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THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS AMONG CHILEAN  
EFL LEARNERS

Tesis para optar al Grado de Magíster en Lingüística

Mención Lengua Inglesa

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## ABSTRACT

This work aimed to investigate about the way Chilean students acquire English Prepositions 'in', 'on', and 'at'.

Through the identification of the most common strategies used by students when choosing one these three prepositions, the researcher aimed to find out about the difficulties the learners face when using those particles. The data analysis is based on the cognitive aspects of interlanguage, as well as some different notions on the learner's knowledge.

This work shows the way modern Linguistics has considered this kind of words and emphasizes their semantic roles. The data was collected through the use of Cloze Tests and interviews made to primary and secondary students from The Deutsche Schule in Los Angeles, Chile.

The aim of the researcher with the interviews was to find out about the reasons why the students chose a particular preposition for their cloze tests. The results showed the students used several strategies to choose among 'in', 'on', and 'at', like overgeneralization of basic uses, inference, application of rules, mental images, among others.

The researcher could conclude that learners do have tools to deal with the knowledge they already have and the knowledge they do not yet, which may contribute to the development of more appropriate approaches for teaching English prepositions, to make learning a more meaningful process for the students.

*Key words: prepositions, learner's strategies, mental processes, acquisition, interlanguage.*

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

There is a great amount of prepositions in the English language, and several of them have a countless number of meanings and uses. This fact makes the students to remember just part of them, and mainly because of their most basic meanings. Among the prepositions mostly used and known are 'in', 'on, and 'at', which will be the object of study in this work.

The acquisition of English prepositions is a very difficult task for primary and secondary learners. A possible explanation for this situation might be the difficulty for EFL learners to move from physical senses of prepositions (place and time) to metaphoric extensions of prepositional meaning.

This research study seeks to investigate how prepositions are acquired among English language learners. It additionally, investigates whether L2 learners have to build or construct new mental concepts to acquire the English spatial prepositions 'in,' 'on,' and 'at.'

In English education in Chile, "in", "on, and "at" are on the list of 2,000 basic words proposed by the Ministry of Education for the school curriculum. But it is in the classrooms where, even Advanced students, have shown proficiency problems when using these three prepositions.

Most, if not all EFL teachers and students are painfully aware of the fact that English prepositions, as well as Spanish prepositions, do not have an area of a clear meaning, therefore, they do not have an exact equivalence in any other language. We cannot establish, then, any parallel in the area of prepositions between our mother tongue and English. Therefore, trying to find out for meaning in dictionaries may be of little help.

It is necessary to understand that an EFL learner will never master English prepositions through the use of logic. Languages do not have much logic. The linguistic phenomenon, inherent to human beings, has got their same features: irregular, complex, confusing, and in constant evolution. A language structure is too complex, irregular and abstract to be categorized and summarized in just a set of rules.

Through this study, it was aimed to explore the strategies students use and how they deal with their own knowledge about prepositions, arising in this way some questions about foreign language teaching and learning processes.

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

### 2.1 General Research Question:

For this research, I take into consideration the following general question.

Do Chilean learners of English only acquire spatial terms and their extended uses or do they have to construct new conceptualizations of space as well?

### 2.2. Specific Research Questions:

More specifically, I also consider the two following questions.

2.2.1 What strategy do Chilean learners of English use when they have to choose a preposition?

2.2.2 Is it possible to learn English prepositions in a different way other than memorization?

### 2.3 General Objective:

2.3.1 Establish whether Chilean English secondary learners construct new conceptualizations of space as they acquire the English spatial prepositions 'in,' 'on,' and 'at.'

### 2.4. Specific Objectives:

2.4.1 Describe what the processes of spatial prepositions acquisition by Chilean learners are.

2.4.2. Identify and exemplify some other possible strategies to learn English prepositions.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Prepositions

Among the difficulties to learn the English language, prepositions are, indeed, one of the most troubling for Chilean students. It is a problem that arises at the moment to give a clear definition of the term 'preposition' by most of grammar textbooks.

When the learner is not given the different roles prepositions have, in order to learn them, he/she decides to do what he/she can do: to memorize them all.

In Grammar, prepositions are called 'particles', and if they are taken from the sentence, understanding the meaning of it is still possible, that is, damage produced by the absence of prepositions does not completely produce the loss of the sentence. For instance, in the sentence *I went to New York*, if the preposition does not appear, the sentence would be *I went New York*. If a person hears this sentence, it would be a little bit strange for him/her the lack of the preposition 'to', but in spite of this situation, communication would be possible.

