasks and was presented in 2015 for second year students; the teacher entitled each activity as follows: (1) *the right object*, (2) *adjective plus preposition*, and (3) *identification and function* (3 categories). In the first activity, students were asked to identify the preposition and to locate its object; the central focus in this task was the structure only. The second task dealt with the use of the prepositions (*about, at, for, from, in, of, on, to, and with*) in relation to some adjectives (absent, absorbed, cruel, eligible, famous, etc.); students were asked to choose from a list of adjectives and a list of prepositions in order to fill in the **gaps** in a set of twenty statements. It is clearly notable that the teacher was trying to direct the students' attention to the use of prepositions with certain words (contexts). This activity focused on both the rule and situation of use; therefore, the students needed to understand the meanings of the situations in order to choose the right adjectives and prepositions. The final exercise was related to prepositional phrases and their functions, in which students were asked to identify the prepositional phrase then its function in each sentence. In this activity, the focus was on the function of each prepositional phrase in the overall structure of the sentence; in this case, students have to analyze the sentence deeply (meaning and structure) to determine the functions.

**Document N°3:**

Another lesson was introduced in 2019 to second year students about preposition and

prepositional phrases; the teacher started providing students with a definition of the preposition and the prepositional phrase. She also presented the two types of prepositions, patterns of prepositional phrases and their functions, and finally meanings of prepositions. The teacher explained each category theoretically with an example for each one in matters of meaning; she listed only the common ones with a limited number of illustrations, but she informed that each preposition has different other meanings, concluding that prepositions cannot be memorized in relation to any meaning because they cover a wide range of meanings. The teacher also asserted that some prepositions are confusing (may be confused with adverbs). Despite the fact that the teacher gave the students interesting remarks about the multi-meaning nature of prepositions, the teacher did not implement different situations to illustrate those meanings.

**Document N°4:**

This document included two exercises related to the use of the prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* when indicating temporal information. At the beginning of the first task (first category), the teacher provided students with a list of separate expressions of time (units), like seasons and days, and they were asked to classify each period of time under the suitable preposition. In the second task (second category), they were asked to complete a set of rules. The learners, in this case, had to focus on the rules of use concerning the prepositions *at*, *in*, and *on* to express time, depending on a set of isolated entities. The teacher did not associate the periods of time with meaningful events to direct their attention to the context in order to improve their performance and to force them to avoid the mere memorization of rules. Therefore, students were going to focus totally on the rules.

**Document N°5:**

Another vivid example used to investigate the implementation of the contextualization theme is a lesson prepared by a teacher of written expression in 2020 for first year students. It

consists of two main categories divided into subcategories; the first category is related to prepositions in general, in which the teacher started by defining prepositions briefly, then he summarized the possible common prepositions in a table, and concluded with an explanation of the two types of prepositions. The second category is about prepositional phrases; the teacher began, as usual, by a definition, then he moved to explain functions of the prepositional phrase. The teacher just informed students about prepositions and prepositional phrases by explaining the theoretical background of each one, without providing illustrations of different situations or real life examples.

#### **2.2.1.6. Discussion and Summary of Key Findings**

The results obtained from this study revealed that most of the deficiencies in students' abilities to use prepositions involved failure to choose the correct preposition, failure to decide when to add or omit a certain preposition, and failure to distinguish between prepositions and adverbs, which are some of the common misuses of prepositions studied by Fitikides (2000) in his book *Common Mistakes in English*. Some examples from students' test papers indicating their inability to use prepositions correctly include the following: *we must conform **with** the rules; they believe **on** negotiating quietly rather than shouting on each other; and Philips walks here **in** every day.*

The findings also demonstrated that the reason behind students' failure to use prepositions is their polysemous, confusing nature; in addition to students' neglecting of the context of the tasks at hand. Moreover, the results obtained from the diagnostic test proved that students are unable to match between their theoretical knowledge about prepositions and their extended uses in different contexts since they discard the context of tasks presented even if the teacher tries to direct their attention to it, which clearly answers the research questions number two and four and matches with teachers' answers to Question 16 in the teachers' questionnaire. This compromised students' answers, a fact that goes in line with the

assumption adopted by Celce-Murcia (1991) that the nature of prepositions as a grammatical form requires a more interactive, context-based learning atmosphere due to the fact that grammar is considered as a tool to be used in the apprehension and construction of discourse. She also believed that “When learned as a decontextualized sentence-level system, grammar is not very useful to learners as they listen, read, speak, and write in their second or foreign language” (p. 466).

The forgoing analysis of the teachers’ questionnaire also revealed that the teachers of both grammar and written expression are implementing the notion of contextualization in their lessons and exercises. However, the data collected from the content analysis of the same teachers’ lessons indicated that the teachers hardly use illustrations based on real life situations or even examples based on students’ interests (answers to Question 14 in the teachers’ questionnaire showed that only 2 teachers consider students interests when designing tasks), which affected students’ performances and learning habits. In other words, Students are considering only the notional rules related to prepositions and they overlook the communicative message of the task due to the absence of contextualization in theoretical sessions as the results of the diagnostic test and the content analysis showed which supports the research assumption number two. In 2000, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain emphasized the importance of the use of the notion of contextualization along with learner-based materials, stating that “language instructors should use materials that are well contextualized and meaningful to learners” (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2008). Another striking finding is the teachers’ emphasis on the importance of students’ interests and needs when explaining prepositions and designing tasks and activities accordingly, students claimed that the tasks they receive are interesting; they also asserted that the presented tasks are somewhat helpful when it comes to the development of their abilities to use prepositions.

Further, the students' questionnaire result analysis clearly indicated that both teachers and students focus on the grammatical rules and their uses in context throughout the process of teaching and learning prepositions. In contrast, the diagnostic test and the teachers' questionnaire results exposed the fact that their answers were biased because they misused prepositions even when their attention was directed to the tasks' context (in the diagnostic test). Comparatively, the analyzed lessons and exercises indicated that the methods of teaching prepositions at the University of Larbi Tebessi lack the implementation of contextualization. When teaching prepositions, teachers rely only on what is theoretical, and discard what is practical in terms of context, i.e. they do not try to direct the students focus to different contexts in order to facilitate the learning of the extended meanings of prepositions. Instead, illustrations and exercises used by teachers are most of the time based on isolated entities instead of paragraphs, dialogues, and/or plays. Thus, learners misuse prepositions when they face various situations and contexts, which supported the idea that students' answers were biased. Additionally the findings are very supportive of the first assumption of this research, in which the researchers claimed that the lack of practice considering real world situations and the ways in which prepositions are learned are the primary reasons behind students' failure in using them, due to the perspective that emphasizes the fact that "the learning objectives should be grounded in some type of real-world discourse" (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2008, p. 51). Consequently, the teaching methods used to teach prepositions are not boosting students' performance when using prepositions in writing; the conclusion drawn here is perfectly matching with the research question number three.

