

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT



***“THE LEVEL OF INTERFERENCE OF ENGLISH LEARNERS’  
MOTHER TONGUE WITH THEIR LEARNING OF PREPOSITIONS:  
CASE OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION II STUDENTS OF THE  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL  
SALVADOR, SEMESTER I- 2013.”***

PRESENTED BY:  
MARTÍNEZ ABREGO, CLAUDIA GUADALUPE.  
VENTURA VIDES, MÓNICA MARÍA.

MA02006  
VV03049

**TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:  
LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS OPCIÓN ENSEÑANZA.**

**ADVISOR:  
JORGE HOMERO LLANES MÁRQUEZ LÓPEZ, M.A**

SAN SALVADOR, OCTOBER 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

---

**AUTHORITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR**

ING. MARIO ROBERTO NIETO LOVO  
**RECTOR**

MTRA. ANA MARÍA GLOWER DE ALVARADO  
**ACADEMIC VICE-RECTOR**

DR. ANA LETICIA ZA VALETA DE AMAYA  
**SECRETARY - GENERAL**

**AUTHORITIES OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

LIC. JOSÉ RAYMUNDO CALDERÓN MORÁN  
**DEAN**

MTRA. NORMA CECILIA BLANDÓN DE CASTRO  
**VICE-DEAN**

MSC. ALFONSO MEJÍA ROSALES  
**SECRETARY - GENERAL**

**AUTHORITIES OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

JOSE RICARDO GAMERO ORTÍZ, MAT  
**HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT**

EDGAR NICOLÁS AYALA, Mti  
**GENERAL COORDINATOR OF DEGREE PROCESSES**

JORGE HOMERO LLANES MÁRQUEZ LÓPEZ, M.A  
**ADVISOR**

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The contributions of many different people, in their different ways, have made this work possible. I would like to extend my appreciation especially to the following:

First of all thanks as always, to God, the only one who makes everything become true, for the wisdom and perseverance that he has bestowed upon me during my major.

- I thank my family: my parents Blanca and Vidal, for their unconditional support throughout my life, the love, patience and understanding shown by them. My brother Roberto, who even far away gave me love as a support to make it possible; my grandparents who guided me when they were alive, furthermore my special gratitude to my fiancé Giovanni, whose support and encouragement were essential all these years.

-I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my advisor, **Jorge Homero LLanes Márquez López, M.A**, who offered his invaluable guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this thesis.

- My sincere gratitude also goes to my friends and all who directly or indirectly helped me in this process.

-Last but not least, I would like to thank the University of El Salvador and Mrs. María Angela Rodríguez Ventura, B.A., for giving me the opportunity to grow as a professional in the teaching field.

**Mónica María Ventura Vides.**

---

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

### **TO MY ALMIGHTY GOD:**

For providing me with his wisdom, strength, patience, persistence, and support in the hardest times during my academic formation up to now. "In all your ways acknowledge God, and He will guide your paths." Proverbs 3:6

### **TO MY PARENTS CONSUELO AND OSCAR:**

For their unconditional love, encourage, pieces of advice that have helped me throughout my life and the economic support they gave me. I will always appreciate their hope and confidence they inspired to me throughout the enduring of my studies.

### **TO MY GRANDMOTHER CHITA:**

For her love, care, trust, help, and advice that have helped me throughout my studies and life. Thank you. Without you, this would not be possible, my beloved mom Chita.

### **TO MY BROTHER ALEX:**

For believing in me, who even far away gave me love, trust and economic support.

### **TO MY BOYFRIEND SALVADOR:**

For helping me when I needed some advice about technical support and above all his love and encouragement.

### **TO MY BEST FRIEND AND CLASSMATE IN THIS WORK MONIK:**

For her friendship, trust and, above all, her invaluable help and constancy without which this work would not have been possible to conclude.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO MY BELOVED ADVISOR JORGE HOMERO LLANES MÁRQUEZ LÓPEZ, M.A,**

For sharing his knowledge, experience and time with us and for his valuable help and advice through the research work. Thank you so much.

**Claudia Guadalupe Martínez Abrego**

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Pages
Introduction .....	vii-viii
<b>I. Topic .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Statement of the problem</b>	
2.1 Description of the problem.....	2-3
2.2 Objectives.....	4
2.3 Justification .....	5-6
<b>III. Theoretical Framework</b>	
3.1 Literature review.....	7-16
3.2 Previous Research and the importance of this research.....	17-21
3.3 Glossary.....	21-23
<b>IV. Methodological Framework (Design of the study)</b>	
4.1 Type and design of research .....	24
4.2 Research design .....	25
4.3 Population and sample.....	25-28
4.4. Timetable.....	29
<b>V. Data Analysis and Interpretation</b>	
5.1 Students test .....	30-57
5.2 Professors survey .....	58-69
5.3 Students Compositions .....	70-72

---

<b>VII. Conclusions</b> .....	73-75
<b>VIII. Recommendations</b> .....	76-77
<b>IX. Limitations</b> .....	78
<b>X. Reference section:</b>	
Bibliographic references .....	79-80
Website references .....	81
<b>XI. Appendices:</b>	
<b>A.</b> Test administered to English Composition II students .....	83
<b>B.</b> Survey passed to FLD professors .....	84-85

---

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is focused on determine the level of interference of English learners' mother tongue with their learning of English prepositions. Learning English as a foreign language is not an easy process, and Spanish native speakers have their issues. In terms of second language teaching and learning, transfer is the influence of the learner's native language in a second language. Clearly, it may take time to master a language where students need to organize their knowledge into appropriate coherent structures, in this case the correct use of English prepositions. English composition II students, of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador are not making the exception of this phenomenon, in this research the group of researchers found out the common errors students have when using English prepositions.

The present study ties to the concept of Language Transfer as a component that involves one of the main difficulties that Spanish students of English as a foreign language have in the process of learning due to the influence of their native language. When students are learning a second language they tend to relate their mother tongue when using the target language, in the way that features of L1 are perceived in the foreign language production.

---

This research is divided into different parts. Firstly, the justification leads the group to introduce the importance of this research, and then comes the theoretical framework, which provides the basis to obtain the essential background to understand the data collected from the learners as well as previous research done and the importance of this research. Additionally, it was necessary to collect the theory which supports the base of the present study. The last part includes the methodology, the collected data and findings. Besides that, some conclusions and recommendations are given.



---

**I. TOPIC:**

**The level of interference of English learners' mother tongue with their learning of prepositions: Case of English Composition II students of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, semester I- 2013.**

---

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM**

During the learning process of a foreign language, learners face many difficulties with its learning; clearly this does not occur in a short period of time; rather there is a process to learn it. Most of the time, those difficulties on foreign language acquisition or learning are strongly related to native language interference. At the beginning of learning a foreign language, many times students count on the use of their mother tongue while they try to improve their skills using the new language, and for that reason most of them always have mother tongue interference when trying to master the four macro skills: writing, reading, speaking and listening. The Foreign Language Department students of the University of El Salvador are not an exception. The researchers have focused on the interference of learners' mother tongue (MT), when learning to use English prepositions. This research emphasized the writing skill to determine the level of interference of students' mother tongue with English prepositions in their English Composition II courses. This is due to the fact that most of them struggle with errors when using that specific part of speech.

Through this project the team of researchers seeks to answer the following question:

- ❖ What is the level of interference of English Composition II students' mother tongue with their English preposition learning process and how can this issue be solved?

---

In this project the team of researchers is interested in finding out the level of interference of students' mother tongue, specifically the ones who are taking English Composition II. That influence is commonly reflected on errors that they make when writing a composition using English prepositions. This is with the purpose of giving possible solutions to this issue. The decision to select students of English Composition II is based on the criterion that they have an advanced English level and previous knowledge in the use of English prepositions that helped researchers to evaluate their use in writing. During the process of the research, the main purpose of the investigation is to identify errors, and specially try to give significant proposals to help students to become skillful English writers, by giving some methods and techniques to facilitate them to improve the use of English prepositions in their compositions.

---

## 2.2 OBJECTIVES

### General

- ✚ To determine the main effects of learners' mother tongue interference with their learning of English prepositions in the English Composition II course at the Foreign Language Department, University of El Salvador, in order for them to avoid grammatical errors in this specific part of speech.

### Specific

- ✚ To identify the most frequent kinds of errors English learners make in the use of prepositions in order to reduce or eradicate them with appropriate guidelines.
- ✚ To discover the negative transfer that English learners' mother tongue has on their learning of English prepositions with the purpose of reducing its interference.
- ✚ To identify the most troublesome English prepositions for the students in order to provide them with suggestions.
- ✚ To identify the English prepositions that student most frequently use in a wrong way with the purpose of eradicating that habit.

---

## 2.3 JUSTIFICATION

This research project is presented to the Foreign Language Department because it involves a great significance for this division specialized in teaching foreign languages since it represents an opportunity to analyze, examine and identify the levels of interference of English learners' mother tongue with their learning of English prepositions in the groups of Composition II at the University of El Salvador during the semester I-2013.

At the time of learning English, learners need to develop the four main skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The four of them are important for good communication. However, the writing skill is very significant and essential because a student can be judged by the quality of writing that he/she possesses. Hence, making correct use of the English prepositions in order to avoid grammatical errors in English writing is determinant to express thoughts and communicate ideas.

As it is known, foreign language learning does not occur in a year or two. Rather there is a process in order to learn it. At the beginning of the study of any foreign language learners make errors because they want to relate the words of their mother tongue, due to the interference of that one with the language that they want to learn. In this research project, errors in English prepositions have taken the attention for the researchers. They seem to be part of the learning process. However, it is worrying to realize that even after

---

five years of study of the English major offered by the Foreign Language Department, learners do not seem to overcome this situation for they keep on making errors even when they have completed their course of studies.

Based on what has been mentioned before, the researchers believe that it is really important to carry out this research oriented to finding out the main effect of learners' mother tongue interference with their learning of English prepositions. For that reason, the researchers prepared some instruments such as a test about English prepositions to learners, a survey to professors, and the checking of English compositions written by learners. With the results, the research group gave a feedback to the professors about the problem with the purpose of determining the frequency with which students use English prepositions when writing compositions.

Furthermore, the research project conductors provided some recommendations to the Foreign Language Department in order to improve the area in which the learners need more assistance. Finally, the team of researchers became aware of the level of discrimination regarding English prepositions that the learners possess during their learning process.

---

### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In these days, learning a foreign language has been a growing need in the empire of the globalization, but since learners express themselves best in their mother tongue, that calls for a special effort because they face different challenges that result in errors with the interference of mother tongue with the foreign language learning. When learning English as a foreign language, it seems to be usual that most of the time students use their first language in order to try to reach an effective communication in the second one, which makes learners follow and accommodate the same grammatical patterns in both languages. Hence, the importance of that influence in the learning process has been a relevant issue for a long time.

In the academic context, English writing for EFL students is one of the most difficult language skills for language learners. What is commonly believed is that the first language has an effect on the foreign language since students do not know enough about how to generate or create ideas for writing. Many professors are aware of the existence of writing English errors, which is an important factor to take into consideration in the foreign language instruction. For EFL learners it is even more complicated to write in a foreign language, and it takes considerable time and effort to become a skillful writer. Consequently, to achieve an effective writing is considered to be a problem that demands a complex process.

---

Clearly, English writing is significant and of great importance in learners' academic courses and it has become a center of attention. It is essential to develop in a proper manner the skill needed for writing about our daily routine, taking notes, writing essays, answering written questions, writing compositions, making experimental reports, and the like. Mother tongue influence is an important aspect to keep in mind in the learning process of a foreign language. Taking the study on the matter, something that takes the attention of researchers is that learners' mother tongue affects what they write because some of their L1 characteristics are shown up in their writing compositions.

Supported by Richards, Platt & Platt (1992) it is considered that during the learning process learner's errors are the result of many implications caused by a phenomenon that appear when the learners borrow or use specific patterns or representative characteristics from their mother tongue and, in this way, express meanings using the vocabulary and syntax which they already knew. To sum it up, it is really necessary to emphasize the relevance of language influence on the cognitive skill which is writing, because it is a determinant tool for language development and progress and critical thinking in all fields of study. Even though speaking is an important communicative skill, writing is the option that gives learners the opportunity to analyze and transmit carefully their ideas and thoughts in a better way, because they have something in front of them to self-evaluate errors and improve their English writing.



---

Both the learners' mother tongue and English as a second or foreign language are a matter of learning and they need to be discriminated from each other. Skiba (2000) defines mother tongue as "one's native language; the language learned by children and passed from one generation to the next; it is received by birth or from ancestors". On the other hand, foreign language is considered the one commonly learned in environments and circumstances where the language of the community is not the language in the learning process. In addition, Ashwort (1992, as cited in Soares, 2008) makes his own denotation. He says that the second language is a language learned by a person besides the fact that he/she acquired his/her mother tongue. For the purposes of this study, L1 is used to refer to mother tongue, whereas L2 refers to a second or foreign language.

It seems that preposition is one of the main areas in which cases of language transfer can be found in the language learning process. The influence of learners' mother tongue leads to many errors and, without any doubt, the use of prepositions in English composition show difficulties with this part of speech. Written composition is an excellent and appropriate tool to develop critical thinking, and to detect a specific error. Besides that, it is useful in terms of developing communication and improving writing skill in L2. Prepositions had always been an origin of great difficulty for English foreign language learners (EFL) because they usually try to relate the use of English prepositions to their mother tongue (MT). In the case of this study, the center of attention is focused on learners' errors, when they do not use the correct and proper grammatical structures in their written works.

---

Supported by Shaw (2008), a preposition is a word used to show the relationship of a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence. Cambridge dictionary defines a preposition as a word that connects a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun to another word, a verb, another noun, or an adjective: In the sentence: *We jumped **in** the lake*, **in** is a preposition, and in the sentence, *I heard the sound **of** loud music*, **of** is a preposition. It is important to include to that definition the fact that prepositions are not inflected and clearly express ideas associated with location, destinations, direction of motion, time, and manner and so on. That is why learning the correct use of prepositions is very important because they are in every piece of a writing work and the correct use of them provides writers with an acceptable sense of effective learning.

It is indispensable to delimit a clear difference between writing errors and writing mistakes. When talking about L1 interference, it is necessary to clarify mistakes and errors made by L2 writers, and that is why some researchers make important remarks about these two terms. It should be stated that based on what Ellis & Brown say (1997) the errors occur because the learner do not know what is correct. Therefore, that determines the deficiency in the learner's knowledge as long as mistakes reflect what the learner is unable to perform with regard to what he or she knows. Moreover, describes mistakes as an ineffective use of grammatical rules; in other words, it is interpreted that learners study the language structures comprehensibly but fail at the moment of using them, in this case, in written works. Hence, this failure is perceived as a mistake. On the other

---

hand, errors are considered a significant difference from the grammar of a native speaker case of adults that demonstrate their interlanguage.

It is understandable to say that in language learning, an error is what learners make in their L2 writing because they do not know the syntactic as well as lexical structures, whereas a mistake is related to the learners' low competence in using a foreign language. Consequently, the rules of L1 knowledge are then employed in the use of L2 writing, which causes the mother tongue to interfere at the time they are exposed to applying their knowledge in their written works.

It is stated that errors are significant because they can be seen and analyzed clearly in the learners' written performance. One way for identifying errors in preposition usage is error analysis. In order to use the correct methods and techniques in the learning process at the moment of facing problems such as errors, teachers needed to focus on identifying the common and usual type of errors with the main objective of eliminating the type of transfer foreign language learners experienced in their written performance, which is considered a challenge.

It is important to point out the value of error and contrastive analysis so as to explain the learners' difficulties reflected on errors. Error analysis (EA) emphasizes "the significance of errors in learners' interlanguage system" (Brown, 1994). Error analysis is considered a new option to contrastive analysis, and it is recognized of value in the

---

classroom research. According to Brown, error analysis demonstrate the importance of errors in the type of the language produced by second language learners, which is the type of speech known as interlanguage; in addition to that, Ellis & Richards (1994) say that error analysis helps and benefits teachers succeed in the difficulties learners of English face in the process. Since then, it can be said that error analysis can be used to determine the learner's need in learning.

Stephen Pit Corders' studies and the contribution of some other researchers established error analysis in SLA in the 1960s. According to his judgment, an error can be classified according to what is considered a basic type: omission, addition, selection of an incorrect element and misordering of the elements; it should be emphasized that he considers that this classification is not accurate enough to describe errors that learners face during the learning process. Closely to this classification, based on Ellis contribution (1997) the classification of errors could bring new ways of classifying and recognizing learners learning problems at any point of their development in the classroom. It is relevant to mention that for Ellis (2003), error analysis is also essential because it provides the researcher with new proposals and methodology to study the learner's language. It is well established that error analysis deals with learner production (speaking and writing) and not with learner perception (listening and reading).