The term 'preposition', according to Cambridge International Dictionary of English, refers to words that "express relationships between people, things, actions, etc." (Procter, 1995) It also mentions that "English uses prepositions more than many other languages, and one preposition often has several different meanings". (Procter, 1995)

Prepositions can also differ among them, in relation to their semantic content, and each one of them can also differ according to linguistic context. This is the reason why is so difficult to establish a division between content and function words.

It is extremely hard for English Language learners to learn the nuances of all the English prepositions, how to understand them, and how to use them (Evans and Tyler, 2005; Celse and Murcia, 1999).

Unfortunately, in English Grammar textbooks not all the semantic roles of prepositions are given when they are taught at schools. For this reason, learning English prepositions without semantic notions can frustrate the learner.

Apart from that, English prepositions are also difficult to teach. One cannot explain a preposition without using one or two more prepositions in the definition. Next, the teacher would have to define those new prepositions. If a teacher can explain a preposition without using another preposition, the definition and meaning are often vague and do not result in a clear understanding for the student, which is obviously quite problematic.

Some of the basics meanings of these three prepositions that are usually taught at Chilean schools are:

#### AT

1) This preposition is used with:

a) TIME

He came here at six o'clock.

b) SPECIAL DATES

A party will be at Christmas.

I wasn't here at Easter.

c) With 'noon', 'night', 'midnight' and 'dawn'.

Lunch will be served at noon.

d) With PLACES, without saying it is inside of it

They are at the bus stop.

There were a lot of people at the station.

The cab driver is at the gas station.

Ann must be at the movies now.

There's a cat at the door.

e) With small cities

He was born at Olinda.

f) With FULL ADDRESSES

Barbara lives at 308 Lincoln Street.

IN

2) This preposition is used:

He studies in the morning.

Your daughter doesn't work in the evening, does she?

b) with months

The course will begin in July.

c) with seasons of the year

It's very cold in winter.

d) with years

Argentina won the World Cup in 1978.

e) with centuries:

Brasília was not founded in the 19th century.

f) with time expressions:

The manager will come in a few days.

g) with place expressions, pointing at the notion of “inside”

They are in the house now.

The students were in the classroom.

The maid is working in the kitchen.

My books are in that box.

h) with types of houses

I live in an apartment.

Peter lived in a humble house years ago.

i) with big cities

Mark's cousin lives in London.

j) with states or regions

There's a lot of poverty in the Region of Antofagasta

k) with countries

He's going to spend his vacation in Poland.

l) with continents:

There are many developed countries in Europe.

ON

3) This preposition is used:

a) with the meaning of "above"

Our bags are on the table.

b) with the days of the week

I have a class on Tuesday.

c) with dates:

The baby was born on February, 14th.

That accident happened on September 6th, 1998.

d) with means of transport

There are more than sixty people on the bus.

The passengers on the plane are scared.

But: *in the car*

*in the taxi.*

e) with names of streets and avenues

The Gordons live on Washington Street.



Evelyn has a shop on Kennedy Avenue.

f) in relation to islands and big farms.

The man lived on an island for many years.

I spent five days on a farm.

g) with the word “floor”

Joe lives on the first floor, not on the third.

### 3.2 Concrete and Abstract Senses of Prepositions

It is well known that not all words show the same learning pattern. During the first years in life, vocabulary is mainly composed by concrete words, due to the fact children are exposed to information through experience with the material world. However, those concepts related to abstract words are acquired through the use in linguistic contexts and in relation to some other concepts with a little or none physical support.

There are differences relating the way concrete and abstract concepts are acquired and stored in the brain. It is possible that concrete concepts may be store in a representational format, as the concrete ones may be represented in audio, visual, and sensorial formats (Mestres-Misses and Rodriguez-Fornells, 2010).

Prepositions denote, prototypically speaking, the notion of space, and it turns into abstract to denote temporal relations, considering time as covered distance or space, and logic relations, like cause-consequence, and mean – end.

Apart from spatial and temporal senses of English language prepositions, it is possible to find some other senses. For example, in the sentences ‘*He is really in hot water*’ the preposition ‘*in*’ does not convey a spatial or temporal meaning, but

rather carries senses that go beyond space and time, that is an abstract sense.