Although 71.4% of the teachers claimed that they use the communicative approach and stressed the significance of interaction-based classrooms, as it is considered and stressed by many applied linguists including Widdowson (197), Canale and Swain (1980), Celce-

Murcia et al (1995), and Hymes (1972), they utilize more than one method to teach prepositions in Grammar and Written Expression sessions. These methods include the Direct Method and the GTM. More importantly, the collected data singled the fact that the teachers are experienced in the aforementioned modules, which connotes that they would know exactly how to choose the method that meets the nature of prepositions as well as the students' lacks and needs; moreover, experienced teachers would affect the learning/teaching process positively. Still, the teachers also proclaimed that it is hard to implement the communicative approach's features in their classrooms due to the notable lacks in the means to achieve such an objective, which affected the students learning habits. In addition, they totally asserted that practice is a very important element in the process of teaching grammar and especially prepositions. However, students did not have enough time to practice at the classroom as the answers to Question 9 in the students' questionnaire demonstrated. Consequently, teachers are advised to depend more on practice the same way they depend on theory; in other words, there should be a balance between theory and practice so that learners have enough chances to use what they have learned about prepositions. Correspondently, the idea discussed here answers the research question number one and proves the hypothesis number one, which proclaims that if teachers and students both depend on practice the same way they do on theory to teach/learn different prepositions, then students' communicative proficiency would be quite satisfactory.

The examination of teachers' instructional habits unveiled that they are mainly using a variety of tasks including formal structures and rule-based activities, context-based activities (authenticity-based tasks), and a mixture between theory and situational use. Furthermore, the results obtained from Question 6 and Question 7 are really inserting since all the teachers are quite familiar with the native speakers' cultural and everyday-life aspects through a variety of contexts. These contexts can be formal or informal, ordinary or exceptional, which indicates



that they are able and qualified to use the notion of contextualization and to design context and authenticity-based tasks and lessons. Another supportive factor to the previous perspective is that students are familiar with the sociocultural dimension of the English native speakers' society, which indicates that they are able to deal with the context-based lessons and tasks if implemented. However, teachers are unable to use only the tasks that implement and focus on both meaning and form due to the lack of the needed means and to the limited time allocated for practice (less than the half of the investigated teachers do implement a mixture between theory and situational use of prepositions), which affected students' performance when using prepositions in different communicative settings. In 1991, Celce-Murcia proposed and foregrounded the importance of integrating grammar instruction into a communicative curriculum, considering content-based and/or task-based language teaching and learning; thereby, teachers should work hard to eliminate all the obstacles that prevent the implementation of such an approach.

In 1980, Canale and Swain adopted the notion of communicative competence to further develop it and to highlight the importance of grammatical competence as an effective component in enhancing students' communicative abilities. In this respect, it is critical to state that the investigated teachers agreed that grammatical competence is essential in enhancing students' communicative skills; they also agreed that both accuracy and fluency have the same degree of importance in language teaching. More importantly, students are also aware of the effects of their level of proficiency (skillfulness) in grammar on the development of their communicative skills; consequently, the implementation of a language teaching approach that combines both form and meaning, accuracy and fluency, appropriateness and correctness (grammatical acceptability), would be quite acceptable. Simply saying, a teaching method that includes the previously mentioned parameters is very suitable to construct students' communicative abilities according to Hymes's claim (1972)

that there should be four main judgments or parameters to assess the effectiveness of language as a communicative system, which are appropriateness, correctness, feasibility, and occurrences. More importantly and since the currently used grammar teaching methods are the reason behind students' ineffective learning habits, the implementation of a meaning-based grammar instruction methodology would improve students' learning and practicing habits, which proves hypothesis number two that claims if students are able to match the conceptual rules of prepositions with their corresponding applications in multiple situations, they will successfully achieve their communicative purposes.

The results obtained from Question 3 in the students' questionnaire signified that the majority of students are aiming at learning how to use English appropriately for a range of purposes and notably each one of them will use it in a different context (different levels of styles, formality, and intimacy), which necessitates an appropriate and an accurate use of language. Therefore, they need to learn it in a variety of contexts in order to improve their communicative competences including grammar. However, and as stated earlier, teachers asserted that it is hard to use solely the communicative approach and to implement the notion of contextualization due to the lack of the needed infrastructures that facilitate the use of the communicative approach features. Along with students' awareness of this considerable lack that affected their learning experience and habits; they prefer to learn prepositions in a direct way, through the explanation of rules explicitly and their translation into their mother tongue; still they did not show any refusal to the interactive-based teaching method. Therefore, the teachers of Grammar and Written Expression believe that it would only be possible to use a communicative approach to teach grammar if they start working more seriously on providing the necessary means to achieve this objective. They also believe that this objective is a cooperative task between the administration and the teachers in charge of such modules as Grammar, Written Expression, and Oral Expression.

Since this research is adopting a correlational design, the previously developed discussion is used to maintain the following correlational analysis:

- **Students' Questionnaire Correlational Analysis**

Table 41 represents the strength of the relationship between the variables of this study. The tabulated data indicates that there is a weak-positive relationship between the teaching method and students' communicative proficiency ( $r = 0.24$ ). Despite the fact that teachers are using a variety of methods of which the Communicative Method is one, students do not seem to be adopting the learning habits required to develop their communicative skills (focusing on the contexts provided, interaction, practicing inside and outside the classroom). According to the results obtained from the instruments used in this research, there are two main reasons for the ineffectiveness of the students' learning habits. The first one is the unavailability of the infrastructures, the time, and means needed to use only context and meaning-based methods to teach language, and more importantly grammar, in addition to the teachers' use of the Direct Method and their focus on grammar as formal structures. Second, the classroom settings seem to be demotivating and daunting; consequently, students do not even try to make efforts to interact or to focus on the situational use of problematic grammatical forms (prepositions). Therefore, they do face difficulties when they use them in different contexts, as it is shown by the r-coefficient ( $r = 0.33$ ) related to the relationship between the students communicative proficiency and the difficulties they face when using prepositions, which is a weak positive relationship.

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	TM	CP	DP
Teaching Method (TM)	1	.24 **	-.24**
Communicative proficiency (CP)		1	.33**
Difficulties to use preposition (DP)			1

**Table 27: Correlational Results in Students' Questionnaire**

It is also noticeable that there is a weak-negative relationship between the teaching method and the misuse of prepositions that goes into the negative direction ( $r = -0.24$ ) because the teaching methods are not the only reason behind the deficiencies that students have in their communicative capabilities. Instead, it is more related to students' practicing or task-solving habits, which are mainly ineffective; in other words, the diagnostic test results clearly indicate that students misuse prepositions even when their attention is directed to the context of the presented activities due to the fact that teachers use both the Direct Method and Formal Grammar, which stimulates the students to consider only the theoretical rules related to prepositions.