Considerably, in the 1960s and early 1970s in the field of second language acquisition, Contrastive Analysis (CA) was used. This is a method of interpreting and

---

explaining why some features and essential properties of a target language are more difficult to acquire than others. This analysis states that the problems and obstacles that learners face in understanding, learning and mastering certain structures in a second language (L2) is conditioned by the difference between the learners' mother language (L1) and the language they are trying to learn. In short words contrastive analysis is the careful study of two languages with the intention of identifying their structural dissimilarities and similarities, whereas error analysis took for granted that errors point out learning difficulties and that the frequency of a specific error is proof of the problems learners face in learning. Thus, error analysis and contrastive analysis need to be carried out in order to find out the main error foreign language learners have to confront because any specific and singular analysis can predict all learning difficulties.

As a result of several previous investigations, and based on what James (1998) defines, a large number of errors committed by second language learners are similar and related to each other regardless of their first language. Those errors are caused by intralingual transfer. In addition, in his opinion, intralingual errors are originally related without referring to L1 resources. Therefore, these are errors resulting from the learner engaged in a literal translation from L1 to L2. Although the focus of this paper is not the translation, it is necessary to take into account this point as the target language may also cause disconcerting intralingual errors. In connection with second language learning, intralingual transfer is strongly related and referred to as overgeneralization, which is when foreign language learners make an inference that is incorrect. Furthermore, as

---

stated by Brown (1994) many of the learners' errors in the second language be the outcome they take for granted that the second language forms are similar to the native language. It should be noted that induced errors are the effect or consequence from the language situation rather than the learner's deficient competence of the target language or the interference of the mother language.

A real learning problem for EFL students is that the L1 has an influence when acquiring the L2. Another phenomenon strongly associated with that influence is the term "transfer", which is considered the same as interference, language transfer (also known as L1 interference, and linguistic interference). The challenges to face mother tongue interference continue to be a big and serious problem in learners' English written works. It is important to emphasize that the transfer can be positive or negative. It is said that the original concept of that term does not make difference between positive and negative transfer. According to Ellis (1999) transfer is the process of using knowledge of the first language in learning a second language; it is negative transfer. On the other hand, Soares, Silvia (2008) has a different point of view. He argues that "transfer is a part of everyday life: individuals encounter new situations and draw on their previously acquired knowledge and skills to deal with them". In fact, making an important reference, that transfer is an essential component of human functioning, so it becomes a positive transfer, but in this present work the negative transfer will be the focus of attention. Based on Gass (2004) viewpoint the phenomenon transfer is the native language language's influence on the target language. In short words, the learners transfer the

---

properties and patterns of their first language that they know to the target language which is in a learning process.

Some relevant theories regarding the interference of L1 in L2 learning have been proposed by different authors. Chomsky (1959,) thinks that imitation of L1 generates routines in L2 practices. Close to that, Krashen (1981) says that there are L1 positive and negative transfers, which take into consideration true and false cognates. Additionally, Cummins (1982) make an important remark about the transferability of linguistic characteristics and the influence of L1 in L2 phonology. At last, Cummins (1981), states that the role of first language is essential for the acquisition of the second one, *the Iceberg Theory*, because clearly through L1 learning, L2 becomes easier. Finally, the implications of these theories are clear with the impact of mother tongue identifying the problem of EFL learners.

Chomsky's work is helpful in understanding the assumptions and association of first language in the acquisition of a second language and how the use and practice of the mother tongue affects the learning of the target language. It is considered that transfer induces to a negative change in all linguistic levels including phonetics/phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, and discourse. In addition, one of the negative connections between L1 and L2 is that students translate every single word into English. The language transfer theory, also known as L1 interference, is about the effect the learners' first language has on their production of the second one. It states that the effect can be in any

---

aspect of language: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, and listening, among others.

This theory is divided into two parts: Positive and negative transfers. In a similar way, in his research about the *Natural Order Hypothesis*, Krashen announces that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a particular order. In some contexts and circumstances depending on the language, some grammatical structures may be acquired earlier or later during the learning process. According to this theory, some of the patterns in one language are naturally transferred to the foreign language, which may be an indicator or manifestation of error in some structures and compositions. Not all the structures in the L1 are the same in the L2. As a result, students may make many errors. To conclude, negative transfer or interference is considered the most frequent antecedent of foreign language learners' errors.

### **3.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH**

Considerable researches have been done in the field of native language interference with the foreign language learning. Within the theoretical foundations, the group of investigation presents related studies to show that English learners' mother tongue's interference is a universal phenomenon. The researchers present some results of existing research within the perspective of other studies in the same field, so as to highlight the remarkable differences and variety of opinions. In this way it is easy to see and perceived how the problem is tied into our reality.



---

## **Study 1**

### **The Effect of EFL Learners' Mother Tongue on their Writings in English: An Error Analysis Study Case of EFL Iraqi students.**

Many studies reveal that EFL students tend to be influenced from their first language in the process of writing in English. The purpose of this study was to identify and specify the errors in English written works of EFL Iraqi students, in this case essay writing. The findings of the study developed indicate that most of the students' errors can be due to the L1 transfer. This is supported by the fact that most of the learners rely on or depend on their mother tongue at the time of expressing their ideas. Although the data gathered revealed that the students' essays included different types of errors, the grammatical errors were the most serious and frequent ones. It is believed that there is a considerable influence of Arabic language on the students' writing of English. The study also indicates some remarkable contributions to the language field where teachers need to take a special attention of transfer and interference phenomenon. Seriously, both issues are part of the main obstacles students have to deal in their production (spoken or written).

---

## Study 2

### **Interference in Learning English: Grammatical Errors in English Essay Writing among Rural Malay Secondary School Students in Malaysia.**

This study was conducted in Malaysia, where certainly occurred the phenomena of transfer during the learning process. Through the researcher's observation is concluded that although not all errors are due to mother tongue interference, a large number of errors identified are related to the inappropriate use of the parts of speech such as: prepositions, determiners, subject verb agreement where is clearly reflected the interference of the Malay grammar. Thus, the problems of acquiring EFL in Malaysia can still be a big deal due to mother tongue interference. Therefore, so as to find a balance some plans should be taken to implement approaches that could best assist and help students in these problematic areas. This investigation study identified a number of errors that seem to be the result of the interference of L1, in other words it showed how the mother tongue is strongly tie to the language learning process. The best thing is to start to implement new techniques and approaches in order to minimize the chances of these errors in the teaching learning process with the use of teaching materials and teaching practices within and outside the classrooms.

---

### **Study 3**

#### **Language Transfer Interlingual Errors in Spanish Students of English as a Foreign Language.**

Through this study, it was possible to define and list the most common type of Interlingual errors, which are constituted by the phenomenon of transfer. The findings revealed that the structures of the mother tongue represent the main factor of interference in the L2. It is important to emphasize that grammar and vocabulary errors are the most common errors identified due to a lack of distinction in Spanish or to the literal translation of L1. Once having the results it is intended to focus on the common type of errors which are seriously affecting the competence of students and how teachers should try thus to eliminate the transfer of structures committed by the students. This can be a challenge, but it is possible to be done by means of making exercises oriented to the practice of the use of linguistic structures and the different part of speech, where these interference phenomena is possible to identify.

---

## Study 4

### A study of L1 Interference in the Writing of Thai EFL Students

Unquestionably once again the mother tongue interference in EFL students is evident through studies. Thai EFL Students are part of the students that face problems with the transfer phenomena in the learning process at the moment of try to communicate their ideas. In this research, the findings reveal that there is a significance level of L1 interference that represents more negative transfer than positive transfer in the students' written English. Also, the results show the different type of errors such as , vocabulary use, phrases, clauses and sentence structures, as well as language style of paragraph writing. It is concluded that at the end of the study it is possible to identify that all aspects of L1 interference should be seriously taken into account by teachers of writing courses so that the negative transfer would be diminished and the positive transfer would appear and become a useful tool to students at the moment of analyze the structures both structures.

---

### 3.3 GLOSSARY

To the purposes of this research, an alphabetical list of useful terms and their meanings are presented. In a general sense, the group of researchers considered appropriate the extraction of these definitions so as to facilitate to the readers the understanding of the unfamiliar terms. Besides that, the researchers took under consideration to make mention of these additional terms in the particular field of EFL used in this study.

- **Contrastive analysis** is the careful study of two languages with the intention of identifying their structural dissimilarities and similarities.
- **EFL:** EFL stands for 'English as a Foreign Language'. An EFL environment is one where the majority of the community does not speak English as their first language (or L1)
- **Error analysis:** Listing and classification of the errors contained in a sample of learner's speech or writing.
- **First Language acquisition (L1):** is the natural process in which children subconsciously possess and develop the linguistic knowledge of the setting they live in.
- **Foreign language:** Any language used in a country other than one's own; a language that is studied mostly for cultural insight.

- 
- **FLD:** Foreign Language Department.
  - **Induced errors:** It is considered are the effects or consequence from the language situation rather than the learner's deficient competence of the target language or the interference of the mother language.
  - **Interference:** Refers to the speaker or writer applying knowledge from their mother tongue to a second language.
  - **Interlanguage:** The type of language (or linguistic system) used by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a target language.
  - **Intralingual errors:** Errors resulting from the learner engaged in a literal translation from L1 to L2.
  - **Language transfer theory:** (also known as L1 interference) is related to the effect the learners' first language has on their production of the second one.
  - **Language transfer:** (also known as L1 interference, linguistic interference, and cross meaning) refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second language.

- 
- **Moodle (acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment):**  
Is a free software e-learning platform, also known as a Learning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
  - **Mother tongue:** The language that a person has grown up speaking from early childhood.
  - **Natural Order Hypothesis:** This theory argues that the acquisition of grammatical structures occurs in a predictable sequence. The natural order hypothesis applies to both first language acquisition and second language acquisition, but, although similar, the order of acquisition often differs between first and second languages.
  - **Second language learning (L2):** takes place where the target language is the language spoken in the language community that differs from the mother tongue ("first language") and is distinguished from foreign language learning, in which the target language is absent from the setting of that community.
  - **Transfer:** It has been viewed as an influence of the learner's first language on his/her second or third language.
  - **Translation:** It is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text.

---

## **IV. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **4.1 TYPE AND DESIGN OF RESEARCH**

This research focused on determining the level of interference of English learners' mother tongue effects on their learning of prepositions when writing. For that reason, all students who are taking English composition II were requested to take a 25-item test about English prepositions so that the measurement could be valid and trustful. In this manner the level of discrimination regarding English prepositions that the students possess it is manageable to determine and evaluate their knowledge and the problems they have to manage that particular part of speech.

Through a short composition the study attempted to measure the accuracy students have when writing. Because of that, the team of researchers checked short compositions made by the students of the four groups of English Composition II to determine the frequency with which students use prepositions when producing writing material and to look for errors when using prepositions so as to get reliable and quantitative measures.

Moreover, a survey was held with the Foreign Language Department professors in charge of English composition II, in order to find relevant information on the matter related to their positions in the process of teaching-learning process. Once having gathered the data it is possible to know the variety and professors' significant points of view regarding the phenomenon addressed in this current study.



---

## **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this current study a non-experimental research is needed because the researchers attempt to study what naturally occurs, specifically in the educational field. The design of the research is non-experimental because the researchers explore the problem and quantify data to reduce results taking into account that non-experimental research is very important in the educational field. The members of the researcher group consider to carry out an appropriate plan and structure of research that best suits with the investigation directed toward determining the level of interference of English learners' mother tongue with their learning of prepositions. This type of research is designed in order to provide a credible and realistic answer to the research question. Naturally, based on the essence of the study, the results are not directed toward any hypothesis testing.

## **4.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The population of this research is made up of learners who are taking English composition II, semester I- 2013 at the University of El Salvador. In order to get the best results through this research, the instruments were passed to 71 students in the different groups of classes of the English Composition II of the Foreign Language Department, who are a representative sample for the study so that final results could be generalized.

---

For the purposes of this research project the researchers used the following instruments: A 25-item test about English prepositions addressed to students and forty short compositions made by students. Additionally, so as to enrich the findings of the study a survey was administered to eight professors of the Foreign Language Department who are in charge of teaching English Composition II. In this manner, their impressions toward the study are helpful at the moment of analyzing the results.

It is important to establish the objectives of each instrument as follows:

- ✓ To determine the professors' concern regarding their students' problems when writing in English Composition II and their points of view about the misuse of English prepositions on their students' part so as to suggest possible solutions.
  
- ✓ To identify the most difficult areas regarding the use of English prepositions by students, in order to formulate guidelines of great importance for solutions to this problem. For that reason, the team of researchers take into account the points of view of the FLD's professors who are in charge of English Composition II. Additionally, to make the study more meaningful, the researchers include the opinions and contributions of some other professionals in the field whose books have been consulted during the whole process of investigation. Besides that, it is of great importance to mention the experience and knowledge the researchers have had as students of the major *Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza*,

---

which includes the subjects of English Composition I and English Composition II in its curriculum.

Before carrying out the data gathering, the researchers requested the professors' permission to administer the test in class. The survey for professors was administered at the same time.

A 25-questions exam was administered to 71 students of English Composition II in the third and fourth weeks of May. At the same time, eight professors of the Foreign Language Department who were teaching or had taught English Composition were surveyed. The purpose of the exam is to verify which English prepositions are more troublesome to the students, whereas the professor survey have the objective of finding their viewpoints regarding this issue.

Concerning the revision of some tasks of English Composition II made by students, the purposes of this review were multiple:

- a) Identify the frequency with which students use English prepositions incorrectly.
- b) Determine the level of influence of Spanish learners' mother tongue with their written compositions in English.

---

c) Determine the persistence of some students to use the same prepositions in different situations.

d) Identify the English prepositions which are omitted by students frequently.

To manage and summarize in a better way the data collected and identify the different kinds of English preposition errors and the number of times they occurred. Once the table are made, graphs are presented so as to visually display information for an appropriate analysis and interpretation.

#### 4.4 TIMETABLE

The researchers made a schedule for their graduation work following this timetable.

Activity/ Date	March-13				April-13				May-13				June-13				July-13				July-13				August-13				September 13							
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Meetings with advisor	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Selection of the topic	■	■																																		
Research design	■	■	■																																	
Doing Literature Review	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																													
Proposal of methodology						■	■	■																												
Proposal data collection instrument										■	■																									
Gathering data											■	■	■	■	■	■																				
Analyzing the gathered data																	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■										
Making corrections to the research findings																							■	■	■	■										
Complete research project proposal																														■	■					
Submit revised final report																																				■

---

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 STUDENT TEST

The following tables and graphs show the results and main findings that were discovered in the data analysis and interpretation about “The level of interference of English learners’ mother tongue on their learning of prepositions: Case of English Composition II students of the Foreign Language Department UES, semester I- 2013.” The learners who took a 25-item test about English prepositions were from four groups of English Composition II.

The results and findings helped the researchers to arrive to the conclusions and provide recommendations for the professors at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. The tables and graphs were analyzed and interpreted according to the results that each showed. Each sentence including a preposition is presented at the beginning. Next come the graph and table to explain the results. Finally, the analysis and interpretation for each case are presented.

The formula used to determine the error average on the student’s part was as follows:

$$\text{Error average} = \frac{\text{Number of errors}}{\text{Number of subjects tested}} \times 100$$

To determine the error percentage for all the prepositions under study, the authors of this research used the following formula:

$$\text{Error percentage} = \frac{\text{Total of error percentage of individual prepositions}}{\text{Number of prepositions}}$$

To determine the error percentage for the most troublesome prepositions, the authors used this formula:

$$\text{Error percentage} = \frac{\text{Total of error percentages}}{\text{Number of troublesome prepositions}}$$

1. Every time I dream **about** you.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	total	percentage
<b>with</b>	13	9	4	12	38	54%
<b>about</b>	4	7	8	13	32	45%
<b>in</b>	1	0	0	0	1	1%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is color red. The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>with</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	38	54%

	<b>about</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	32	45%

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>with</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>about</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>in</b>	<b>1%</b>

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	1	1%

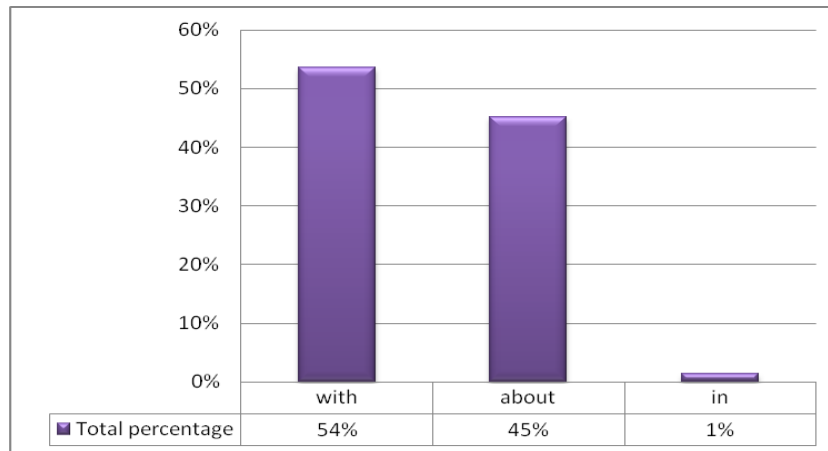


Fig. 1. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether

**Analysis:** Less than half of students, 45%, made a correct use of the preposition **about**, whereas 55% mistook the use of the preposition using **with** and **in**, which are incorrect.