When considering prepositions, it is appropriate to say that senses beyond space and time are considered to be figurative language. For example, while the sentence '*The flowers are in the vase*' shows concrete meanings, the sentences '*I am in anger*' is figurative language.

### 3.2.1 Examples of Concrete Prepositions

She lives *in* Milan.

We sat *on* the floor.

I met her *at* the bus stop.

(Source: Redman, 1997)

### 3.2.2 Examples of Abstract Prepositions

I'm reading a book *on* Hollywood.

The factory is *among* the most modern in Europe.

The President is regarded as *beyond* criticism.

(Source: Eastwood, 2005)

## 3.3. Interlanguage

The term Interlanguage was created by the American Linguist Larry Selinker in 1972. He observed that the learners of a foreign language built a particular linguistic system, with part of its base on the mother tongue and the other part on the target language. For the author (1972), the Interlanguage is composed by a system of linguistic rules that learners have from the foreign language, and that is temporal and different from the mother tongue and the target language.

In his first article about Interlanguage, Selinker (1972) proposes there is a psychological structure, present in human brain and activated when someone tries to learn a new language.

About Interlanguage, Selinker also states that:

- It is the process of transition to the foreign language, that is built from the learners' exposition to this language, as much as in the natural context as in a formal learning context;
- It constitutes an inevitable stage in the learning process;
- It is like an inner linguistic system that evolves by turning into a more complex system, in which learners express intuitions.

According to the author the only important (observable) performance data to identify Interlanguage are: a) the learner's productions in his/her L1; b) the expressions in Interlanguage produced by the learner, and; c) the target language expressions produced by that language native speakers. This set of expressions, according to Selinker, represents the data that is psychologically relevant for the L2 learning (and teaching) process.

To create his/her interlanguage, the learner passes through a number of basic processes:

- Overgeneralization: some of the rules in the interlanguage system may be the result of generalization of specific rules and characteristics of the L2.
- Transfer of learning strategies: some of the components of the interlanguage system may be the result of the transference of specific elements.
- Communicative strategies: rules of the interlanguage system can also be the result of strategies used by learners to communicate with L2 native speakers.

- L1 transfer: some of the rules in the target language system can be the result of the learner's L1 transfer to his/her interlanguage. (Selinker, 1969).

The term 'strategy' defines a cognitive activity at a conscious or subconscious level that includes the L2 data processing with the purpose of expressing meaning.

It is acknowledged that the words we already know affect the ones we learn. That is to say, interlingual factors, such as the distance between L1 and L2, the frequency certain word will occur in the input, will determine new words learning.

Like any other theory, Interlanguage theory is in constant adaptation to new findings in SLA. It is a theory in constant evolution.

### 3.4 L2 implicit and explicit knowledge

Krashen (1981) contributed to the beginning of several research projects about differentiating among the L2 learner's knowledge, shortly after of Interlanguage Theory appeared. He was interested in the role of formal instruction in the L2 development, a point that made him to make some distinctions between implicit and explicit knowledge.

The explicit knowledge refers to that knowledge that is available to the student for a conscious representation. The learner produces or explains sentences with his/her own words or using words from the textbooks. The implicit knowledge, based on rules, abstract structures that were internalized, is intuitive, and, consequently, it stays hidden. The learners do not realize about what they know.

The need to give the students an instruction with or without the presence of rules in an explicit way has produced, up to present, debates among EFL teaching and learning researchers.

### 3.5 Transfer

Errors may be produced by interference of L1. This is called 'Transfer'.

Transfer may be positive when one or more elements from L1 make the L2 learning process easier; or negative when the use of vocabulary or any structure from L1 makes the learner to produce errors. This phenomenon is related to words, rules, and subsystems that are present in Interlanguage as a result of L1 interference.

The strategies learners use in particular circumstances are not clearly identified yet, not if those strategies are individual or cultural. Though, there are some that are common to all learners, like simplification and generalization of a rule. These strategies have the aim to reduce the L2 system and make it a simpler system. This strategy of simplification may occur in different stages of interlanguage.

The strategy of generalization is also pretty common. It refers to the learners' tendency to hyper generalize some grammatical items from L2. These strategies are unconscious and may produce some errors that are considered to be normal in the learning process, that is, errors that eventually will disappear.