- **Teachers' Questionnaire Correlational analysis**

The data obtained in the table below is very supportive of the previous analysis (Students' Questionnaire Correlational Analysis); it is notably indicated that there is a significant relationship between the variables but still it is a weak relationship due to many factors. This relationship should be considered strong only if the r-coefficient equals or exceeds 0.50 ( $r \geq .50$ ); beside the aforementioned factors in the students' questionnaire correlational analysis, the positive weak relationship ( $r = .31$ ) between the implemented teaching methods and students' communicative competence is basically related to students' unwillingness to depend on authenticity-based tasks and materials when practicing prepositions. The main reason behind this kind of behaviour is teacher's inability to use only contextualization and meaning-based approaches when teaching or designing tasks about prepositions; this assumption was highly supported by the results gathered from the content analysis conducted on the lesson and exercise documents related to prepositions. The teachers' questionnaire data analysis also indicated that they are unable to use such methods (communicative approach) due to the unavailability of the necessary means. Since students' communicative proficiency is affected by the lack of the utilization of the notion of

contextualization in the Grammar and Written Expression courses, they consequently face difficulties when using prepositions; this relationship is presented by the r-coefficient ( $r = .41$ ) that indicates a positive weak relationship. Moreover, Table 42 also shows that there is a weak negative relationship between the teaching methods and students' deficiencies when using prepositions; the key factor standing behind this relationship is their constant inability to use the correct preposition, when encountering different situations. The data collected from the diagnostic test and the teachers' questionnaire revealed that the students are incapable of choosing the right prepositions when solving tasks of different communicative purposes due to the multi-meaning nature of the targeted prepositions.

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	TM	CP	DP
Teaching Method (TM)	1	.31 **	-.31**
Communicative proficiency (CP)		1	.41**
Difficulties to use preposition (DP)			1

**Table 28: Correlational Results in Teachers' Questionnaire**

In sum, the perspectives discussed above unquestionably answer the research questions and support the assumptions and hypotheses presented in this research:

- First, students are not aware of the importance of practicing prepositions in a more communicative, interactive setting due to the fact that they do not pay attention to the context in the activities at hand. More importantly, teachers are not able to fully depend on practice as they do depend on theory due to time restrictions and limited means of instruction. Thereby, it is critical for both of them to depend on practice the same way they do on theory and use communicative-based methods to teach and learn different prepositions.
- Second, students are obviously not capable of linking the knowledge of the theoretical rules of prepositions with their applications in contextualized tasks since they do not focus on the notion of contextualization when learning prepositions at the first place, and

it is also hard for their teachers to implement such a notion all the time. Therefore, it would be effective if they consider learning strategies to enhance their ability to match the conceptual rules of prepositions with their corresponding applications in multiple situations, and to successfully achieve their communicative purposes.

- As clarified earlier, the teaching methods used at the Department of Foreign Languages at the University Larbi Tebessi are varied, including the communicative approach; however, they are not effective in terms of practice for two reasons: first, teachers are not able to implement the communicate language teaching approach features appropriately; second, students' learning habits are a serious obstacle to achieve such an objective, which supports the assumption that lack of practice considering real world situations and the ways in which prepositions are learned are the primary reasons behind students' failure in using them accurately.

- Finally, the results obtained from the instruments utilized in this study clearly demonstrated that students do discard the communicative purposes behind the exercises when they attempt to solve them due to the absence of contextualization in theoretical sessions.

### **2.2.2 Pedagogical Implications**

The results obtained through the tools utilized in this research displayed that both students and teachers are aware of the important effects of grammar on the students' communicative abilities, which goes with the belief that grammatical competence is a fundamental component in communicative competence; therefore, it would be crucial to implement a meaning and form-based instruction method to teach different language components, including grammar (Canale and Swain, 1980). Correspondingly, the implementation of a grammar teaching approach that integrates both context and formal structures becomes a necessity due to the fact that students of English at Larbi Tebessi University are developing ineffective learning, practicing, and task-solving habits due to

teacher's inability to use only contextualization and meaning-based approaches (the communicative approach) when teaching or designing tasks about prepositions as it is presented in the correlational analysis above. As it is showcased in this study's theoretical part, Long (1991) presented what is known as Focus on Form (FonF), an instructional method that call for an integration of grammar and communication in second language pedagogy (L2); he emphasized the effectiveness of such a design feature in language teaching methodology (as cited in Nassaji and Fotos, 2002, p.11). Thereby, it is important to direct attention to the necessity of using such methodological features, including teaching prepositions through texts and contexts, using task-based materials and more importantly realia, which depends on authentic (from-life) materials such as newspapers, articles, advertisements, signs, and pictures. Moreover, the use of such materials is highly recommended because they would help the teachers to obliterate the demotivating and daunting classroom settings and consequently push the students to be more involved in the lesson's explanation and interactive in the classroom (focus on the situational use of problematic grammatical forms). Finally, the following are some strategies that may improve students' communicative skills when using prepositions

- Students attention should be directed to both the theoretical rules and the context (extended meaning) when learning or practicing prepositions through the use of task-based lessons and exercises such as cue cards, activity cards, pair or group communication. This type of tasks was highly supported by Yule (1998 and 2008) in his books in which he designed a set of a very effective context-based activities
- Students should constantly practice the theoretical knowledge related to prepositions inside and outside the classroom. They may use grammar worksheets, which are usually a collection of tasks that depend totally on pictures, especially pictures taken from real life situations that are easy to find and download.

- Teachers should use authenticity-based materials (materials taken from real life situations, original real materials) to design lessons and tasks in order to help learners develop constructive learning habits like context consideration and constant practice because these tasks, based on such materials, are usually interesting (learner and interest-based tasks), which would guaranty the constant practice.

### **2.2.3. Recommendation for Future Research**

This research had undergone a few complications in the process of its completion, which are taken as the foundation for further studies that can be done by other researchers in the same area of investigation. This research has adopted the cluster random sampling strategy, but unfortunately the researchers failed to obtain the appropriate sample size that guaranties generalizability to the overall population. They did not manage to divide the population into three groups and choose randomly from each group; instead, they chose randomly one of the administrative groups of second year students composed of 33 students along with 7 grammar and written expression teachers, which may affect generalizability. Therefore, it is recommended to replicate this study with a larger sample for more possible generalizations. Additionally, this study's results indicated that it is very essential to use a communicative approach to teach prepositions; thereupon, the investigators propose to replicate this study using an experimental design in order to examine this approach's effects on students' communicative competence and the process of teaching prepositions. This work has focused only on the relationship between the mastery of prepositions as one of the problematic grammatical forms and the development of students' communicative skills when writing for different purposes. It did not examine the discourse-grammar (a grammatical framework that grew out of the analysis of spoken and written discourse) related to different genres and contexts in relation to learners' abilities to communicate effectively when writing in different genres; a closer experimental examination is recommended in order to investigate



the effects of the communicative approach on students' writing abilities using different grammatical frameworks when writing different genres of discourse.

#### **2.2.4. Limitations**

No research is fully complete; therefore, it is quite natural to find limitations and obstacles in any type of educational research. This study has failed to obtain the appropriate sample size that guarantees generalizability to the overall population, in which only thirty-three participants (belonging to the same administrative group) were chosen randomly from three official administrative groups (three clusters that comprised 108 student), using cluster random sampling, instead of random selection of the individuals from each cluster due to the lack of accessibility and time limitations. The total number of subjects in this study was 41, consisting of 33 students and 8 teachers; the teachers' number was already very limited when one teacher withdrew from the study.