**Interpretation:** Less than 50% of the subjects under study chose a wrong answer. This reveals that the students need reinforcement on that particular preposition **about**. The students' mother tongue's interference is clearly observed (*con* = *with*) because in Spanish we say "*sueño contigo*," but in English they say "*I dream about you*."

**2. That depends *on* him.**

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
on	7	12	11	19	49	69%
of	7	3	1	3	14	20%
from	4	1	0	3	8	11%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<i>on</i>	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	49	69%

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	14	20%

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	4	11%

	percentage
<i>on</i>	69%
of	20%
from	11%

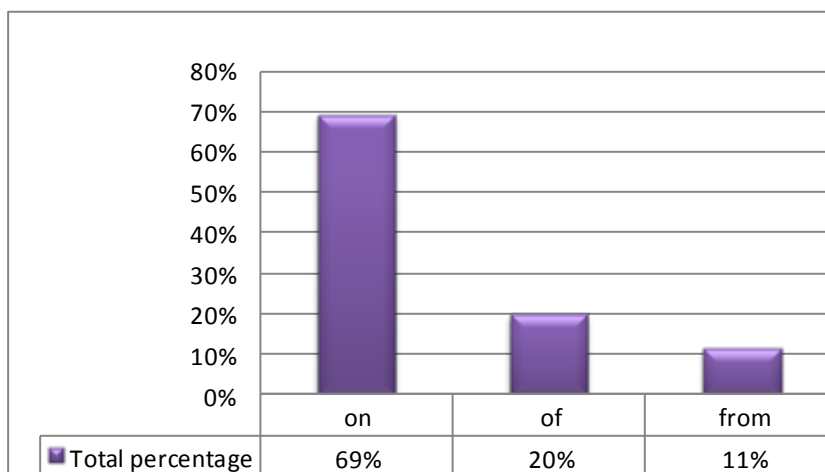


Fig. 2. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 69%, were able to choose the right preposition *on*, whereas 31% of students chose the incorrect prepositions *of* and *from*.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of preposition *on*, as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 69%. On the other hand, almost a third of the students tested, 31%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition.



3. He is falling in love **with** her.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
of	8	4	0	6	18	25%
to	2	3	1	7	13	18%
with	8	9	11	12	40	56%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	18	25%

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	13	18%

	Percentage
Of	25%
To	18%
With	56%

	with	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	40	56%

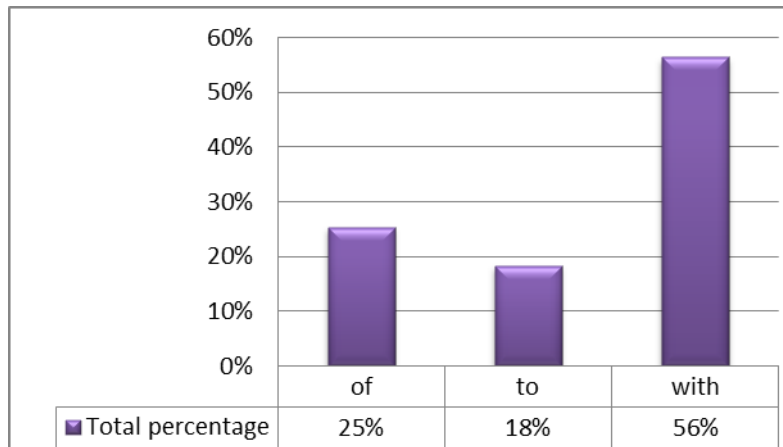


Fig. 3. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 56%, were able to choose the correct preposition **with**, whereas 43% mistook it with the use of **to** and **of**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **with** as revealed by their percentage of correctness, 56%. On the other hand, almost half of the students tested, 43%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition. A probable explanation of this divided situation is the fact that the English preposition **with** (meaning **con** in Spanish) is used in the phrase "**falling in love**," whereas in Spanish we say "**enamorarse de**" and not "**enamorarse con**."

4. I was thinking **on** you.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
on	11	8	8	18	45	63%
in	6	8	4	7	25	35%
at	1	0	0	0	1	1%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>on</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>63%</b>

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	25	35%

	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>on</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>in</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>at</b>	<b>1%</b>

	<b>at</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	1	1%

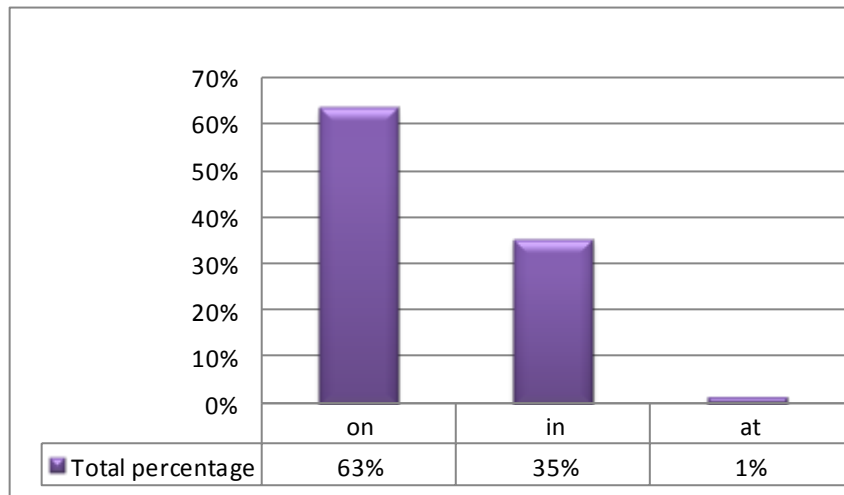


Fig. 4. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 63%, chose the right preposition **on**, whereas 36% of students chose the incorrect prepositions **in** and **at**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **on** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 63%. On the other hand, more than a third of the students tested, 36%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition. It is observed that the students' mother tongue has somehow interfered with the use of the preposition. In this case, **en** ("**in**") in Spanish seems to be influential on the students' use of English preposition **in**.

5. She told me something **about** you.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
of	0	0	0	3	3	4%
from	0	0	0	21	21	30%
about	18	16	12	1	47	66%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	3	4%

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	21	30%

	about	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answer	47	66%

	percentage
Of	4%
From	30%
<b>About</b>	<b>66%</b>

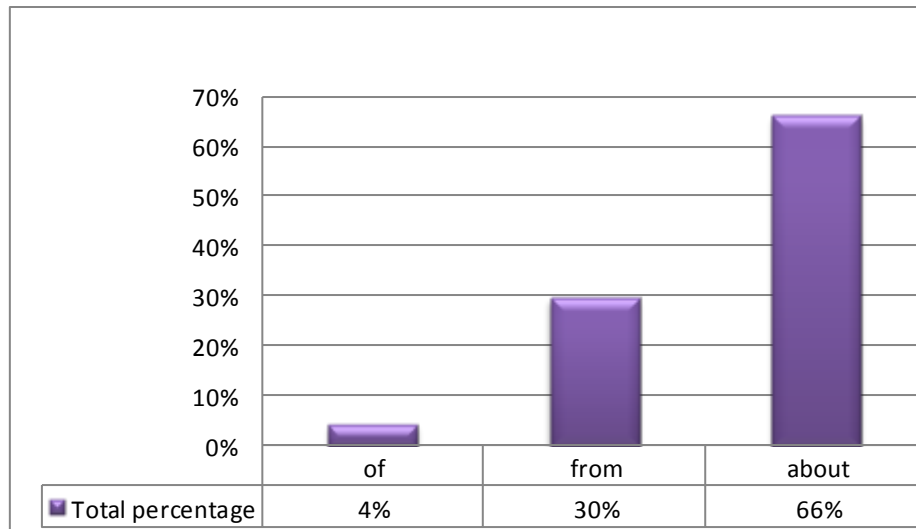


Fig. 5. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 66%, chose **about**, the right preposition, while 30% of students mistook it with the use of **from** and **of**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **about** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 66%. On the other hand, 30% of the students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition. Here the interference of Spanish is not so strong because there is no significant risk to confuse about with the distractors.

**6. What do you do **at** home?**

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
in	1	0	1	2	4	6%
at	17	16	11	23	67	94%
on	0	0	0	0	0	0%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	in	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	4	6%

	at	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	67	94%

	Percentage
in	6%
at	94%
on	0%

	on	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

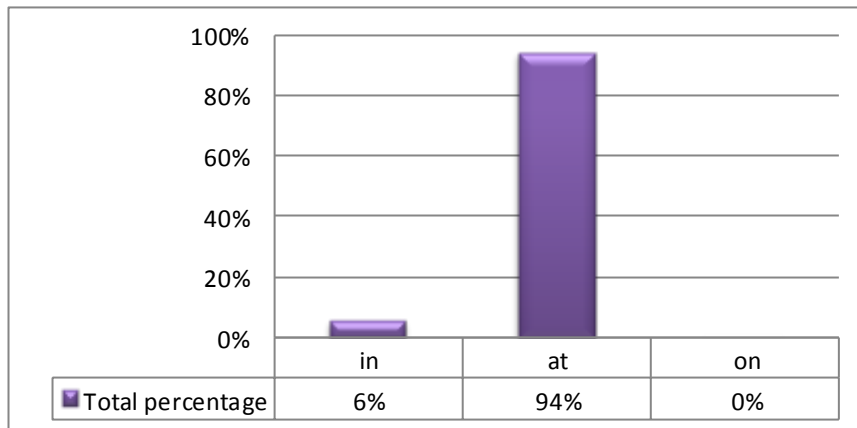


Fig. 6. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** Almost all of the students, 94%, were able to choose the right preposition, **at**, while 6% of students chose the incorrect preposition **in**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **at** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 94%. On the other hand, the minority of students, 6%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition. As revealed by the graph, the subjects under study show some mastery on the preposition in this context. A probable explanation is the fact that in Spanish we say **en casa** (“**at home**”) and not “**dentro de la casa**” or “**sobre la casa.**”

7. I was born **on** October 28th.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
<b>in</b>	5	5	2	9	21	30%
<b>on</b>	13	11	10	15	49	69%
<b>at</b>	0	0	0	1	1	1%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	21	30%

	<b>on</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	49	69%

	<b>at</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	1	1%

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>in</b>	30%
<b>on</b>	69%
<b>at</b>	1%

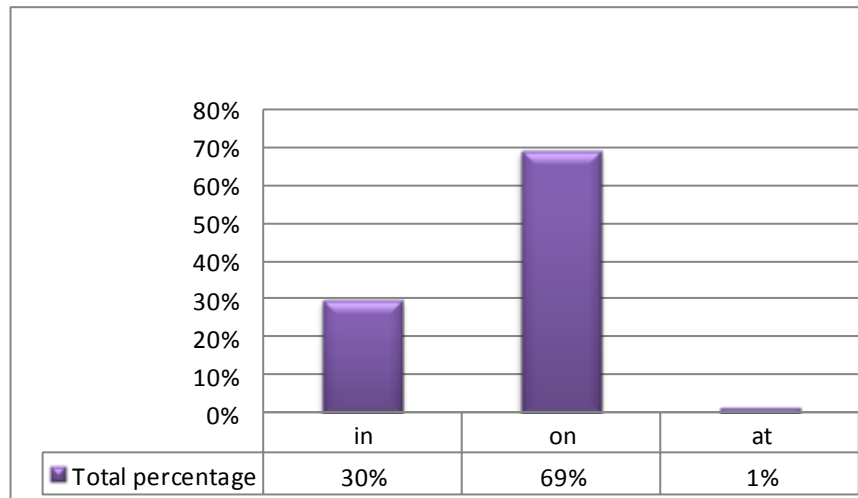


Fig. 7. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 69%, were able to choose the right preposition **on**, while the remaining 31% chose the wrong prepositions **in** and **at**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **on** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 69%. On the other hand, almost a third of them need reinforcement on that particular preposition. The students' mother tongue's interference is not strong in this case. Two facts reinforce this phenomenon:

- the study of the grammar rule regarding **on** by the students;
- the absence of a preposition in the Spanish counterpart.

8. The cake you received was made **by** Juan. He is a good baker.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
for	0	0	0	0	0	0%
by	18	16	12	25	71	100%
of	0	0	0	0	0	0%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

	by	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	71	100%

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

	percentage
for	0%
by	100%
of	0%

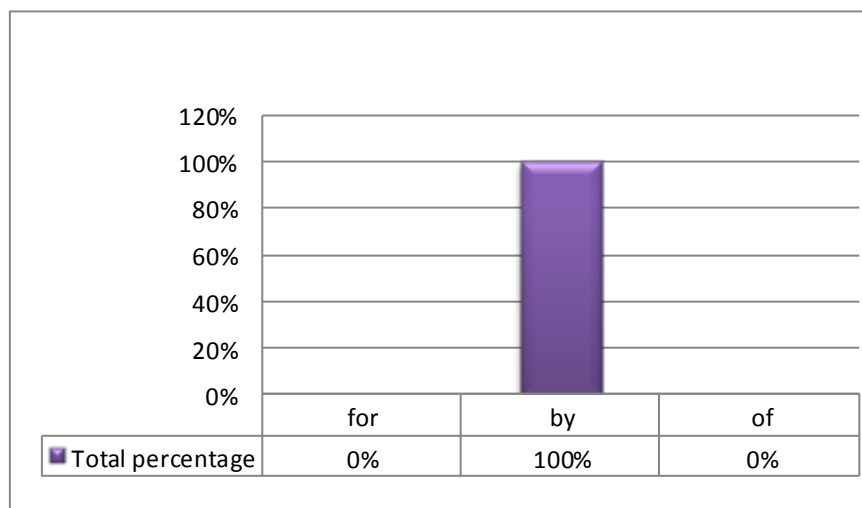


Fig. 8. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** All of the students, 100%, were able to choose the right preposition **by**, without hesitating as to its use.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable use of the preposition **by**, since all of them, 100%, chose the right one. Here the students' mother tongue does not interfere with the use of the English preposition. One fact to support this situation is the similar role of both prepositions (**por** in Spanish and **by** in English, which refer to the doer of the sentence).

9. This article is **on** page 10.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
on	11	12	11	21	55	77%
at	0	1	1	1	3	4%
in	7	3	0	3	13	18%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>on</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>77%</b>

	<b>at</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18%</b>

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>on</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>at</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>in</b>	<b>18%</b>

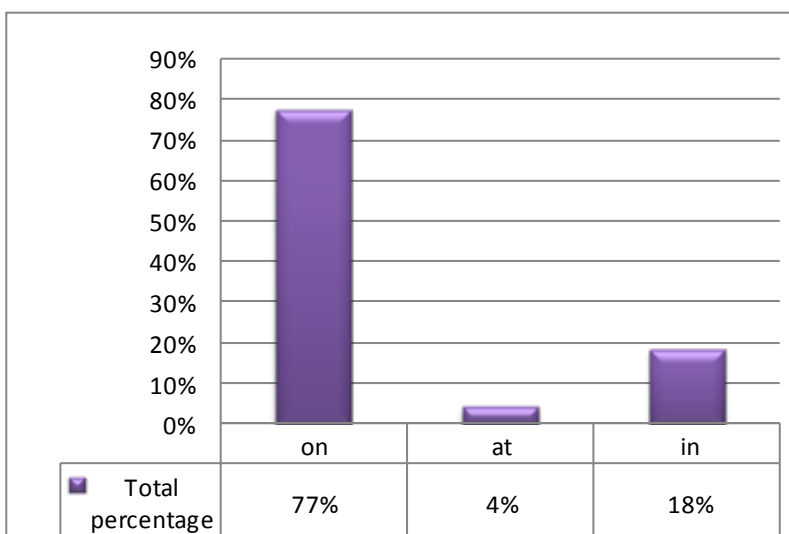


Fig. 9. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 77%, were able to choose the right preposition, **on**, while the remaining 19% of students chose the incorrect prepositions **at** and **in**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **on** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 77%. On the other hand, a third of the student tested, 22%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition. Here the interference of Spanish with the use of the English preposition is not strong. A probable explanation is the fact that **on** seems to be more logical for students rather than the other prepositions: In Spanish we say **sobre el papel** ("**on the paper**"), which justifies the students correctness.