For speakers whose native language uses spatial prepositions in the same way as English, learning spatial prepositions may be easier for them; however, they may also overgeneralize in ways which are incorrect to the target language.

There are two types of Transfer: the positive transfer and the negative transfer. According to Ellis (2005), when language patterns are identical in L1 and L2, the learning process is made easier by the positive transfer of the L1 patterns, but when they are different, the learning process is made harder and some errors arise as a result of the negative transfer. Apart from that, Ellis considers several kinds of transfer manifestations: errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer),

avoidance (the learner avoids to use certain structure that he/she considers to be difficult), and over-use (the learners shows a tendency to use certain lexical items and grammatical structures, as a result of avoidance in certain structures and expressions considered to be inappropriate).

Talking about Transfer implies relating it with the concept of Interlanguage, introduced by Selinker (1972): “Interlanguage is the types of language produced by second- and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language”. In other words, an interlanguage, not being L1 or L2, is the product of the interaction between these two linguistic systems, and constitutes a compulsory stage in the learning process. Errors, produced by a L2 learner, are a clue about the learning process, and give us information about the stages he/she is passing through before reaching the final stages.

If errors constitute one of the results of transfer, we understand the concept as a strategy that the learner uses from L1 borrowings (or another language), and that, when they are correct, they are incorporated to interlanguage. But, when these are mistaken and they are permanent in time, they might be fossilized in the learner’s interlanguage.

Overgeneralizations also occur in the processo EFL aquisition/learning. They consist of the overuse of a grammatical rule or of a lexical unit that corresponds to a regular pattern.

### 3.6 Previous approaches about English prepositions teaching and learning

When learning a second language, a learner is not only faced with learning new spatial terms and mapping them to previously held concepts but, perhaps, he might be also faced with constructing new conceptualizations of space as well. In nonlinguistic tasks, people of different languages conceptualize spatial relations differently (Finkbeiner, 2002).

Most of students, when learning preposition, have been face with memorization as the best strategy to manage them. A long list of prepositions and their several meanings is now the content for the student to memorize.

This section presents a review of previous research on English prepositions “in”, “on, and “at”. The focus will be placed on the functions and uses of the three prepositions with respect to EFL teaching and learning.

### 3.6.1 The Traditional approach

If I open one of my English Dictionaries to find out about prepositions, I will surely find a random list of definitions. That is also the case of English textbooks or English Grammar books, which also present prepositions with lots of items, each of which is illustrated with several examples.

List of definitions like the ones presented above are commonly seen among English dictionaries. For dictionary users, it is a common practice to check against each item for the target definition they are searching for. However, when EFL learners are provided with all definitions of a preposition listed item by item, they are forced to resort to rote learning, memorizing one definition after another.

This approach considered prepositions teaching just as an explicit presentation of grammar rules. This fragmented way to teach grammar, not contextualized, without meaning; therefore, it does not give the learners conditions for them to develop their linguistic competence in L2. Learners, at the end, are not able to use their grammatical knowledge in their own speeches.

### 3.6.2 Categorization

Categorization is the ability to identify similarities and differences we perceive between certain entities, or between certain events, or between certain relations, to

gather them together. Categorization is fundamental to understand knowledge representation or linguistic meaning. If we did not have that ability to group several aspects of our experience into categories, our experience would be chaotic, and we would not be able to learn anything from it. And just because we are able to group elements from our experience into categories, we can recognize we already tried them and we can get into our knowledge about them.

Saying concepts can be understood as a principle of categorization means categorization gives origin to concepts. But, at the same time, categorization depends on concepts. For instance, when we see two animals for the first time and we realize that they are very similar, we create a category to group these two animals. When creating this category, we also create a concept, that is, an idea that helps us to recognize these animals, and that helps us to make a distinction between these animals and others, different from them. Once the category and concept have been created, all animals that are similar to the ones we saw first, will be included into them. That is, once the category and the concept were created, we will categorize certain animals as members of that category.

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### 3.6.3 The Prototype Theory

Eleanor Rosch, in her theory known as the Prototype Theory, proposes that we, human beings, organize concepts in different categories that have diffuse limits, but that can identify most of its members easily.

The ability to categorize, that is, considering if an item belongs or not to a particular category, is an important part of cognition. Categorization is normally automatic and unconscious, and that can lead to mistakes about considering our categories to be categories of things, when they are really categories of abstract entities. The ability to categorize is essential when using the acquired experience to lead the orientations of new experiences.