Moreover, the researchers intended to gather the lessons and exercise documents about prepositions from the teachers' sample (teachers of grammar and written expression) to conduct a content analysis; however, this ended into a failure because most of the teachers did not prepare and present the lesson due to the lockdown situation. Unfortunately, they managed to gather the lessons only from two teachers (a teacher of grammar and a teacher of written expression).

The researchers also faced another problem when they reached the field test phase, in which they conducted the pilot study of the teachers' questionnaire with the same members (four out of seven teachers) of the target sample due to the limited number of teachers in order to insure the validity and the effectiveness of the instrument.

## **Conclusion**

To reach the final form of this fieldwork, the researchers investigated the teachers and students' teaching/learning habits concerning some of the most problematic prepositions in relation to students' communicative proficiency. In doing so, they utilized a collection of research instruments including two questionnaires, a diagnostic test, and a conventional content analysis. The data collected through these tools demonstrated that students are facing confusion and uncertainty when using prepositions in different contexts, which affected the development of their communicative skills. The findings of this research notably supported its objectives and showed that the main reasons behind students' deficiencies are: prepositions polysemous nature, students failure (students' learning habits) to take into consideration the context of the tasks when they attempt to solve them, the lack of practice, and more importantly the absence of teaching methods that stress the use of context and authenticity-based materials to design lessons and tasks. On the basis of the above-mentioned findings, some methodological suggestions were vital to take into consideration. Implementing authenticity-based instructions and a communicative approach (FonF instruction design) in language teaching would surely reinforce the students' learning of prepositions and affect positively their communicative abilities. The chapter was finalized with a set of educational suggestions offered for advanced investigation and elaboration.

## General Conclusion

The inquiry presented throughout this dissertation was an attempt to promote the discussion about some major perspectives in second and foreign language pedagogy and their effects on students' communicative competence, taking grammatical competence as a major theme. In other words, we practically examined the role of linguistic competence in the development of foreign language learners' abilities to communicate appropriately and accurately in different communicative setting. Prepositions' multi-meaning nature seemed to be a major reason for students' deficiencies when using them to write for various communicative purposes. That is why the ultimate aim of this study was to particularly examine some of the most commonly used prepositions, considering their problematic, polysemous nature in relation to the teaching methods implemented at the department of English - University of Larbi Tebessi. This inquiry was initiated through a set of theoretical perspectives concerning the nature and the development of such a problematic second language pedagogy issue.

This study basically aimed at investigating the relationship between the teaching of prepositions and students' inability to use them appropriately when writing, in correspondence with their communicative proficiency, and to answer the research questions associated with the topic objectives. Therefore, a correlational design was adopted, and the study targeted 40 subjects including teachers and students of English at the same department. This study was initiated by a means of a diagnostic test to examine the types of difficulties that students face when they use prepositions and to support the claims and assumptions that gave birth to this topic. We also intended to explore students and teachers' learning/teaching habits in order to verify the correctness of the assumption of the ineffectiveness of the methods used in teaching prepositions and the absence of practicing prepositions' use in

communicative contextualized settings, by means of two questionnaires. Finally, a conventional content analysis (of a qualitative nature) was conducted to support and give more significance to the data collection through the other instruments. The data gathered indicated that the main reasons for students' deficiencies are their inability to match between the knowledge of the theoretical rules of prepositions with their applications in contextualized tasks due to the fact that they do not consider the context of the presented tasks when they attempt to solve them, along with prepositions' polysemous, confusing nature. Moreover, students did not have enough time to practice preposition using context-based tasks; the findings also demonstrated that the teaching methods used by teachers of grammar and written expression lacked the use of the notion of contextualization, which affected students' performance negatively. However, they used a variety of methods of which the interactive, situational approach is one; still they were not able to implement its features successfully due to time and means' limitations.

The correlational analysis of the foregoing results implied that the teaching methods used to teach grammar and written expression are not the direct reason of students' weak capabilities to use prepositions when writing; instead students disregard for the context when learning or practicing prepositions is a major affecting factor, in addition to students' ineffective learning and practicing habits. In sum, these findings supported the assumption that was thoroughly tackled in the first section of the first chapter in this research, which dealt with the crucial role of grammar in developing students communicative abilities; it also emphasized the important need for a language teaching approach that combines both meaning and form, fluency and accuracy, appropriateness and correctness. Therefore, it is highly recommended to use such an approach in second and foreign language instruction. Moreover, learners should have varied opportunities to acquire the language that covers both their grammatical and communicative learning needs, and guarantee to meet their different

proficiency levels. The findings of this research certainly have their impediments, which require more work to be done in this area of investigation; subsequently, this study's defects can shape an essential plan for future research.

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## **Appendices**

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## Appendix A: The Diagnostic Test



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
Larbi Tebessi University -Tebessa  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Letters and English Language



Dear students,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important study of our Masters dissertation. The following exercises are used for testing your knowledge and abilities to use some of the most commonly used prepositions you have supposedly dealt with in Grammar module and Written Expression : (*in, on, at, to, by, from, of, with, and for*). Please read them attentively and answer them all (even when you are not quite sure about the answer). Be assured that your answers will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

**Task 01: Fill in the gaps with the appropriate preposition from this list: *for, on, of, with, to, by*. (4.5 points)**

1. I bought a bag of rice and a quart of milk.
2. Is there room for me on this seat?
3. I would like a new computer for Christmas.
4. Would you like to come with us to the arcade?
5. I am becoming more familiar with American history by reading about the civil war.

**Task 02: Place the prepositions below where necessary in the sentences. Some of the sentences do not necessitate any of those prepositions. (5 points)**

*For, at, on, to, in, of, with, from, by*

- A. We went home.

- B. You can either stand at the bar or sit at a table in most pubs in Britain.
- C. We will be in Eugene tonight.
- D. We stayed in Provo all week.
- E. I get to the Red Lion from here.
- F. Deadline: a point in time by which something must be done or complete.
- G. Philips walks here every day.
- H. He tried to remove the old broken handle of the door with a screwdriver.
- I. I was busy last Friday.
- J. The meeting focused on economic problems in developing countries in South-East Asia.

**Task 03: Which one is correct: (A) or (B)? (4.5 points)**

- A. The bank manager was sitting on his desk.

B. The bank manager was sitting at his desk.
- A. I spend a lot of time on my computer.

B. I spend a lot of time for my computer.
- A. I hope he will succeed at his work.

B. I hope he will succeed in his work.
- A. I am quite sure of her honesty.

B. I am quite sure for her honesty.
- A. Are you satisfied from your marks?

B. Are you satisfied with your marks?
- A. He plays regularly for that team.

B. He plays regularly with that team.
- A. My book is different of yours.

B. My book is different from yours.

8. A. We must conform to the rules.  
 B. We must conform with the rules.
9. A. We believe in God.  
 B. We believe to God.