10. We sent the package **for** Lupita because she couldn't do it.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
<b>by</b>	2	0	1	2	5	7%
<b>for</b>	6	4	3	9	22	31%
<b>to</b>	10	12	8	14	44	62%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>by</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	5	7%

	<b>for</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	22	31%

	<b>to</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	44	62%

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>by</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>for</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>to</b>	<b>62%</b>

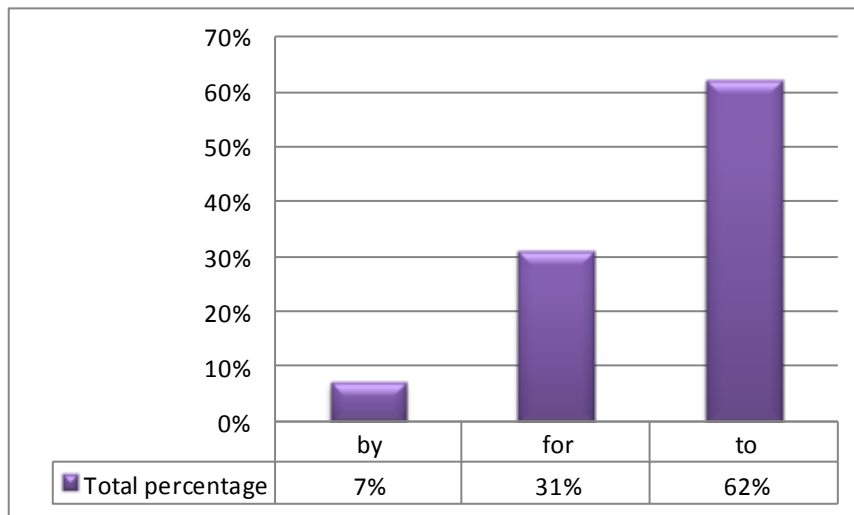


Fig. 10. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 62%, chose the incorrect preposition **to**, whereas 31% of them answered correctly. The remaining 7% chose the incorrect preposition **by**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed a low knowledge of the preposition **for** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 31%. On the other hand, more than two thirds, 69%, of students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition. Here, Spanish preposition “**a**” (“**to**”) affected the students’ selection of the answer because the preposition **for** in this context seems confusing for Spanish speakers.



11. They are laughing **at** us.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
of	8	7	5	11	31	44%
about	8	4	3	8	23	32%
at	2	5	4	6	17	24%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	31	44%

	about	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	23	32%

	at	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	17	24%

	percentage
of	44%
about	32%
at	24%

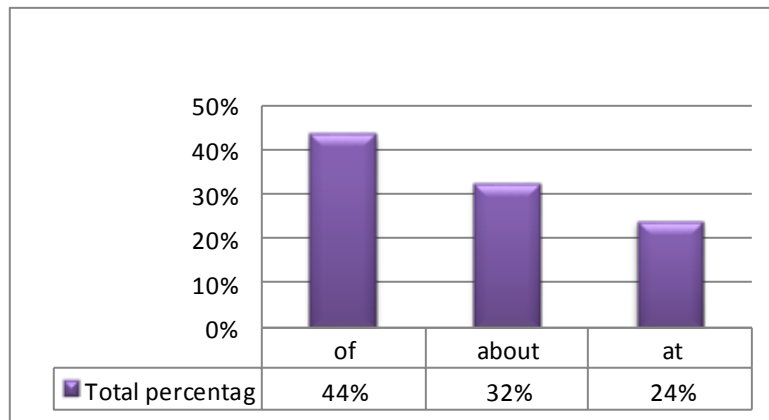


Fig. 11. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 76%, mistook the use of the preposition, using *of* and *about* being *at*, with a 24% the correct one in this statement.

**Interpretation:** Students showed a low knowledge of the preposition *at* as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 24%. On the other hand, the majority of the students tested, 76%, need reinforcement on that particular preposition. The student's mother tongue interference is clearly revealed in this case. Two facts explain it:

- In Spanish we say *reirse de*, which is noticed in the wrong choosing of the preposition *of* on the students' part.
- About* is somehow close to Spanish preposition *acerca de*, which would be logical to a Spanish speaker. This explains the selection of this distractor. The use of "*at*" (the right answer) could be due to study alone

**12. The solution is up to you.**

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
for	5	4	4	5	18	25%
to	13	12	7	18	50	70%
from	0	0	1	2	3	4%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	18	25%

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	50	70%

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	3	4%

	percentage
for	25%
to	70%
from	4%

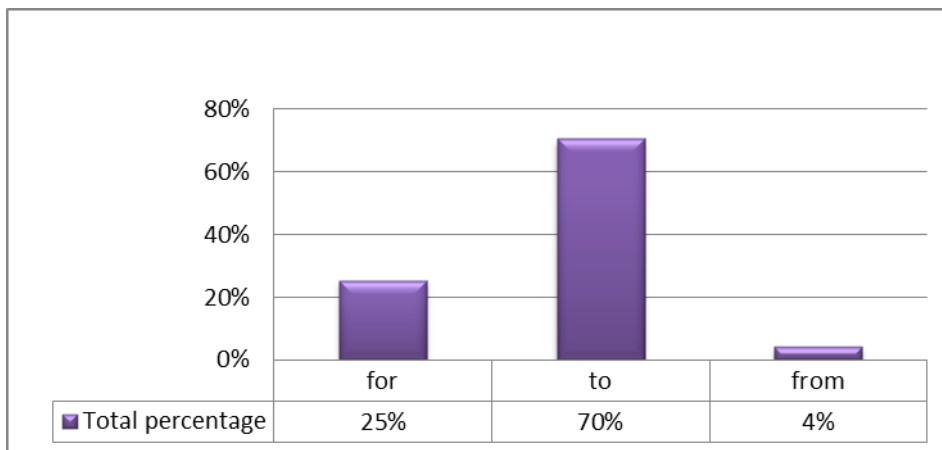


Fig. 12. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four group altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 70%, chose the right preposition **to** in this specific statement, whereas 30% of students mistook its use with the prepositions **for** and **from**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **to** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 70%. On the other hand, 30% of the students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition.

In this case, the interference of students' mother tongue, Spanish, with the use of prepositions is not strong. A possible explanation is the fact that **to** seems to be more logical for students rather than the other two prepositions, as revealed by the percentage of correctness in the graphic.

13. Ricardo is different **from** Rosa.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
to	5	2	1	6	14	20%
of	2	2	0	1	5	7%
from	11	12	11	18	52	73%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	14	20%

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	5	7%

	percentage
to	20%
of	7%
<b>from</b>	<b>73%</b>

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	52	73%

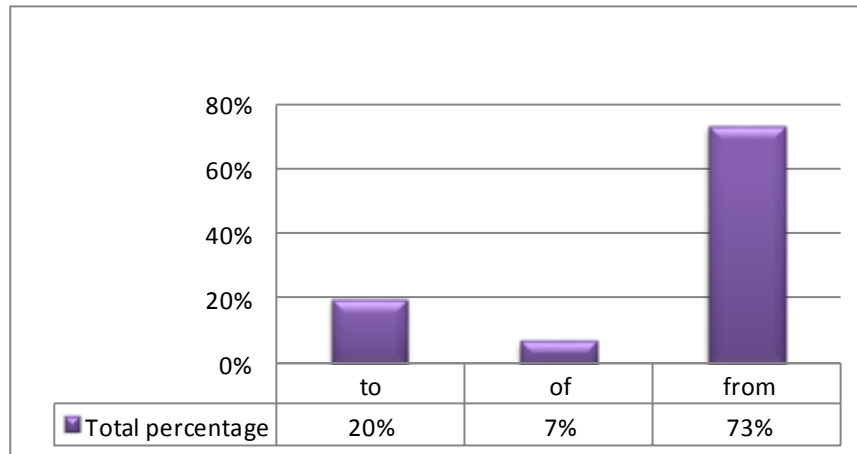


Fig. 13. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 73%, chose the right preposition **from**, while 27% of students mistook its use with the prepositions **to** and **of**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **from** as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 73%. On the other hand, 27%, of the students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition.

As revealed in the graphic, interference of Spanish is not that strong since students are familiar with the use of the right preposition in this specific statement.

14. Sarita is interested **in** that car.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
in	16	14	8	15	53	75%
on	2	2	4	10	18	25%
over	0	0	0	0	0	0%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>75%</b>

	<b>on</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	18	25%

	<b>over</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>In</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>On</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>over</b>	<b>0%</b>

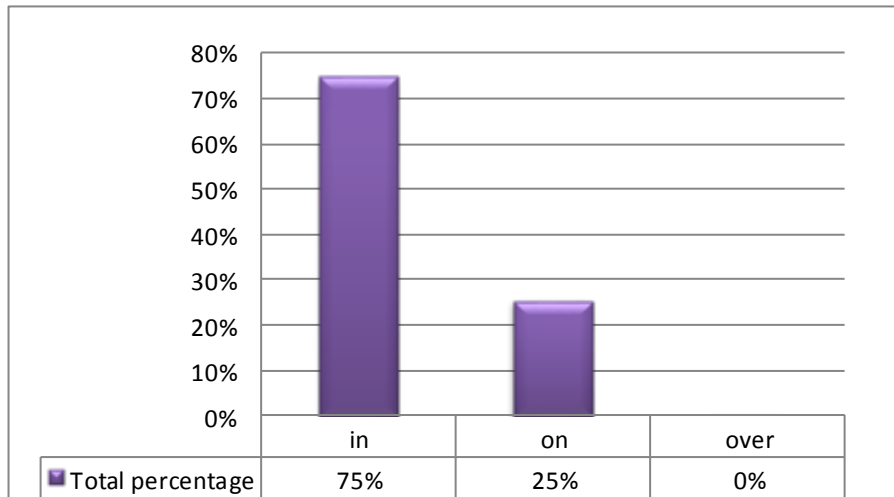


Fig. 14. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 75%, chose the right preposition **in**, while the rest confused, its use with the preposition **on**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **in**, as revealed by the percentage of correctness. On the other hand, 25% of the students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition. The third part of students chose the correct preposition **in** as revealed in the graphic level of correctness. Here the Interference of mother tongue is not strong because there is no way students confuse it with the preposition **on** in this particular case.

15. Raúl works downtown.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
at	6	8	6	8	28	39%
in	11	6	5	14	36	51%
–	1	2	1	3	7	10%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	at	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	28	39%

	in	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	36	51%

	–	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	7	10%

	percentage
at	39%
in	51%
–	10%

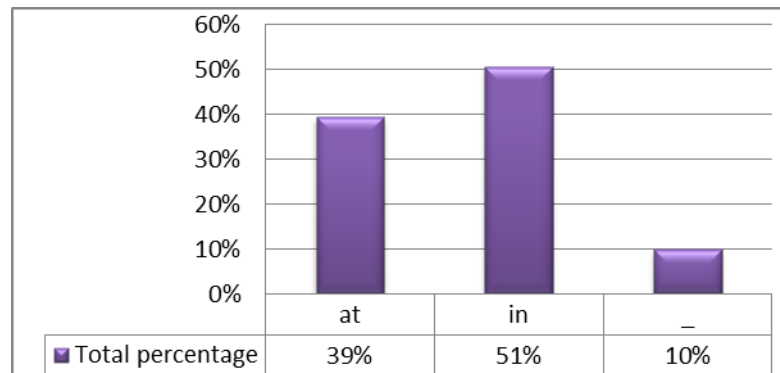


Fig. 15. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 90%, showed they struggle with the use of the prepositions *in* and *at* since in this specific statement no preposition was needed.

**Interpretation:** Students selected the wrong options since no preposition was needed in this specific statement. Just 10% of students chose the right option, without preposition, while the majority of them, 90%, used a preposition when not necessary.

In this specific case no preposition was needed. As revealed in the graph, 90% struggled deciding whether to use them or leave the statement without preposition, which was the best option. As revealed by the graph, students need a lot of training as to how to omit English prepositions when not necessary. The students' mother tongue's interference is clearly noticed in this case. A probable explanation is the fact that Spanish always has prepositions whereas English omits some of them in some particular cases.

16. Consuelo is married **to** Oscar.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
with	17	13	9	18	57	80%
to	1	3	3	7	14	20%
for	0	0	0	0	0	0%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	with	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	57	80%

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	14	20%

	percentage
with	80%
to	20%
for	0%

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

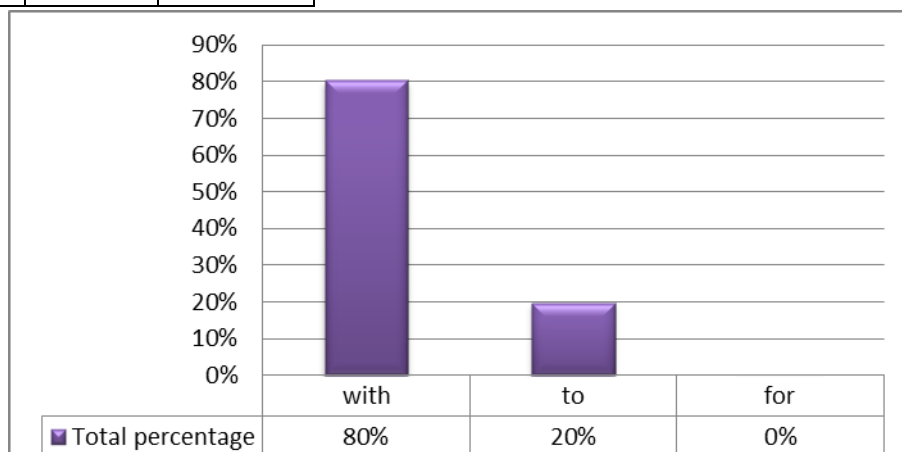


Fig. 16. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of students, 80%, chose the wrong preposition **with**, while just 20% of them chose the right preposition **to**.

**Interpretation:** Students showed they mistake the use of the prepositions **with** and **to**, since the majority mistook the use of both. In this statement the correct one was **to**, which means that the majority of students tested need reinforcement on that particular preposition. Here, the interference of mother tongue with the use of the preposition **with** is strong; a possible explanation for this is that students tend to relate the use of the preposition **with** in their mother tongue with the English counterpart (**with**).

17. They entered the house.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
to	10	7	9	13	39	55%
in	8	7	2	11	28	39%
–	0	2	1	1	4	6%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	39	55%

	percentage
to	55%
in	39%
–	6%

	in	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	28	39%

	–	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	4	6%

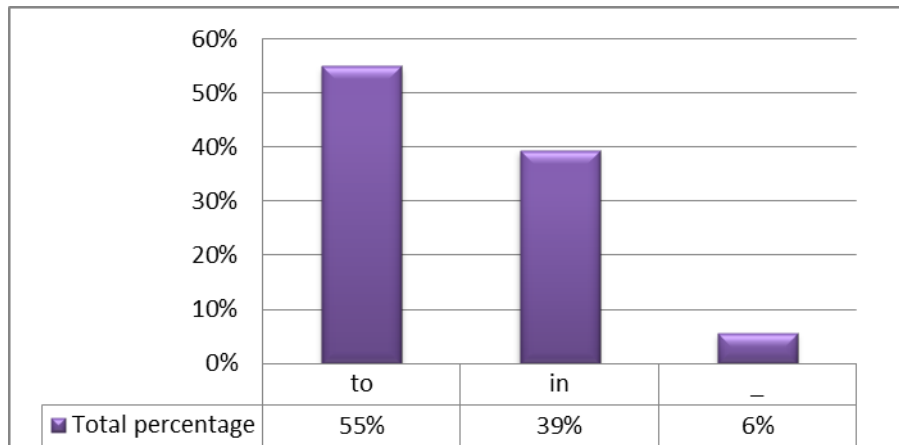


Fig. 17. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The majority of the students, 94%, chose the wrong prepositions **to** and **in**, when no preposition was needed in this statement, as a significant minority of the subjects under study was able to identify.

**Interpretation:** Students show a low knowledge when no preposition is needed. Only 6% of them chose no preposition, while 94% of the students mistook its use with the prepositions **to** and **in**, showing they need reinforcement when no preposition is needed. Here students are making use of unnecessary prepositions.