A category considers a list of characteristics which members of that category share. Every category presents among its members, a member that is central since it shows all or most of the attributes of its category. This member is known as 'prototype'.

The prototype is, then, the most representative member in a category. That means that there are some members that will be closer to the prototype, depending on the amount of attributes they share with it. Those members that share just a small number of attributes will be further from the prototype, so, they will be labeled as 'peripheral' members. The prototype is the best and most prominent member of a category. It is the first example that comes to our mind when we think about that category. In other words, the members of a category do not have the same status; some are more important and central than others.

Eleanor Rosch studied colors, birds, fruits categorization. According to her, human beings are not able to categorize the world in a rational way, that is, by capturing reality and distinguishing beings. The world, to her, is stable, because there would be a unique conceptual system for all the individuals; a kind of filter whose function would be giving objectivity in contents categorization.

According to Rosch, belonging to a category is not at random. What she proposes is that what determines the structure of a category is the cultural relevance given to typical attributes. People, in a cultural context, and according to their cognitive abilities, are the ones who will define (in a different way) the categorization.

The prototypical members are categorized faster than the non-prototypical members. The prototypical members are the first acquired by learners. Prototypes are considered to be points of cognitive reference.

Relations among members of a category are similar to the ones given among the members of a family: the daughter may be very like her mother, and the mother very like the grandmother, but this does not necessarily mean that the daughter

may be very like the grandmother. In terms of the Theory of Prototypes, this means that the central member and the least central members are not necessarily linked directly. A less central member may be included in the same category because of its “resemblance” with some other less central member that has a direct relation to the prototype. In other words, members in a category share some attributes, but those attributes are not enough to make them members of that category.

Let us take, as an example, the word “head” with its several meanings in English and Spanish. The prototypical member of this category would be the part of the body that contains the eyes, ears, mouth, nose and brain. The other uses of this item would be the non-prototypical senses of it. Those less central members share some attributes, but not all, the central item has. For example, “the head of a nail” would share the attribute of being at the “end”, that is, those semantic extensions have in common that “head” is the part of the body that is located at an extreme. In the sentence “he is still in my head” (memories), “head” is related to the central member because it is the part of the body where our brain is, and, therefore, the place where our cognitive skills are located. Members less central are linked to the prototype through cognitive mechanisms, like metaphor (as observed in the examples given above). Relations among central members and peripheral members (or less central) are represented in what Lakoff (1987) called “radial categories”. From that perspective, there would not be problems when recognizing that the several senses of “head” correspond to the same polysemic lexeme. The study of polysemy turns to be central, then, in the cognitive approach.

Categories do not have clear boundaries. Some linguists even say categories do not have boundaries at all. The point is that just the prototypes may be considered members of a category. The rest of the members will be more or less appropriate to a category, depending on their similarity to the prototype.

There does not exist any rule about when an item can move away from the prototype and be still considered a member of the category. Some people may be better observers than others, and perceive similarities between an item and the prototype that simply are not seen by the other people. These better observers will certainly include the item in the category; whereas the other people will leave it outside of it.

When considering the three prepositions under study, it is known that the prepositions 'in' and 'on' are the first prepositions to be acquired in English. We also know that the preposition 'at' is more complex and highly polysemous member, therefore this might be the reason why learners take more time in acquiring it, mainly, if learners are children. Adults, on the contrary, take less time in acquiring these items because of their experiential knowledge.

When focusing on polysemy, we have to consider the difficulties semantic networks might produce to EFL learners.

It is worthy to include now, in this study, the list Chavarría (2002) provided about the English locatives 'in', 'on' and 'at', as spatial and temporal concepts, with examples of both the most prototypical concept, and the least prototypical concept:

1. *ON* has a line/surface configuration, establishing a spatial relationship of one point to another which can either be a one-dimensional object (ex.: *Put your signature on this line*), or represent a two-dimensional area (ex.: *The fiddler is on the roof.* ) *On* implies objects touching each other. This relationship can be given on a horizontal or non-horizontal surface. "*On*" can be used with spatial but not surface elements. *On* is also used as preposition of 'time when ' with an abstract meaning.