**Task 04: First, fill in the blanks with the appropriate preposition: *on, at, in*. Then, complete each sentence from “Box A” with the corresponding part from “Box B”. (6 points)**

Box A	Box B
1. There are restrictions <u>on</u> travel 2. Jan kept staring <u>at</u> the goldfish 3. They believe <u>in</u> negotiating quietly 4. He was concentrating <u>on</u> the task	a. rather than shouting <u>at</u> each other b. of counting the money <u>in</u> his wallet c. as it swam around <u>in</u> its small glass bowl d. <u>in</u> some parts of the country
1. D.      2. C.      3. A.      4. B.	

# Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Larbi Tebessi University -Tebessa

Faculty of Letters and Languages



Department of Letters and English Language

Dear teachers

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a research project about the teaching of prepositions and the development of students' communicative competence. We will be so much grateful if you could take the time and the energy to share your experience and ideas by answering the questions below. Your answers are very important and will be of much help for this research work

Thank you so much in advance for your help

Note: you can choose more than one answer

## I. Background Information

1. Gender:            Male                Female   

2. Degree(s) held:

a. BA( license)   

b. Master   

c. Magister   

d. PhD( Doctorate)   

e. Other:.....  
.....

3. Which module do you teach?

- a. Grammar
  - b. Written expression
  - c. Both
4. How long have you been teaching English at University? .....
5. Are you personally aware of the native speakers' cultural and everyday-life aspects?
- Yes  No
6. If yes, say how?
- a. Traveling
  - b. Watching movies
  - c. Via Skype or any other social media
  - d. British council events
  - e. Native teachers ( colleagues in Algerian universities)
  - f. Reading ( books, magazines, blogs ... }
  - g. Other: .....

**II. Methods of Grammar Instruction and the Teaching of Prepositions**

7. What method do you follow when you teach grammar?
- a. Grammar translation method
  - b. Explicit deductive(starting by rules, then examples)
  - c. Functional grammar ( grammar in context)
  - d. Grammar as formal structures (focus on form, but not meaning)
  - e. Direct method (giving examples leading to rules)
  - f. The communicative approach (Context, interaction, meaning, competencies-based method )
  - g. Other: .....



.....  
8. When teaching prepositions, do you focus on the notion of contextualization (language items put in context instead of being treated in isolation.).

Yes  No

9. If no, what prevents you?

a. Time

b. Students interests and attitudes

c. The curriculum

d. Other: .....

.....  
10. Do you focus on learners' needs and interests when teaching?

Yes  No

▪ please justify:

.....  
.....  
.....

11. Do you think that students face problems when learning or practicing prepositions?

Yes  No

12. If "Yes", what kind of difficulties do they face.

a. They fail to choose the correct preposition

b. They add unnecessary prepositions

c. They omit the necessary preposition

d. They confuse preposition with adverbs

e. Others: .....

.....

13. Why do you think they face difficulties

- a. They fail to understand the extended meanings of prepositions
  - b. They don't focus on the situational use of prepositions
  - c. They do not have enough time to practice preposition
  - d. They do not practice preposition outside the classroom
  - e. Others: .....
- .....

14. Activities about prepositions are designed according to:

- a. Formal structures and rules
  - b. Real life situations ( authenticity )
  - c. The different uses of prepositions
  - d. Contexts which are based on learners' interests
  - e. A mixture between theory and situational use
  - f. Other: .....
- .....

15. Does your method motivate students to study grammar, and more particularly prepositions?    Yes                       No                       I do not know

16. When students practice prepositions, Do they ignore the context of the presented task and only care about applying their theoretical knowledge

- a. Ignore the context
- b. Consider only the rule
- c. Consider both
- d. Ignore both

17. Please indicate how far you agree with each item ( put the corresponding number in front of each item in the box below.)

**Strongly Agree (1)/ Agree (2) / Strongly Disagree (3) / Disagree (4)**

Learners better learn prepositions when they know how they function in contexts rather than learning the theoretical rules only	
Both accuracy and fluency have the same degree of importance in language teaching.	
Grammatical competence is essential in enhancing students' communicative skills.	
Success in solving tasks about prepositions depends on the student understating of the tasks context.	
Good performance of students is the manifestation of different competences.	
Practicing is more important than the mere memorization of rules.	
The linguistic system is better learned through communication	
Implementing the notion of contextualization is important to help students develop their abilities to use prepositions effectively and appropriately.	
Prepositions are polysemous, and the best way to teach them is to showcase them in various situations.	
The focus on both form and meaning will improve learners' ability to use prepositions appropriately.	

18. Is it possible to teach grammar following a Communicative Approach at our department?

(The approach takes into consideration the concept of contextualization, interaction, linguistic variation, authentic devices, and any helpful learning materials.)

Yes  No

19. Would you please justify your answer?

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you so much for you cooperation**

## Appendix C: Students' Questionnaire



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
Larbi Tebessi University -Tebessa  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Letters and English Language



Dear students

We are undertaking a research project about the relationship between the teaching of prepositions in communicative settings and the enhancement of students communicative competence; we would like to request you to thoughtfully answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) in the right box correspondent to your preferred options. Remember that there are no wrong or right answers; just answer as honestly as possible

Thank you so much for your contributions

Note: you may choose more than one answer

### I. General Information

1. Age:
2. Gender:            Male             Female
3. Why are you studying English?
  - a. For communication with native/nonnative speakers.
  - b. For business or getting a job
  - c. For attending conferences and lectures.
  - d. For writing in different occasions.
  - e. For mastering and developing my English language.
  - f. Others: .....
4. Are you familiar with the native speakers' cultural and everyday-life aspects?

- a. Not at all familiar
- b. Slightly familiar
- c. Somewhat familiar
- d. Quite familiar
- e. Very familiar

5. If you are familiar, in what way?

- a. I read about them.
- b. I watch movies.
- c. I have native English speaking friends on social media.
- d. I watch the news on English speaking channels ( media)
- e. I use YouTube channels.
- f. Others .....

## II. Prepositions and Their Uses

6. When writing in different contexts, do you fail to use prepositions appropriately?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Often
- e. Always

7. Why do you fail to use prepositions appropriately when writing in different contexts?

- a. Each preposition has more than one meaning.
- b. They occur in various different contexts
- c. Because of their placement in the sentence
- d. They are hard to memorize.
- e. The teacher does not give us precise rules for each.

8. How do you prefer to learn prepositions?

- a. In explicit direct rules and structures.
- b. Implicitly/in an indirect way
- c. In an interactive communicative environment. ( debates, interaction in clasrrom)
- d. Using multiple real life situations and experiences.
- e. By translating them into your mother tongue.

9. Do you think that you have enough time to practice prepositions in the classroom?

Yes  No.

10. When you try to solve tasks, what do you focus on?

- a. The theoretical background you have about prepositions (rules/structures).
- b. The context of tasks presented.
- c. Both of them.

11. While solving exercises about prepositions, do you take into consideration?

- a. The meaning of the preceding and the following words.
- b. The meaning of prepositions.
- c. The structural and the grammatical uses.
- d. The situational use of prepositions.

### III. Communicative Approach and Students' Communicative Proficiency

12. Your level of proficiency ( skillfulness ) in grammar affects your communicative skills:

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree

13. Are the tasks in which you practice prepositions interesting?

Yes.  No.