18. Monica forgot **about** her mother's birthday.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
of	2	3	1	1	7	10%
about	11	12	11	18	52	73%
to	5	1	0	6	12	17%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	7	10%

	percentage
of	10%
<b>about</b>	<b>73%</b>
to	17%

	<b>about</b>	percentage
Tested	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
Answered	<b>52</b>	<b>73%</b>

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	12	17%

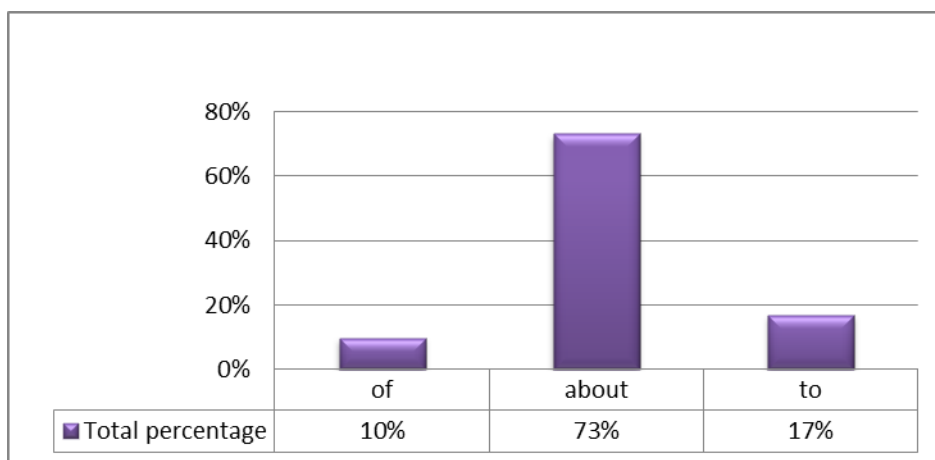


Fig. 18. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** Almost three fourths of students, 73%, were able to choose the right preposition **about**, while the rest chose wrong prepositions.

**Interpretation:** Students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **about**, as revealed by the percentage of correctness, 73%. On the other hand, 27% of the students need reinforcement on that particular preposition. In Spanish we say "*Mónica olvidó el cumpleaños de su madre,*" without using a preposition, while in English they use **about**, which 73% of students selected as the best option, being this one the correct one.



19. Tito is **in** his forties.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
on	10	7	4	12	33	46%
for	2	1	2	0	5	7%
in	6	8	6	13	33	46%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	on	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	33	46%

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	5	7%

	in	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	33	46%

	percentage
on	46%
for	7%
in	46%

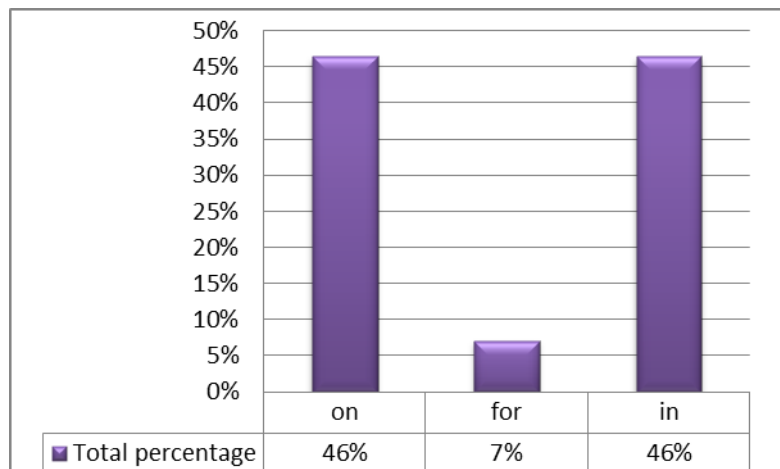


Fig. 19. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** What this graph shows is that the students' responses were equally divided. 46% chose the correct preposition **in**, whereas another 46% chose the incorrect preposition **on**. The remaining 7% chose **for**.

**Interpretation:** The students' mother tongue's interference is clearly revealed in this situation. In Spanish we say: **está en los 40**, which is clearly noticed in the wrong choosing of the preposition **on**. **In** is somehow the preposition close to Spanish preposition "**en**" which would be logical to a Spanish speaker and, therefore, they translated it literally.

20. I have to travel by car or boat because I am afraid **of** flying.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
to	4	2	1	3	10	14%
from	1	1	0	1	3	4%
of	13	13	11	21	58	82%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	10	14%

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	3	4%

	of	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	58	82%

	percentage
To	14%
From	4%
Of	82%

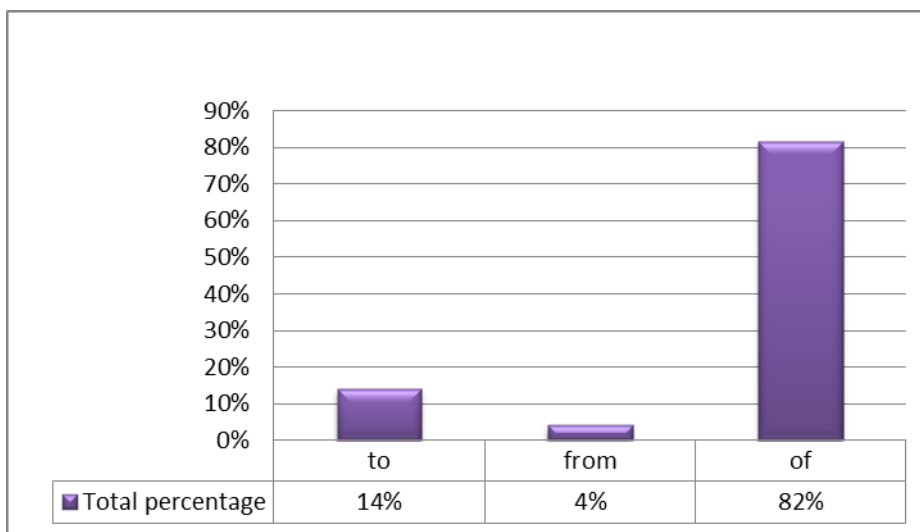


Fig. 20. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** This graph displays that more of the majority of students, 82%, could identify the missing prepositions **about**, whereas 24% chose **to**. The remaining 4% chose the distractor **from**.

**Interpretation:** Less than 50% of the subjects under study chose a wrong answer. This means that students showed an acceptable knowledge of the preposition **of**. Two facts reinforce this: A) The study of the grammar rule regarding how to use the *preposition of*. B) The students' mother tongue interference. They translated it literally. Therefore, positive transfer occurred in this particular situation.

21. We are enthusiastic **about** learning English prepositions.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
for	4	5	3	5	17	24%
about	14	11	9	20	54	76%
from	0	0	0	0	0	0%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	17	24%

	about	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	54	76%

	from	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	0	0%

	percentage
for	24%
about	76%
from	0%

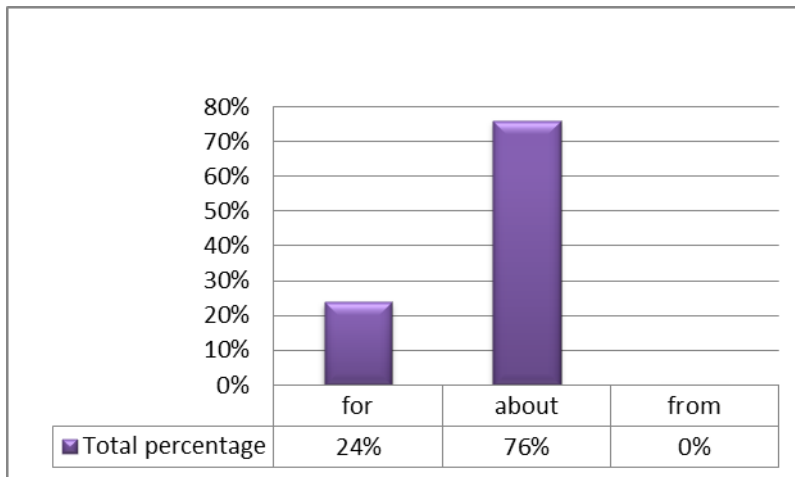


Fig. 21. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** More than 50% of the students could identify the missing preposition **about**. The remaining 24% chose **for**.

**Interpretation:** A probable explanation of this specific situation is: A) Students' mother tongue has not interfered with the use of the preposition **about**. Thus, there is no interference in the translation. B) The students know the grammar rule regarding **about**.

22. The movie was based **on** a book written 50 years ago.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
on	15	14	10	22	61	86%
in	3	2	2	2	9	13%
of	0	0	0	1	1	1%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>on</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
Answered	<b>61</b>	<b>86%</b>

	<b>in</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	9	13%

	<b>of</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	1	1%

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>on</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>in</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>of</b>	<b>1%</b>

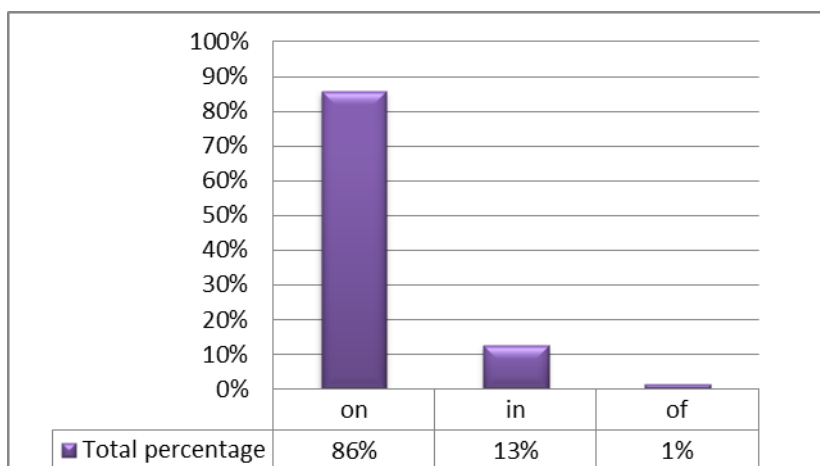


Fig. 22. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether

**Analysis:** As revealed by the data, almost all the students under study, 86% chose the English preposition **on**, whereas 13% a small percentage of them who had problems in doing that, chose **in**. The remaining 1% chose **of**.

**Interpretation:** The students' mother tongue's interference is not strong in this case. Two facts reinforce this: A) The study of the grammar rule regarding on. B) The students' answer did not depend on negative transfer.

23. Klare is **between** Eliza and John.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
between	15	11	11	20	57	80%
among	1	0	0	1	2	3%
next to	2	5	1	4	12	17%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	<b>between</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Answered</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>80%</b>

	<b>percentage</b>
<b>between</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>among</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>next to</b>	<b>17%</b>

	<b>among</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	2	3%

	<b>next to</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Tested	71	100%
Answered	12	17%

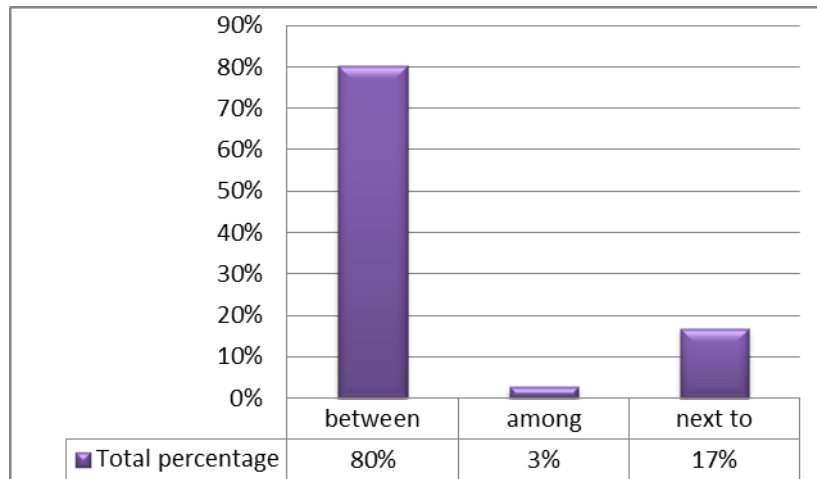


Fig. 23. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** The sum of all the results of the subject under study showed that 80% of them chose the correct preposition **between**, whereas a small percentage had problems in doing that. 17% chose **next to** and the remaining 3% chose the incorrect preposition **among**.

**Interpretation:** Here the interference of Spanish with the use of the English preposition is not strong. Students have an adequate knowledge of the preposition **between**. In Spanish there is only one preposition, "**entre**", while in English there are two: "**among**" and "**between.**"

**24. Among** my favorite subjects I can mention Spanish, Math, Art and Philosophy.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
between	4	2	1	2	9	13%
among	10	10	11	21	52	73%
in	4	4	0	2	10	14%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.

The distractors for each sentence are black.

	between	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	9	13%

	among	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	52	73%

	in	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	10	14%

	percentage
between	13%
among	73%
in	14%

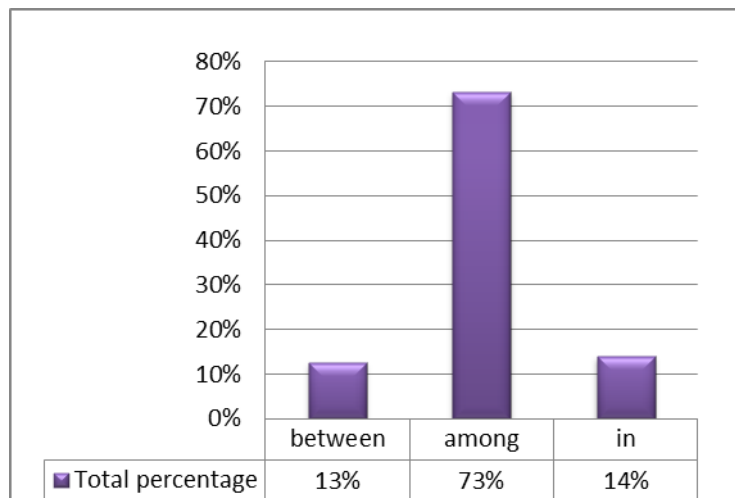


Fig. 24. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** Here the majority of students, 73%, chose the preposition **among**, whereas 14% chose **in**, and the remaining 6% of students selected **between**.

**Interpretation:** Students show some mastery on the preposition **among** in this context. One fact reinforces that: The Study of the grammar rule regarding among. Here the interference of Spanish is not strong.

25. She smiled **at** me.

Preposition	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total	Percentage
to	2	3	1	1	7	10%
for	11	12	11	18	52	73%
at	5	1	0	6	12	17%
					<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** The true preposition for each sentence is colored red.  
The distractors for each sentence are black.

	to	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	7	10%

	for	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	52	73%

	at	percentage
Tested	71	100%
Answered	12	17%

	percentage
To	10%
For	73%
At	17%

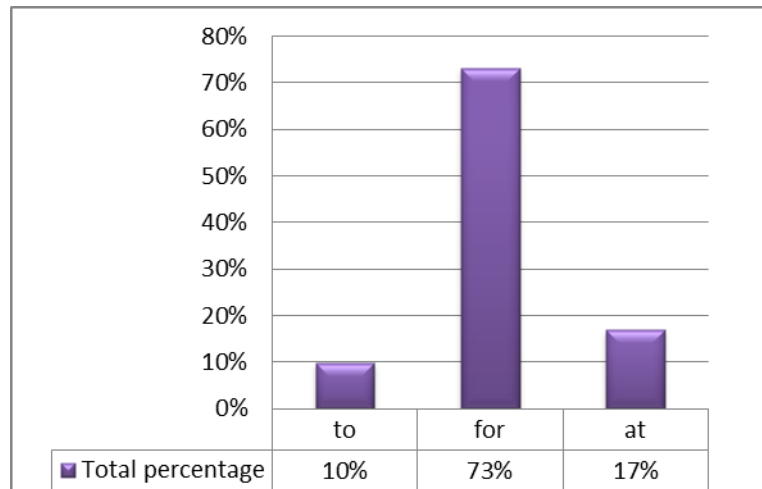
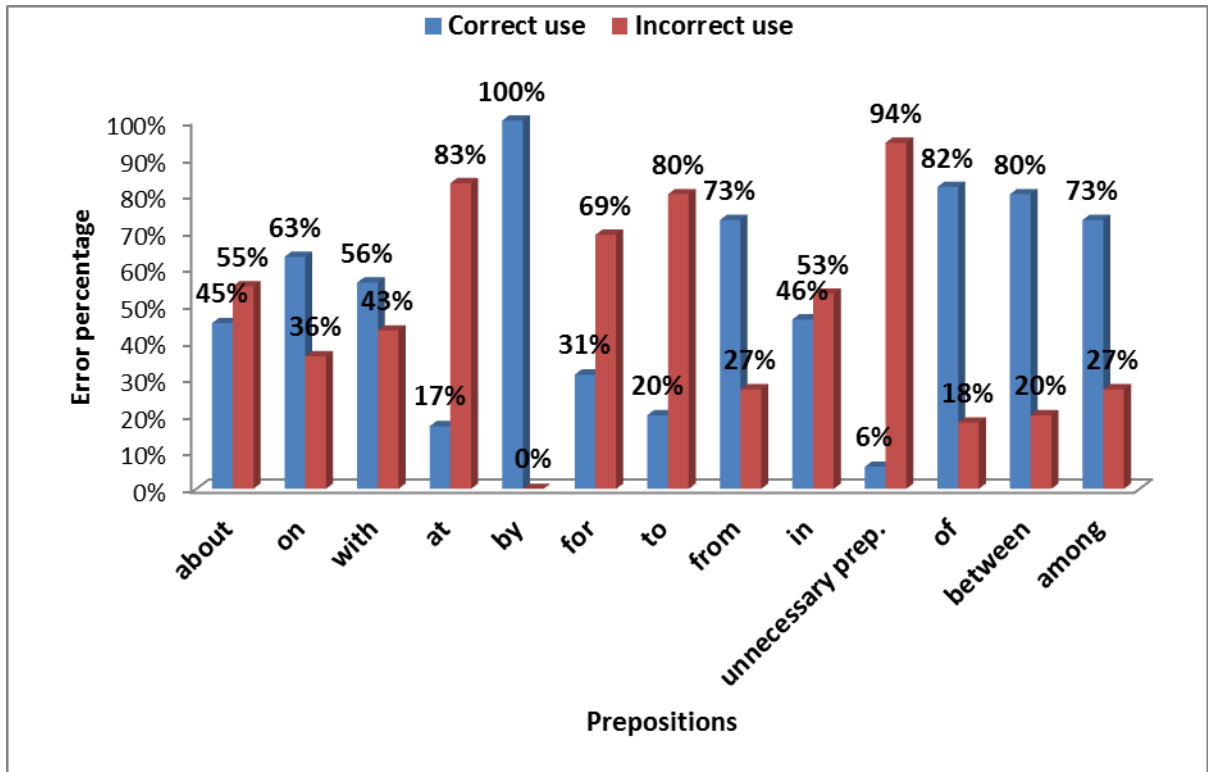


Fig. 25. Graph illustrating the answers provided by the four groups altogether.