14. What type of tasks do you receive when practicing prepositions?
- a. Tasks that focus on the rules
  - b. Tasks that focus on the context (sentences, paragraphs, texts)
  - c. interactive communicative environment ( like objects, models, and pictures about what exists in reality )
15. Do you feel that the types of tasks used in class enhance your capacity of using prepositions?
- a. Never
  - b. Almost never
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Almost every time
  - e. Every time
16. When teaching you about prepositions, your teacher focuses on:
- a. Structure and form more than meaning.
  - b. Meaning more than form
  - c. Both the grammatical rules and their uses in context.
17. Your strategy to study prepositions focuses on:
- d. Structure and form more than meaning.
  - e. Meaning more than form
  - f. Both the grammatical rules and their uses in context.

## Appendix D: Document One in the Content Analysis

### Common Prepositions and Their Usage

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Other uses</b>
<b>at</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a specific time (clock time): <b>At</b> 10:00 am; <b>at</b> noon; <b>at</b> sunrise</li> <li>Common expressions: They came <b>at</b> the same time. <b>At</b> present, I can't tell you more. The stars shine <b>at</b> night.</li> <li>Mealtimes: <b>At</b> lunchtime; <b>at</b> breakfast; <b>at</b> teatime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a specific point or address: <b>At</b> university; <b>at</b> the door; <b>at</b> 1912 Ankeny Street</li> <li>At the intersection of two streets: Let us meet <b>at</b> 23rd Avenue and Broadway.</li> <li>To indicate distance, speed: <b>At</b> arm's length; <b>at</b> five miles; <b>at</b> 70 mph</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to an activity: I am good <b>at</b> drawing.</li> <li>To state the age at which someone does something.: He left school <b>at</b> the age of 15.</li> <li>Pointing toward someone or something: He pointed a gun <b>at</b> her.</li> </ul>
<b>in</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For months, years, centuries, seasons, and long periods: <b>In</b> summer; <b>in</b> 1774; <b>in</b> the past; <b>in</b> twenty minutes; in years</li> <li>Parts of the day (non-specific times): <b>In</b> the morning; <b>in</b> the evening</li> <li>After a length of time: She learnt to drive <b>in</b> three weeks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For an enclosed space (position): <b>In</b> class; <b>in</b> my pocket; <b>in</b> the eyes</li> <li>For land-areas within boundaries (towns, states, countries, continents, neighbourhood): <b>In</b> Algeria</li> <li>For small vehicles and chairs with arms: <b>In(to)</b> the car; <b>in</b> his comfortable chair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To indicate a shape, colour, size: <b>In</b> purple; <b>in</b> a circle; <b>in</b> size 44</li> <li>To indicate a belief, an opinion, an interest, a feeling, physical surroundings: She broke up <b>in</b> tears <b>In</b> love; <b>in</b> his sixties; <b>in</b> full bloom I believe <b>in</b> Heaven Sitting <b>in</b> the darkness; walking <b>in</b> the rain</li> </ul>
<b>on</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For days and dates : <b>On</b> Friday ; <b>on</b> 1st August ; <b>on</b> Saturday morning ; <b>on</b> her birthday</li> <li>Common expressions: <b>On</b> time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a surface: <b>On</b> the wall; <b>on</b> the floor; <b>on</b> the menu</li> <li>With names of streets and avenues: <b>On</b> Flannery Avenue</li> <li>For large vehicles, armless chairs and long seats: <b>On</b> a plane; <b>on</b> a boat; <b>on</b> the train; <b>on</b> the sofa; <b>on</b> a bench; <b>on</b> the stool</li> <li>Parts of the body: <b>On</b> the cheek; <b>on</b> the shoulder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With devices and machines: <b>On</b> televisions; <b>on</b> the radio; <b>on</b> the computer</li> <li>The state of something: <b>On</b> fire; <b>on</b> sale</li> <li>In common expressions: <b>On</b> the way; <b>on</b> a business trip; <b>on</b> a diet; <b>on</b> antibiotics; <b>on</b> loan; <b>on</b> vacation</li> </ul>



**Common prepositions of direction: in, into, onto**

<b>To</b>	<b>Into</b>	<b>Onto</b>
<b>Moving toward a specific place:</b> He will be flying from Algiers <b>to</b> Tunisia. She walks <b>to</b> her work.	<b>Moving to the inside of an enclosed place:</b> She jumped <b>into</b> the pond. She poured the water <b>into</b> the cup.	<b>Moving toward a surface</b> He threw the keys <b>onto</b> the coffee table.

## Appendix E: Document Two in the Content Analysis

### Prepositional Phrases-Practice

#### A. The right object

Underline the preposition and draw an arrow to its object. Be sure to note where PPs contain other (embedded) PPs.

1. After all, of his warnings about the dangers of cigarettes, Ben consumed a cut of meat with a huge amount of cholesterol.
2. Oscar resigned in the face of increasing evidence of his association with disreputable companies.
3. In the middle of two boxes, you can find another box.
4. The gift was placed inside a beautifully decorated box.
5. Edinburg's declining number of locally owned businesses demonstrates the increased hardship faced by northeast rural communities.
6. One in three children now enter school developmentally delayed, negatively impacting literacy and academic achievement.
7. The link between soda consumption and weight gain was seen in both children and adults in two separate studies.

#### B. Adjective + Preposition

Chose words from the list below to complete the sentences with a suitable adjective plus a preposition. Some of the prepositions will be used more than once.

absent	absorbed	cruel	eligible	famous
fond	friendly	good	grateful	ill
jealous	keen	proud	responsible	rich
satisfied	serious	short	similar	terrified

about	at	for	from	in	of	on	to	with
-------	----	-----	------	----	----	----	----	------

1. The king was very \_\_\_\_\_ ice cream.
2. I have been \_\_\_\_\_ a cold for over a week.
3. I have always been \_\_\_\_\_ water ever since I nearly drowned as a child.
4. John has been \_\_\_\_\_ school for over a month. He will have a lot of catching up to do when he comes back.
5. Our daughter has just graduated as a doctor. We are very \_\_\_\_\_ her.
6. Could I phone you later, Alan? I'm a bit \_\_\_\_\_ time right now.
7. Costa Rica is \_\_\_\_\_ its beautiful scenery.
8. My cousin is very \_\_\_\_\_ music and can play four or five instruments.
9. I like ballet but I'm not very \_\_\_\_\_ opera
10. Julie is my oldest friend. We have been \_\_\_\_\_ one another since we were at Primary school.
11. Our teacher is never \_\_\_\_\_ our work.
12. For the last time, who is \_\_\_\_\_ this mess?
13. We are \_\_\_\_\_ you for all you have done for us.
14. I am afraid only single people under the age of thirty are \_\_\_\_\_ membership of this club.
15. Michael was \_\_\_\_\_ his sister's success, even though he pretended to be happy for her.

16. She is \_\_\_\_\_ her sister in character.
17. Australia is \_\_\_\_\_ natural resources.
18. He was so \_\_\_\_\_ what he was doing that he did not notice me come into the room.
19. Small children are often \_\_\_\_\_ animals without realizing it. They do not mean to hurt them.
20. You are not \_\_\_\_\_ leaving this country and going to live in China, are you?

**C. Identification & Function**

Underline the PPs in the following sentences, and in the space provided say what function they fulfil:

1. Many People are intolerant of opinions and actions opposing their ideas of appropriate behaviour.  
.....
2. From this experience, I have learned my lesson about the dangers of telling lies.  
.....
3. The children danced around the pole until the song came to an end.  
.....
4. We ran toward the barn when the storm broke from the clouds.  
.....
5. The trail that winds up the mountain leads to the top of the ridge near the edge of the cliff.  
.....
6. Hilda waited at the corner for the bus.  
.....
7. Everyone except William voted for my suggestion.  
.....
8. At the end of recess, the children ran into the school.  
.....
9. When the beater spins around the bowl, the batter raises above the edge.  
.....

# Appendix F: Document Three in the Content Analysis

## Lesson 6: The Prepositional Phrase (PP)

1. **Definition** → Prepositions are uninflected words (or groups of words) that connect their **object** to other parts of the sentence and give contextual information. Prepositions are not content words; they are function words and do not alter the basic content of a sentence. They are minor parts of speech that enter into the combination of **Prepositional Phrases**.

Although prepositions are minor parts of speech, a sign of their importance is their ability to appear in so many structures—mainly within noun phrases and adjectival phrases.

2. **Types of Prepositions** → Prepositions come in two types: (A) **single-word prepositions**, which are composed of just one element, and (B) **multi-word prepositions**, which are frozen structures made up using a preposition + a noun + a preposition or other words + a preposition.

(A) Single-Word Prepositions: *about, above, across, after, against, along, amid(st), among, around, astride, at, from, before, behind, below, beneath, beside(s), between, beyond, by, concerning, despite, down, during, except, but, for, from, in, inside, into, like, near, off, of, on, onto, opposite, out, outside, over, past, round, since, through, throughout, to, towards, underneath, under, until, up/up to, upon, with, within, without.*

(B) Multi-Word Prepositions: *according to, along with, apart from, aside from, as for/to, because of, by means of, by way of, by virtue of, due to, except for, in accordance with, in case of, in addition to, in compliance with, in opposition to, in reference to, in regards to, in relation to, in respect to, in spite of, instead of, on account of, out of, with reference to, with regards to, with respect to.*

3. **Patterns of Prepositional Phrases**

- **Preposition + Noun/Pronoun:** *with me, by John, at home*
- **Preposition + Modifier (s) + Noun/Pronoun:** *under warm blankets, after my lunch hour*
- **Preposition + Gerund:** *about moving*
- **Preposition + Noun Clause:** *concerning what you said yesterday*

4. **Stranded Prepositions** → A preposition may sometimes be separated from its object and occur on its own at the end of the sentence (as in: *This is the room I slept in, what did you call about? The lamp which you called about has been sold.*)

When this separation occurs, we are talking about **preposition stranding**. Although this occurrence tends to be criticized, some cases necessitate the use of a stranded preposition because it sounds more grammatical than a regular one:

\*About what did you call?  
She asked what you called *about*

\*She asked *about* what you called

5. **The Functions of Prepositional Phrases** → The PP has a modifying role. It may function as:

- A modifier for a head noun in a noun phrase:  
*The letter from Simona was lovely.*
- A modifier for a gerund:  
*She dislikes working on her own.*
- A modifier for a verb or the whole sentence:  
*She drove with great caution.*  
*Before class, Adam begged his friends for a pencil.*
- A complement of an adjective:  
*I am terribly bad at history.*
- A complement of an adverb:  
*Fortunately, for me, he was dismissed.*

6. **Meanings of Prepositions** → Semantically speaking, prepositions do not only indicate time and location (although these are the most common); they cover a wide range of meanings:

<b>Location:</b>	<i>behind, between, above</i>
<b>Direction:</b>	<i>up, down, to</i>
<b>Time:</b>	<i>at, after, during, before, until</i>
<b>Manner:</b>	<i>with, by, in</i>
<b>Origin:</b>	<i>from, out of, of</i>
<b>Accompaniment:</b>	<i>with</i>
<b>Instrument/Means:</b>	<i>by, with</i>
<b>Recipient:</b>	<i>to (Tony donated \$10,000 <u>to</u> the hospital)</i>
<b>Beneficiary:</b>	<i>for (The money was <u>for</u> the cardiac laboratory)</i>
<b>Other:</b>	<i>without, about, except, according to</i>

7. **Multi-Meaning Prepositions** → Some non-native English speaking students tend to memorise every single preposition and associate it with a certain structure, but they end up being confused because some prepositions have several meanings:

*Batman, the fictional superhero, operates **by** night.*  
*They live **by** the volcano.*  
*We drove **by** the national park.*  
*I will be there **by** five o'clock.*  
*It is thicker **by** ten millimetres.*  
*The necklace was designed **by** a famous jeweller.*

*I made an artificial tree **for** Hilary.*  
*I made an artificial tree **for** \$3,000.*

*Sam offered a dozen roses **to** Hilary.*  
*I sent Hilary **to** the lake.*

**WARNING:** Some words may act as prepositions or as adverbs, depending on the context. To avoid the confusion, some tests may be applied to decide whether the word in question is a preposition, an adverb, or

sometimes a particle. Notice the various functions of the word *down* in the following examples:

- He fell ***down*** the hill. (preposition)
- He cut ***down*** the trees. (particle → part of a phrasal verb)
- He looked ***down***. (adverb)

**Question:** Which of the following examples uses 'underneath' as a preposition?

*They skated underneath the bridge*  
*The room underneath is used as an office.*  
*Kim was on top and I was underneath.*

## Appendix G: Document Four in the Content Analysis

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### When in, on and at indicate time

#### 1. Put the time expressions into the correct column.

Saturday evenings, January, yesterday evening, spring, midday, 1st October, the 19th century, every winter, a week ago today, midnight, today 7 pm, the afternoon, Wednesday morning, June 3rd, the evening, the weekend (Brit. Eng; Tomorrow, last night, Monday, 9 o'clock, summer, the morning, Eid, the twentieth century, Thursday afternoon, last weekend, lunch time, 1994, next summer

on	at	In	No preposition

#### 2. Complete the rules.

We use \_\_\_\_\_ + days/dates.  
\_\_\_\_\_ + month/season/year/century.  
\_\_\_\_\_ + part of the day (except night).  
\_\_\_\_\_ + clock time/meal time.

### When in, on and at indicate a place

#### 1. Put the time expressions into the correct column.

Countryside, the sea, the airport, a small village, the beach, my living room, a big town, a plane, Thailand, the walls, the railway station, a box, the bus stop  
The cinema, the hospital, television, apartment, the ground floor, the mall  
The office, a desk, the queue, the supermarket checkout, class, the city, work

on	at	In	No preposition

#### 2. Complete the rules.

We use \_\_\_\_\_ + country/town/village.  
\_\_\_\_\_ + position, place.  
\_\_\_\_\_ + place inside a building.  
\_\_\_\_\_ + surface, floor.