**Analysis:** What this graph displays is that the majority of students, 73%, had significant problems to identify the missing preposition **at**. A small quantity, 17%, found the correct missing preposition **at**, whereas the rest of the students, 10%, chose **to**.

**Interpretation:** Students need reinforcement on the preposition **at**. Students' mother tongue has somehow interfered with the use of the preposition. In this case, negative transfer occurred (**por=for**). To a Spanish speaker **for** seems to be more logical than the other prepositions.

Fig.1 General Graph for the students' error percentage using English prepositions.

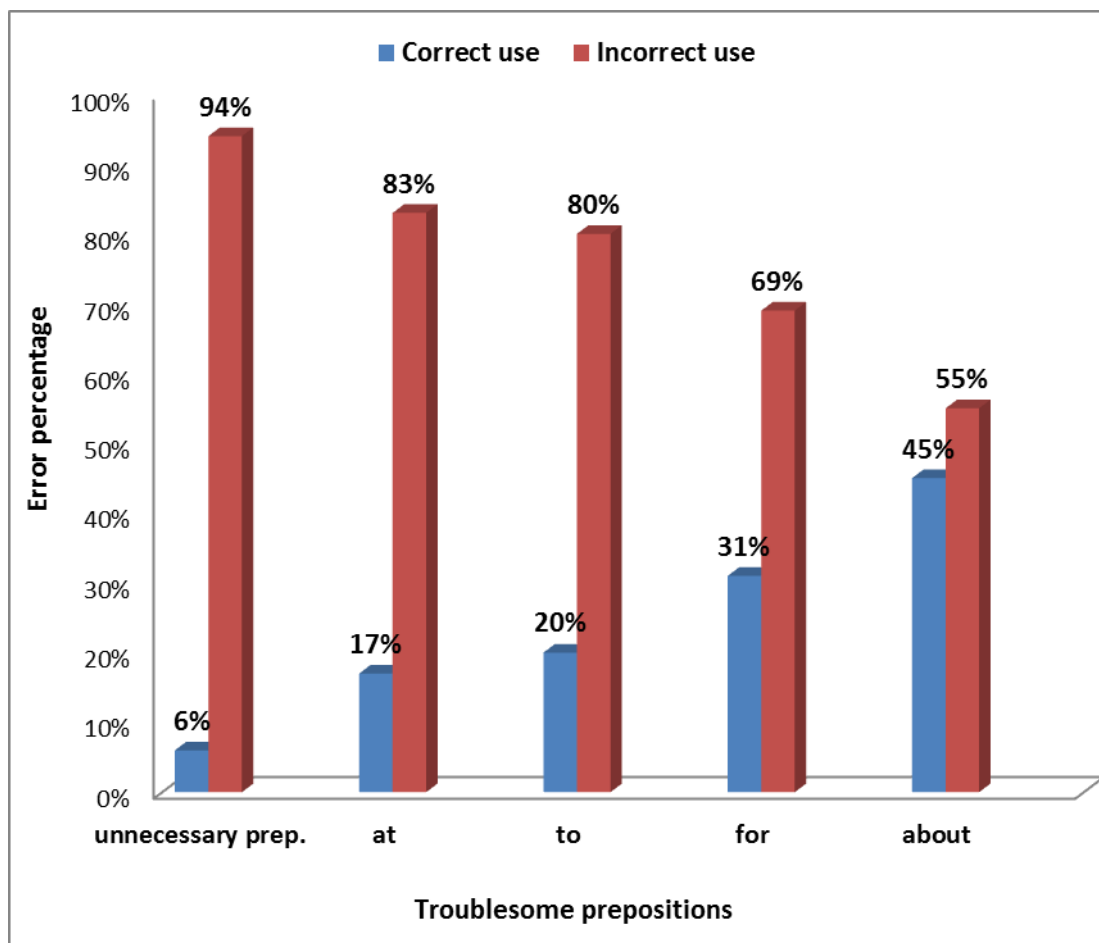


**Analysis:** The graph shows the different English prepositions and the errors that the English students made in each case. As observed, some English prepositions are more troublesome than others.

**Interpretation:** The most troublesome situation was that in which **no preposition was necessary**, with 94%. On the other hand, the least troublesome prepositions was **by**, which showed 100% of correctness.



Fig.2 Graph for the student's most troublesome cases when dealing with English prepositions.



The graph shows the students' error percentage consisting of using wrong prepositions caused by their mother tongue (Spanish). First of all, the students usually make error by introducing a **preposition when not necessary**. This is the most troublesome situation, which was observed in 94% of the cases. Second, comes the preposition **at** which has a frequency of 83% of errors, because the students used preposition **for** or **to** when **at** was necessary. Third, the students used the preposition **with** instead of **to** in 80% of cases. Preposition **for** was observed in 69% of errors, because the students used prepositions **to** or **by**. Finally, preposition **about** was not used correctly in 55% of cases.

---

## 5.2 PROFESSORS SURVEY

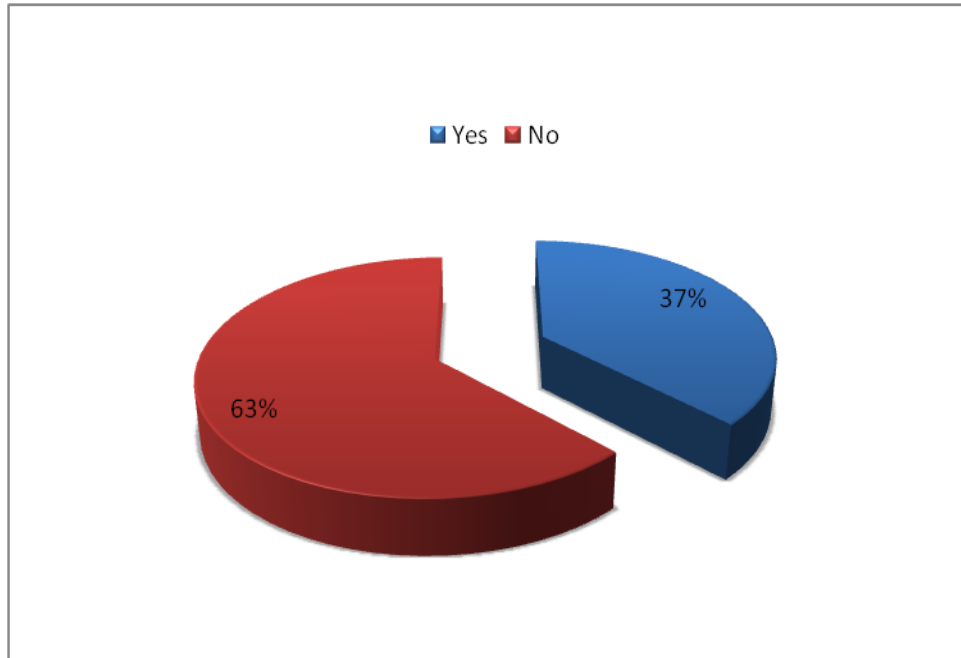
Regarding the relevant issue of this research about the level of interference of English learners' mother tongue on their learning of prepositions, professors also filled out a short questionnaire about their attitudes toward the problem presented in classroom.

The group of researchers could not exclude the position that teachers have regarding the phenomenon. The following graphs show the results to represent the information gathered that complemented and enriched the findings of the study that were discovered in the data analysis and interpretation about professors' viewpoints regarding English prepositions learning process. The survey was administered to eight professors of the Foreign Language Department who are in charge of teaching English Composition II.

---

**1. Do you allow the use of Spanish in the classroom?**

Yes	3	<b>37%</b>
No	5	<b>63%</b>
Total	8	<b>100%</b>



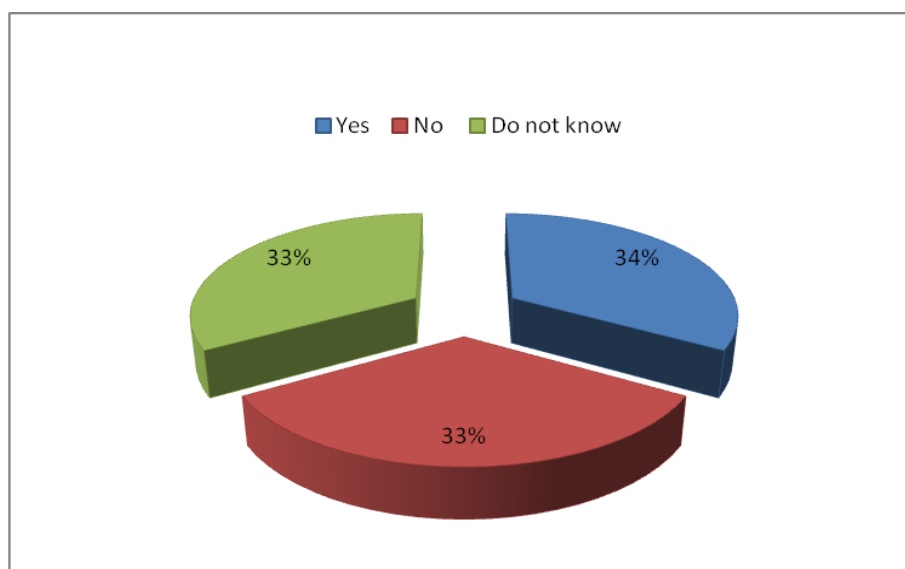
**Analysis:** 63% of professors allow their students to use their mother tongue in class, whereas the rest do not permit that.

**Interpretation:** There is a divided opinion among the professors regarding the use of students' mother tongue in class. As revealed by the data, the English Composition professors do not have a common attitude with regard to this particular issue.

---

**2. If your answer was YES, does it affect your students' learning of English prepositions?**

Yes	1	33%
No	1	33%
Do not know	1	33%
Total	3	100%



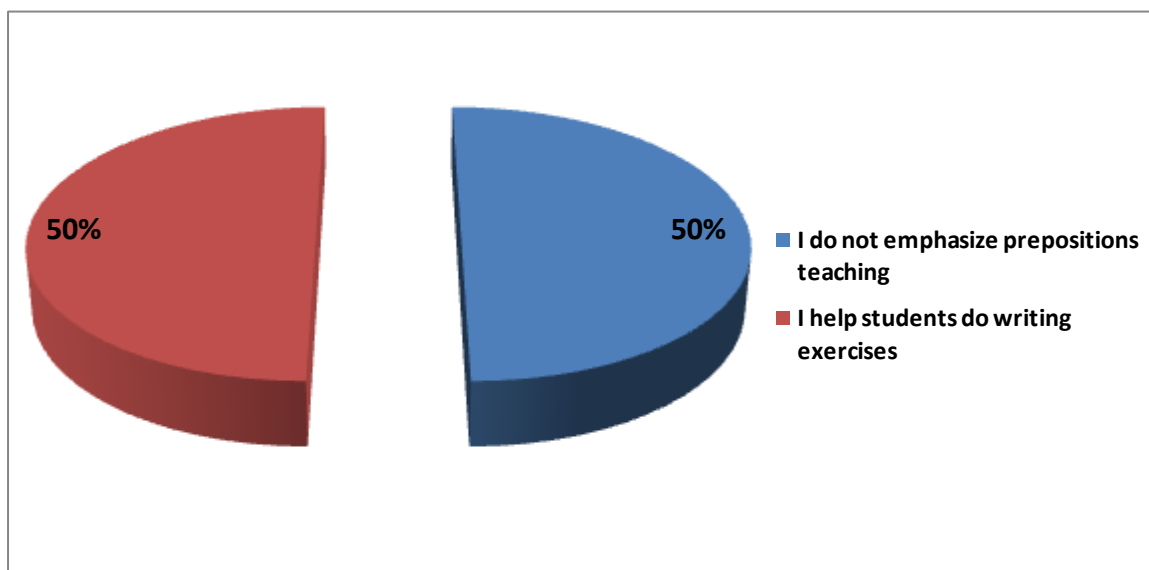
**Analysis:** When being asked if the students' mother tongue affects their learning of English prepositions 33% of the professors express that the students' mother tongue does not affect it, 33% of them say that they do not know anything about it and the rest (33%) of them admit that this phenomenon happens.

**Interpretation:** As shown by the graph, there is a divided opinion between the professors who admit that their students' mother tongue affects their learning of English prepositions and those who do not consider it occurs. The rest of them (33%) express that they do not have any idea about it.

---

### 3. What kind of writing activities do you carry out with your students when teaching English prepositions?

I do not emphasize prepositions teaching	4	50%
I help students do writing exercises	4	50%
Total	8	100%



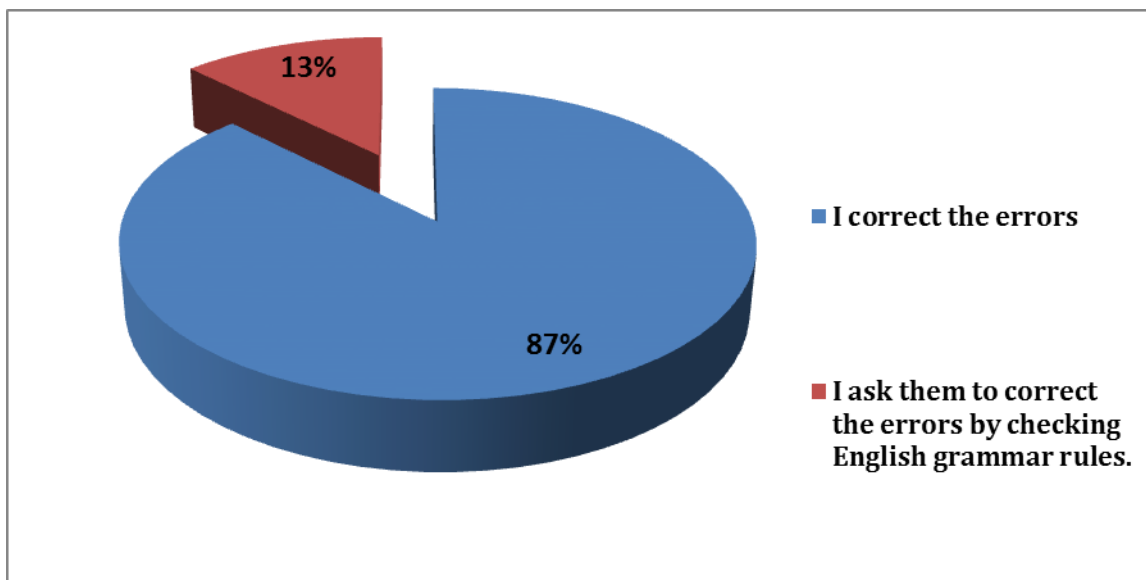
**Analysis:** This graph reveals that 50% of the professors do not emphasize prepositions teaching in their class, and the others (50%) help students do writing exercises and go beyond the content.

**Interpretation:** In this case, there are two different points of view; some professors consider it necessary to focus on everything and not on that specific part of speech. On the other hand, a similar group of them try to help students with punctuation and grammar, not only with the contents.

---

#### 4. What do you do when your students make errors when writing a composition using English prepositions?

I correct the errors	7	87%
I ask them to correct the errors by checking English grammar rules	1	13%
Total	8	100%



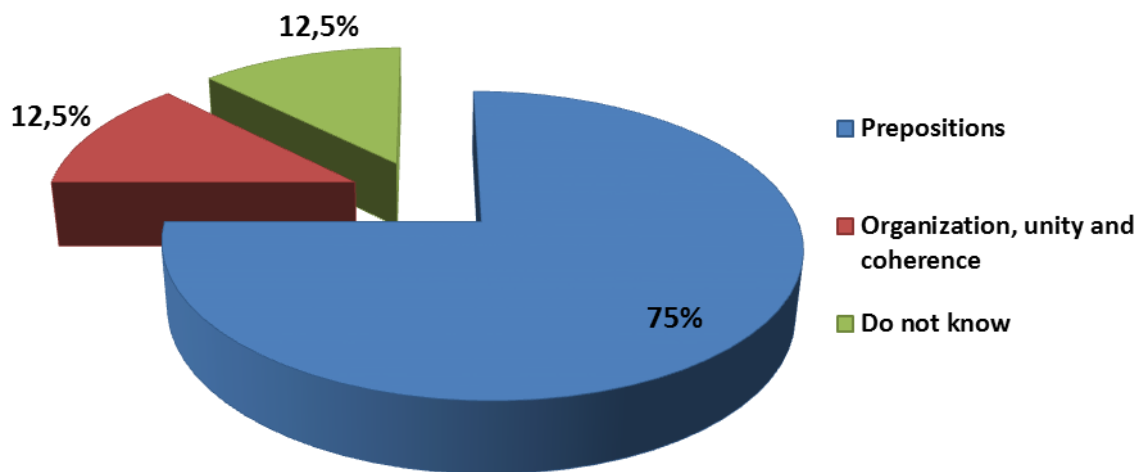
**Analysis:** 87% of professors correct the errors so as to show their students where their errors are, whereas the rest (13%) ask students to correct the errors by checking English grammar rules.

**Interpretation:** It is visible that for all the professors error correction is essential at any level of study. The difference is found in their error correction.

---

## 5. Which errors are the most common?

Prepositions	6	75,0%
Organization, unity and coherence	1	12,5%
Do not know	1	12,5%
Total	8	100%



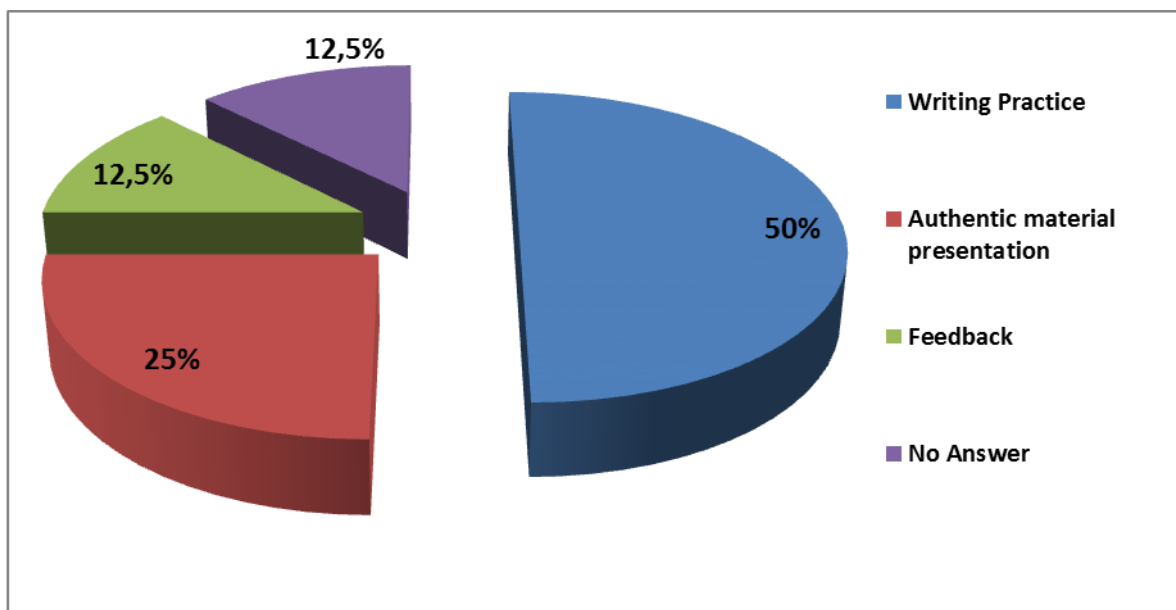
**Analysis:** As revealed by the graph, students have trouble with English prepositions as stated by the professors. Organization, unity and coherence rank second as stated by 12.50% of them. Finally, the rest (12.50%) provided no answer.

**Interpretation:** Based on the professors' opinion, it is evident that English Composition II students need reinforcement with regard to some prepositions, which means that this part of speech should be emphasized in the teaching-learning process.

---

## 6. Which techniques do you use to improve your students' writing skill?

Writing Practice	4	50,0%
Authentic material presentation	2	25,0%
Feedback	1	12,5%
No Answer	1	12,5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Analysis:** As revealed by graph, writing practice is one of the techniques used by the Foreign Language Department's professors to improve their student's writing skill. Sharing authentic material presentation ranks second as stated by 25% of them. 12.5% of the professors express they use the resource of feedback, whereas the rest (12.5%) provided no answer.

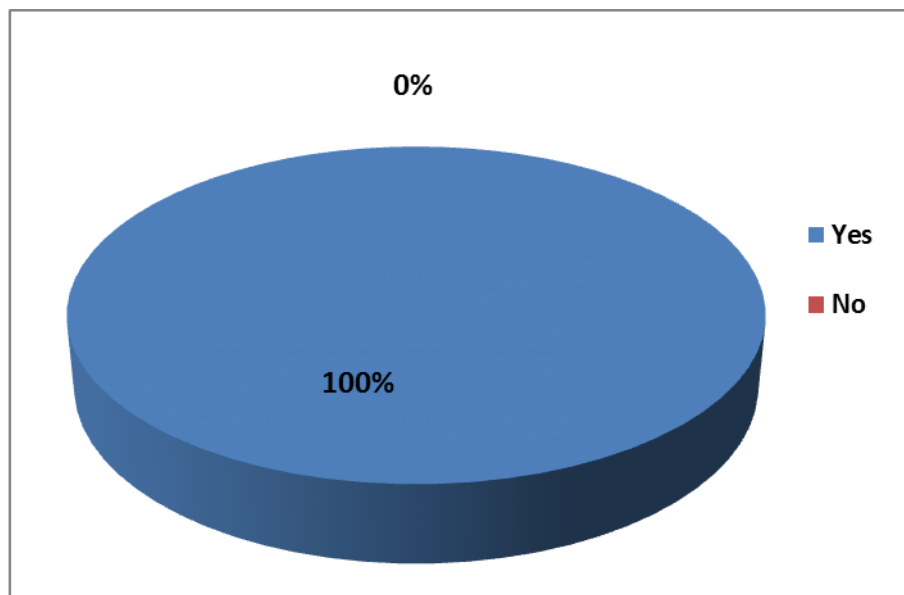
**Interpretation:** 50% of the professors interviewed express that they apply *writing practice*. *Authentic material presentation* ranks second as stated by 25% of them. The third technique is *feedback* (12.5%). The remaining 12.5% provided *no answer*. As shown by the professors' answers, the techniques applied by them are varied.



---

**7. According to your experience, does the interference of students' mother tongue affect their development of writing skill?**

Yes	8	<b>100%</b>
No	0	<b>0%</b>
Total	8	<b>100%</b>



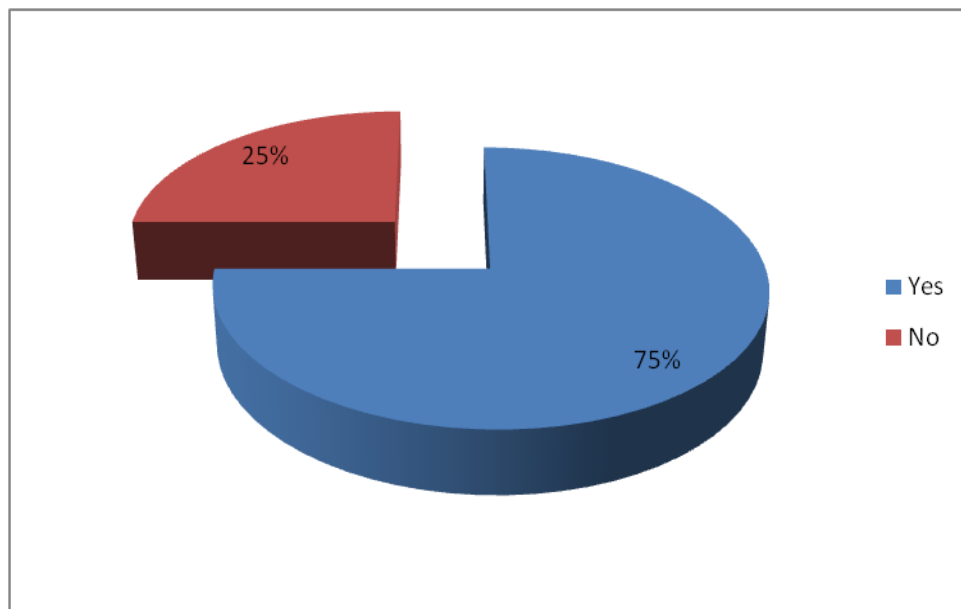
**Analysis:** All the professors admit that the interference of students' mother tongue affects their students' development of writing skill. They consider their students want to use the Spanish structures when writing.

**Interpretation:** Definitely, the professors take under consideration that students face typical interference errors in the learning process and they are exemplified when students try to express their ideas in pieces of writing.

---

**8. Do you notice that your students' mother tongue interferes with their learning of English prepositions?**

Yes	6	<b>75%</b>
No	2	<b>25%</b>
Total	8	<b>100%</b>



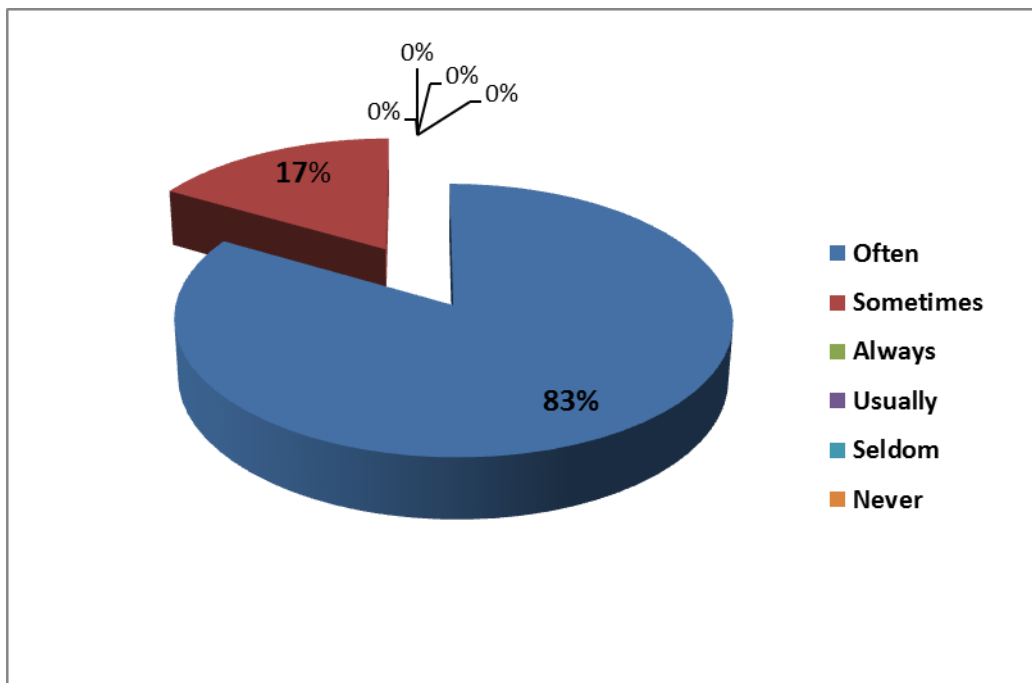
**Analysis:** The majority of professors (75%) admit that their students' mother tongue interferes with their learning whereas the rest (25%) express the opposite.

**Interpretation:** There is a strong tendency on the professors' part to consider that their students' mother tongue interferes with their learning of English prepositions.

---

9. If your answer was YES, how often does this interference happen?

Often	5	83%
Sometimes	1	17%
Always	0	0%
Usually	0	0%
Seldom	0	0%
Never	0	0%
Total	6	100%

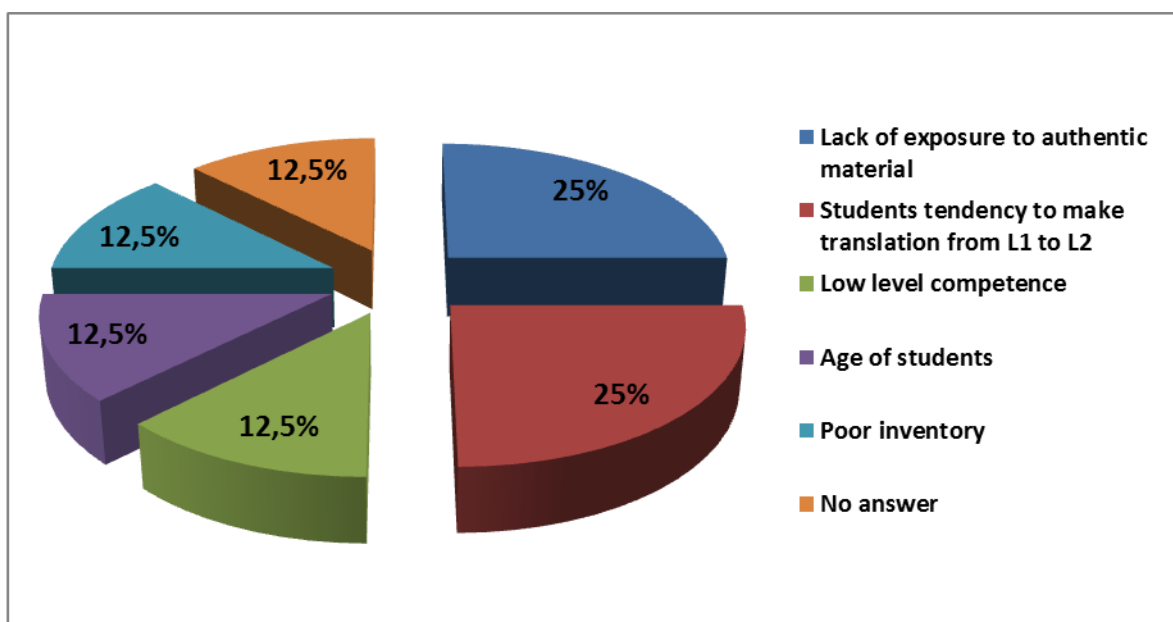


**Analysis:** When being asked about the frequency of their student's mother tongue interference, 83% of the professors answered that this phenomenon happens frequently (*often*), whereas 17% of them admit that this interference happens *sometimes*.

**Interpretation:** As shown by the graph, there is a strong tendency on the professors' part to admit that their students' mother tongue interferes with their learning of English prepositions.