## Appendix H: Document Five in the Content Analysis

### Prepositions

A **preposition** links and relates its **object** (a noun or a pronoun) to the rest of the sentence. Prepositions often show relationships of time, place, direction, and manner.

I walked **around** the block. She called **during** our meeting.

#### *Common Prepositions*

along	below	during	off	past	under	within
among	beneath	except	on	since	underneath	without
around	beside	for	onto	through	until	
at	besides	from	out	till	up	
before	despite	in	outside	to	upon	
behind	near	down	over	toward	with	

Some prepositions consist of more than one word; they are called **phrasal prepositions** or **compound preposition**.

**According to** our records, you have enough credits to graduate.

We decided to make the trip **in spite of** the snowstorm.

#### *Common Compound Prepositions*

according to	because of	in place of	on account of	with respect to
aside from	by means of	in regard to	out of	
as of	in addition to	in spite of	prior to	
as well as	in front of	instead of	with regard to	

The Laundromat was **between** campus and home.

**As of** 6 April 1999, all gifts to charities will be free of tax.

**N.B.** **As of** used for saying that something will start to happen on a particular day, and will continue after that day

### **The prepositional phrase**

Includes a preposition, its object, and any modifiers of the object. The preposition's object is the noun or pronoun that follows the preposition. Prepositional phrases can function as either adjective phrases or adverb phrases to modify other words in a sentence.

Prepositional phrases frequently function as adjectives or adverbs. If a prepositional phrase modifies a noun or pronoun, it functions as an adjective. If it modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb, it functions as an adverb.

Common prepositional phrase examples include *about, after, at, before, behind, by, during, for, from, in, of, over, past, to, under, up, and with*.

### **Prepositional Phrase Examples Functioning as Adjective Phrases:**

The boy **with him** is his son.

(*With* is the preposition, and *with him* is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase functions as an adjective phrase, modifying *boy*.) The bracelet **in the storefront window** is the one I want. (*In* is the preposition, and *in the storefront window* is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase functions as an adjective phrase, modifying *bracelet*.)

### **Prepositional Phrase Examples Functioning as Adverb Phrases:**

When you get **to the sign**, take a left.



(*To* is the preposition, and *to the sign* is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase functions as an adverb phrase, modifying *get*.)

I will meet you **after school**.

(*After* is the preposition, and *after school* is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase functions as an adverb phrase, modifying *meet*.)

## Résumé

Selon les perspectives dominantes sur les finalités de l'enseignement des langues secondes et étrangères, la capacité des apprenants à communiquer de manière appropriée et précise est cruciale. Par conséquent, l'attention s'est détournée de la prédominance des structures grammaticales aux effets significatifs de la dimension sociolinguistique sur les compétences communicatives des apprenants. Cette perspective a été massivement adoptée pour attirer à nouveau l'attention sur l'importance des compétences linguistiques et sociolinguistiques dans l'enseignement des langues. Ainsi, cette étude enquête sur le rôle de l'enseignement des prépositions comme l'une des caractéristiques grammaticales les plus problématiques, et les lacunes des étudiants lorsqu'ils les utilisent pour communiquer dans divers contextes situationnels, en relation avec le développement de leurs capacités à communiquer efficacement. À cet égard, l'étude a utilisé une conception corrélationnelle à approche mixte pour étudier cette relation à l'aide de deux questionnaires, un test de diagnostic, et une analyse de contenu conventionnelle qualitative menée sur les leçons et les d'exercices. Les données ont été collectées auprès de 33 étudiants de 2<sup>ème</sup> année et 7 enseignants) au département d'Anglais, Université Larbi Tebessi. Les résultats du test de diagnostic ont démontré de manière significative que les apprenants ne choisissent pas les prépositions correctes même pour les exercices de contexte, et les données recueillies des deux questionnaires impliquent que la plupart des étudiants ignorent le contexte lorsqu'ils apprennent ou pratiquent les prépositions. Les méthodes d'enseignement ne renforcent pas les capacités des étudiants à communiquer correctement, et les enseignants rencontrent des difficultés dans la mise en œuvre de la notion de contextualisation. Ces résultats corroborent nos hypothèses et indiquent que la forte absence de pratiques utilisant un contenu contextuel et l'inefficacité des habitudes d'apprentissage et de pratique des étudiants sont les principales causes de leurs déficiences communicatives lors de l'utilisation des prépositions.

## مُلخَص

وفقا للآراء المهيمنة حول أهداف بيداغوجية تعليم اللغات فإن القدرة على التواصل المناسب و الدقيق للمتعلمين أمر بالغ الأهمية، و بناءً على ذلك فقد تحول الاهتمام من التركيز على هيمنة التراكيب النحوية إلى التركيز على التأثيرات الرئيسية للبعد الاجتماعي اللغوي في هذا المجال (القدرة على التواصل الفعال لدى المتعلمين) . تم تبني هذا المنظور بالإجماع وذلك لتوجيه الانتباه مرة أخرى إلى أهمية كل من الكفاءة اللغوية و الكفاءة الاجتماعية-اللغوية في تعليم اللغة كلغة ثانية أو كلغة أجنبية. وعلى هذا النحو فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى التعرف على دور تدريس أدوات الربط و الذي يعتبر من أكثر الخصائص النحوية صعوبة بالإضافة إلى عدم قدرة الطلاب على استخدامها للتواصل في مختلف الحالات و لمختلف الأهداف و دراسة علاقتها مع تطور قدراتهم على التواصل الفعال. في هذا الصدد استخدمت الدراسة البحث الارتباطي مطبقةً منهجيةً مختلفةً للتحقق من العلاقة بين المتغيرات و ذلك عن طريق استبيانين و اختبار تشخيصي إلى جانب تحليل نوعي طبيعي أجري على الوثائق التي تخص الدروس و التمرينات، و تم جمع المعلومات اللازمة من أربعين مشاركاً، ثلاث و ثلاثون طالباً من السنة الثانية وسبعة أساتذة، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة العربي التبسي. برهن أداء المشاركين بشكل ملحوظ أثناء الاختبار التشخيصي على فشلهم في اختيار أدوات الربط الصحيحة حتى عند حلهم لتمرينات تعتمد على السياق. كما أثبتت المعلومات المأخوذة من الاستبيانين أنه تقريباً كل الطلبة يهملون السياق عند تعلمهم أو استخدامهم لأدوات الربط. و كنتيجة فإن طرق التدريس لا تعزز قدرات الطلاب على التواصل بدقة، كما أن الأساتذة يواجهون صعوبات في تطبيق مفهوم السياقية ومنه فإن هذه النتائج تؤيد فرضيتنا و تشير إلى الغياب الحاد للممارسة و التطبيق باستخدام الوسائل القائمة على السياق، كم أنها تشير إلى أن غياب كفاءة الطلاب فيما يخص عاداتهم التعليمية و التطبيقية هو السبب الرئيسي وراء ضعف قدراتهم التواصلية عند استخدام أدوات الربط. وأخيراً فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة واقتراحاتها المنهجية وإرشاداتها يجب ان تؤخذ بعين الاعتبار في المستقبل.