**10. In your opinion, what are the main reasons why your students' mother tongue interferes on their English prepositions learning process?**

Lack of exposure to authentic material	2	<b>25,0%</b>
Students tendency to make translation from L1 to L2	2	<b>25,0%</b>
Low level competence	1	<b>12,5%</b>
Age of students	1	<b>12,5%</b>
Poor inventory	1	<b>12,5%</b>
No answer	1	<b>12,5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

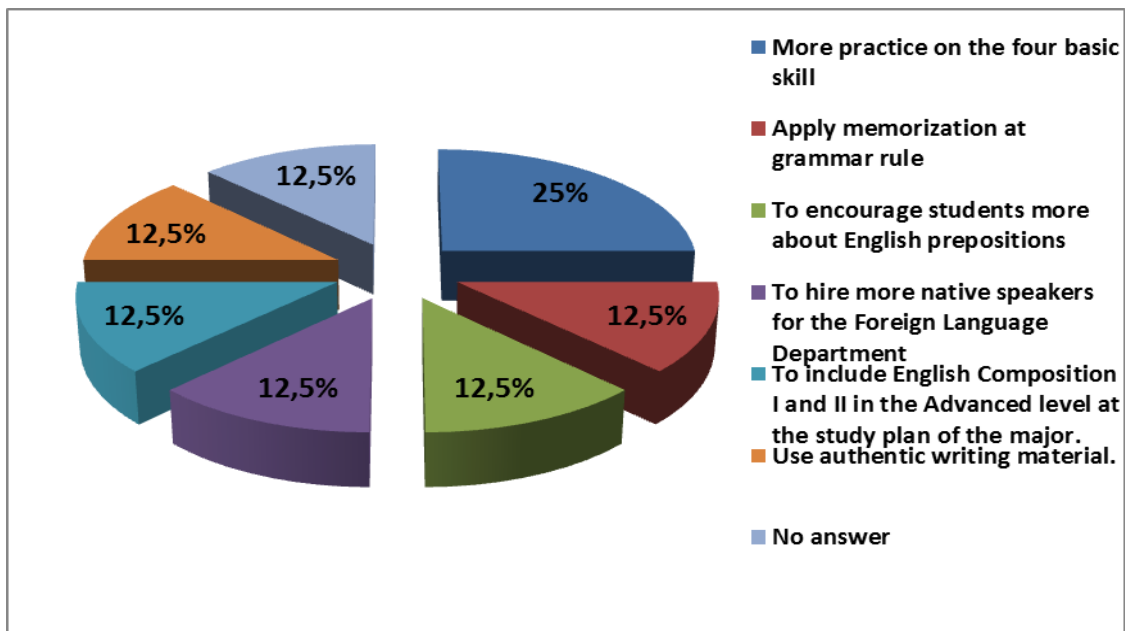


**Analysis:** 50% of the professors interviewed expressed that the main reasons of their students' mother tongue's interference are lack of exposure to authentic material and students' tendency to translate from L1 to L2. The remaining answers are related to these problems: students' low level competence, age of students, and poor inventory. A similar percentage of them (12.5%) provided no answer.

**Interpretation:** Based on the data presented above, there is a strong tendency on the professors' part to relate students' mother tongue interference mainly to lack of exposure to authentic material, and translation from L1 to L2.

## 11. What would your recommendations be?

More practice on the four basic skills.	2	25,0%
Apply memorization at grammar rule.	1	12,5%
To encourage students more about English prepositions.	1	12,5%
To hire more native speakers for the Foreign Language Department.	1	12,5%
To include English Composition I and II in the Advance level at the study plan of the major	1	12,5%
Use authentic writing material.	1	12,5%
No answer.	1	12,5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Analysis:** There is a wide variety of answers regarding the professors' recommendations. More practice on the four basic skills is a recommendation made by two out of eight professors (25%). Applying memorization of grammar rules and encouraging students more about English prepositions rank second as stated by 12.5% of them. The remaining recommendations are varied and have the same percentages: a) including English Composition I and II in the advanced level (upper level) of the study plan of the major; (b) using authentic writing materials and c) hiring native speakers. The remaining professors (12.5%) did not provide any answer.

**Interpretation:** To face the mother tongue interference, it is important to take into account the information gathered from the professors' opinion so as to help students to minimize the problem.

---

### 5.3 STUDENTS' COMPOSITIONS

When examining forty compositions written by English Composition II students at the Foreign Language Department, who are currently studying the B.A. in English Teaching, the researchers had these findings:

1. Students make errors when using the most troublesome English prepositions, especially these ones: **on, in, at, of, for, to, with** and **by**.
2. Students do not show much difficulty in dealing with prepositions that are used in some contexts which are common to Spanish and English.

✓ ***"In this opportunity, let me tell you my own..."***

3. The use of prepositions where not necessary is observed repeatedly in certain cases:

a) ***"The Government gives to the University a certain amount of money each year."***

Intended meaning: ***"The Government gives the University a certain amount of money each year."***

b) ***"...love to yourself, help people, and be thankful."***

Intended meaning: ***"...love yourself help people and be thankful."***

4. The English particle to is usually placed where not necessary:

***"...we can to identify one product..."***

Intended meaning: ***"...we can identify one product..."***

---

5. The students' mother tongue interferes with their learning and use of English prepositions:

*"Many of the domestic materials produced with timber are related **with** beds, table, chairs, kitchenware, bookcases, etc."*

Intended meaning: *"Many of the domestic materials produced with timber are related **to** beds, tables, chairs, kitchenware, bookcases, etc."*

6. Some English prepositions are used instead of nouns by making a literal translation:

a) *"...there are **for** and **against** things about it."*

Intended meaning: *"...there are **pros** and **cons** about it."*

7. Some students use their mother tongue's preposition to make a literal translation.

a) *"...I consider that it is according **with** the level of each student..."*

Intended meaning: *"...I consider that it is according **to** the level of each student."*

b) *"When students have an interest **by** a subject"*

Intended meaning: *"When students have an interest **in** a subject."*

8. Student's mother tongue affects their use of English idiomatic expressions that have prepositions.

*"Having a good job and a good salary will be an important part to give them part of my salary every month **in order that** they can live on."*

Intended meaning: *"Having a good job and a good salary will be an important part to give them part of my salary every month **in order for** them to be able to live on."*

---

9. Students show the tendency of using the infinitive of verbs after a preposition:

***“It is good for students because students have the opportunity **of** check or study...”***

Intended meaning: ***“It is good for students because students have the opportunity **of** **checking** or **studying**...”***

10. Students usually place preposition **in** where **on** was necessary and viceversa:

***“...the evaluation system and the evaluation instruments at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador are based **in** the principles of effective assessment.”***

Intended meaning: ***“...the evaluation system and the evaluation instruments at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador are based **on** the principles of effective assessment.”***



---

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the findings after having applied the three instruments: the English Composition II students test, the professors' survey and the student compositions. It is important to mention that some findings were gotten in more than one of the instruments mentioned above.

The major concern of this research during the complete process of investigation has been based on the interference of learners' mother tongue when using English prepositions and its effects on foreign language learning. As the results showed in this current study, learners have associated and used some mother tongue structures to produce responses in foreign language learning activities. Supported by the different theories regarding the interference of mother tongue with foreign language learning process, the group of researchers tried to make clear, analyze, and explain the errors made by students in their responses they did in the test and in the written compositions. The professors' opinions are also used to verify the students' mother tongue affects their learning of English prepositions.

With regard to the findings of this study, without doubt students transfer what they know in their mother tongue into the English language, also known as mother tongue interference because they tend to translate word by word from L1 to L2. Based on Chomsky's contribution, in this case it is helpful to understand the association of first language in the acquisition and production of a second language and how the use and practice of the mother tongue affects the learning of the target language. Besides that,

---

and based on Krashen's theory about negative transfer, in this detailed research it is possible to identify what is considered positive transfer, even though the level of mother tongue interference in the subjects under study represents more negative than positive transfer in the students' production.

These findings indicate that the phenomenon of transfer is a reality and a relevant antecedent in second language acquisition and production. It plays an important role as stated by Cummins in the *Iceberg Theory*, in which the structures of the mother tongue represent a significant factor of interference in the foreign language regarding the meaning of words. It is a relevant determinant in second language acquisition and therefore, in its use. The representations of expressions in foreign language have been influenced by the mother tongue's structures in the way of transferring the students' ideas on their written production.

After carrying out the research and analyzing the results gotten from the instrument administrated, the researchers arrived to the following conclusions:

- ❖ The level of interference of the student's mother tongue with their English prepositions learning is intermediate in the most troublesome cases.
  
- ❖ The most frequent kinds of errors English students make are these: use of unnecessary prepositions and the replacement of prepositions by others.

- 
- ❖ Through this study it was discovered that the students' mother tongue, that is, Spanish, has a considerable interference with their learning of English prepositions.
  
  - ❖ The most troublesome English prepositions for the subjects under study are the following: **zero preposition (preposition not necessary), at, to, for, and about.**
  
  - ❖ The English prepositions that students most frequently use when writing are: **on, in at, of, for, to, with and by.**
  
  - ❖ This research showed that the students of English Composition II who had already studied English Grammar I and English Grammar II continued having problems in the use of English prepositions because they related their response to their mother tongue, in this case, Spanish.

---

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis on the findings of the study, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations:

### **To students:**

- ❖ To put into practice the grammar rules even before classes in order to identify and distinguish the different uses of English prepositions.
  
- ❖ To learn the correct use of English prepositions is to improve their use in writing compositions such as essays and compositions when taking those classes in the semester, since students are able to find those teachers who do not pay as much attention to the use of prepositions as other parts of speech.

### **To professors:**

- ❖ To train students in the classroom about how to think in the foreign language, in this case English in order to minimize the influence of their mother tongue so as to improve their production in the target language
  
- ❖ To integrate English Composition classes with grammar learning strategies in order to help students to improve their quality of writing in the future.

---

❖ To give students more activities to review the prepositions, in order to optimize the learning of the foreign languages:

1. Encourage students to write continuously sentences using a preposition of place, time, and movement in each sentence.

2. Provide students with missing Preposition worksheets.

3. Encourage students to read authentic texts as much as possible so as they can realize the different types of prepositions through literature.

4. Try to teach grammar (prepositions) in real context because in that way students reinforce their understanding of prepositions.

5. Continuously create quizzes so as to test students' knowledge and it will help them to review, and refresh their knowledge about English Prepositions.

**To the Foreign Language Department:**

❖ To include in the curriculum such subjects as Advanced Grammar II and Advanced Grammar III in order to implement a rigorous program of study since the very beginning of the major to the end of the process.

---

## IX. LIMITATIONS

- Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is the new approach implemented by the Foreign Language Department, which is an e-learning platform that enables teachers to create courses and activities online. Since it does not require students to attend to the classroom, it caused a delay in the data collection process because the students did not attend all days during the week.
- It was planned to make a census so as to get precise results and avoid making generalizations, but at the end of the study there was a small percentage of students that were not tested because a teacher forgot to administer the instrument to all of her students. In that way it can be said that the results gotten are from a sample of the whole population.
- Because of the non-availability of some teachers in charge of English Composition II, some activities such as the data collecting and analyzing process had to be rescheduled.
- For some reasons out of our reach it was not possible to administer the test to the number of students who were expected, but certainly this study is a useful reference for more studies in the future.

---

## X. BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Baljit Bhela (1999). "Native language interference in learning a second language: Exploratory case studies of native language interference with target language usage," in International Education Journal Vol 1. Loja (Spain): Centro Universitario San Rafael.

Bennui, Pairote. (2008). "A study of L1 interference in the writing of Thai EFL students," in Malaysian Journal of ELT. Research 4. Thaksin (Thailand): University of Thailand.

Brown, H. D. (1994). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (Third edition). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Celce – Murcia, Marianne. (2001). Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language. (Third Edition), Los Angeles: Heinle&Heinle.

Crompton, Peter. (2011). "Errors in the English Writing of Advanced L1 Arabic Learners: The Role of Transfer," in Asian EFL Journal. Professional Teaching Articles. Vol. 50, February 2011. Sharjah (Malaysia): American University of Sharjah.

James, Carl (1998). Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis. Harlow (England): Addison Wesley Longman.

---

López Urdaneta, Julio Lorenzo. (2011). "Spanish - English Writing Structure Interferences in Second Language Learners" in Gist Education and Learning Research Journal.

Bogotá (Colombia): Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana.

Murphy Raymond and William R. Smalzer. (2002).Basic Grammar in Use with answers.

(Second Edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nada Salih A. Ridha (2012). "The effect of EFL learners' mother tongue on their writings in English: An error analysis study," in Iraq Journal of the College of Arts.

Basrah (Iraq): University of Basrah.

Ramón, María del Mar. (2009). "Effects of cross-linguistic influences on second language acquisition: A Corpus - based study of semantic transfer in written production,"

in Revista de Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). La Mancha (Spain):

Universidad de Castilla.

Rod, Ellis. (1997). Second Language Acquisition, (First Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Soares, Silva, Noemi. (2008). The Impact of Mother Tongue on Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Beginner Levels, (Thesis).Praia (Cabo Verde): Instituto Superior de educação.



---

## WEBSITE REFERENCES

-Abisamra, Nada.(2003). "An Analysis of Errors in Arabic Speakers English Writings."  
<<http://abisamra03.tripod.com/nada/languageacq-erroranalysis.html>>

- Arab EFL University Students' Errors in the Use of Prepositions

<<http://www.mjal.org/Journal/Arab%20EFL%20University%20Students%27%20Errors%20in%20the%20Use%20of%20Prepositions%20by%20Yousef%20Sharif%20Tahaineh%20Pages%2076-112.pdf>>

-"Cambridge Dictionaries Online."

<<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>>

-Corder, S.P. (1967) "The significance of learners' errors," in The international Review of Applied Linguistics.

<<http://es.scribd.com/doc/126302787/Corder-S-P-1967-the-Significance-of-Learners-Errors-International-Review-of-Applied-Linguistics-5-161-169>>

- Using Parse Features for Preposition Selection and Error Detection.

< <http://aclweb.org/anthology//P/P10/P10-2065.pdf>>

-"Moodle". 2013. 13 May 2013

<<http://idiomas.ues.edu.sv/moodle/html>>

-Mother-Tongue Interference in Spanish-Speaking English Language Learners' Interlanguage

<<http://www.viethoc.com/Ti-Liu/bien-khao/khao-luan/mother-tongueinterferenceinspanish-speakingenglishlanguagelearners%E2%80%99interlanguage>>

-"Thesaurus.com."

<<http://thesaurus.com/>>

-"Wikipedia.org."

<[http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)>

# APPENDICES

---

## APPENDIX A

**University of El Salvador**  
**School of Arts and Sciences**  
**Foreign Language Department**

**Undergraduate Project Test**  
**Date \_\_\_\_\_**



**Direction:** Complete each of the following sentences by using the appropriate preposition in parentheses.

- 1) Every time I dream \_\_\_\_\_ you. (with, about, in)
- 2) That depends \_\_\_\_\_ him. (on, of, from)
- 3) He is falling in love \_\_\_\_\_ her. ( of, to, with)
- 4) I was thinking \_\_\_\_\_ you. ( on, in, at)
- 5) She told me something \_\_\_\_\_ you. ( of, from, about)
- 6) What do you do \_\_\_\_\_ home? ( in, at, on)
- 7) I was born \_\_\_\_\_ October 28<sup>th</sup> (in, on, at)
- 8) The cake you received was made \_\_\_\_\_ Juan. He is a good baker. ( for, by, of)
- 9) This article is \_\_\_\_\_ page 10. (on, at, in)
- 10) We sent the package \_\_\_\_\_ Lupita because she couldn't do it. (by, for, to)
- 11) They are laughing \_\_\_\_\_ us. (of, about, at)
- 12) The solution is up \_\_\_\_\_ you. (for, to, from)
- 13) Ricardo is different \_\_\_\_\_ Rosa. ( to, of, from)
- 14) Sarita is interested \_\_\_\_\_ that car. (in, on, over)
- 15) Raúl works \_\_\_\_\_ downtown. (at, in, --- )
- 16) Consuelo is married \_\_\_\_\_ Oscar. (with, to, for)
- 17) They entered \_\_\_\_\_ the house. (to, in, --- )
- 18) Mónica forgot \_\_\_\_\_ her mother's birthday. (of, about, to)
- 19) Tito is \_\_\_ his forties. ( on, for, in)
- 20) I have to travel by car or boat because I am afraid \_\_\_\_\_ flying. ( to, from, of)
- 21) We are enthusiastic \_\_\_\_\_ learning English prepositions. (for, about, from)
- 22) The movie was based \_\_\_\_\_ a book written 50 years ago. ( on, in, of)
- 23) Klare is \_\_\_ Eliza and John. (between, among, next to)
- 24) \_\_\_\_\_my favorite subjects I can mention Spanish, Math, Art and Philosophy. (between, among, in)
- 25) She smiled \_\_\_\_\_ me. (to, for, at)

---

**APPENDIX B**

**University of El Salvador**  
**School of Arts and Sciences**  
**Foreign Language Department**

**Undergraduate Project Survey**  
**The level interference of English learners' mother**  
**tongue on their learning prepositions**



**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** To gather information about the way professors at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador evaluate their students in the use of English prepositions when writing a composition and how this problem can be solved.

1. Do you allow the use of Spanish in the classroom?

Yes

No

2. If your answer was YES, does it affect your students' learning of English prepositions?

Yes

No

3. What kind of writing activities do you carry out with your students when teaching English prepositions?

4. What do you do when your students make errors when writing a composition using English prepositions?

5. Which errors are the most common?

---

6. Which techniques do you use to improve your students' writing skill?

7. According to your experience, does the interference of students' mother tongue affect their development of writing skill?

8. Do you notice that your students' mother tongue interferes with their learning of English prepositions?

Yes

No

9. If your answer was **YES**, how often does this interference happen?

Always

Often

Seldom

Usually

Sometimes

Never

10. In your opinion, what are the main reasons why your students' mother tongue interferes with their English prepositions learning process?

11. What would your recommendations be?