1. 1 Most prototypical use

1. 1. 1 + surface element, + horizontal element, + touching objects

a. *Put your signature on this line*

b. *The fiddler is on the roof.*

1 . 1 . 1 . 1 with roads , bridges and routes

a. *He was waiting for her on the bridge.*

b. *She lives on Canal Street.*

1. 1. 2 + surface element, + non-horizontal element, +touching objects

a. *The child wrote his answer on the board.*

b. *The frost made patterns on the window.*

1 .2 Least prototypical use

1. 2. 1 + surface element, + attached objects

a. *There is a fish on the hook.*

b. *We saw some apples on the tree.*

1 .2.2 for most modes of conveyance: large vehicles which imply the condition of being 'in transit', as well as for two-wheeled vehicles and animals used for transportation.

a. *The students go to school on the bus.*

b. *She came on her bike despite the rain.*

1. 2.3 for most audio and video equipment

a. *We heard the news on the radio.*

b. *I saw him on T.V.*

1.2.4 Point of time (abstract meanings)

a. *The train didn't arrive on time at the station.*

b. *The bell rang on time for the next lesson.*

1.2.4.1 for dates and for days of the week

a. *She was born on July 20, 1974.*

b. *We are going to Chicago on Saturday.*

2. *IN* establishes an area or volume configuration, establishing a spatial relationship of one point to another which is three-dimensional (ex.: *The child put the piece of glass in his pocket.*) Area should be conceived of as an enclosed space. *IN* can also take a two-dimensional object (ex. : *The cow is in the field.*) It may also be used to indicate a specific point in time.

2.1 Prototypical use

2.1.1 to indicate a relationship point-area/volume, where one object is within the confines of another object which is an enclosed space or container

a. *There were more than a hundred guests in the room.*

b. *The child put the piece of glass in his pocket.*

2.1.2 with objects indicating a relationship point-area, where one object is within the confines of the other, but not implying the meaning of container.

a. *The cow is in the field.*

b. *The strange man was standing in the doorway.*

2. 1. 3 with small , four-wheeled-motor vehicles

a. *I saw him in his new car*

b. *It was raining so she came in a taxi.*

2. 1 .4 to indicate periods of time

2. 1 .4. 1 with months and years

a. *I moved to San Jose in 1961.*

b. *We visited Peru in October.*

2. 1 .4. 2 to indicate a time within a larger period of time

a. *The doctor will be back in an hour.*

b. *I will try to be here in the morning.*

3. *At* establishes a spatial relationship of one point to another that represents a dimensionless location, a mere point in relation to which the position of an object can be indicated. *At* can also indicate points of time. *At* shows such a broad range of uses that it is difficult to get at its prototypes.

3. 1 Most prototypical use

3. 1. 1 to indicate the location where an activity takes place, but does not specify any surface or area relationship among the objects involved.

a. *The concert was at the university.*

b. *She is at the door waiting for her turn*

3. 1 .2 to refer to a building in its institutional or functional aspect

a. *I work at a state university.*

b. *It is 2 o' c lock. She must be at the office now.*

### 3.2 Least prototypical use

3 . 2 . 1 to indicate a precise place

a. *She lives at 409 Campus View .*

b. *The Flee Market is at the comer of Seventh and Elm.*

### 3. 2. 2 Points of time

3. 2. 2 . 1 to indicate a precise time that has previously been mentioned

a. *At that time he was only five years old.*

b. *At that moment she heard a strange shriek.*

3 . 2 . 2 . 2 to indicate clock time

a. *My class starts at eight.*

b. *I will meet you at one o' clock.*

(Chavarría, 2002, p. 59-72)

The spatial metaphors may be more prototypical or unmarked because they evoke a more vivid mental image in the learner's mind. If one constructs a mental image of a situation that involves abstract concepts, he/she would have to use a metaphorical extension of the objects and relationships in the situation simply because abstract concepts do not have any graphic representation of their own. Thus, the less prototypical a word may be, the harder its acquisition will be.

### 3.7 Important contributions from Cognitive Linguistics

It is appropriate, at this point, to mention the reasons why Cognitive Linguistics turned into the alternative paradigm, in opposition to Generative Grammar:

- a) Language is a product from a bodily experienced, that is, the body, the sensorial experiences, and the space-time aspects, determine the conceptual structure. Human beings interact with the surrounding world, by capturing more common spatial configurations, which are transferred to memory, in form of abstract and image conceptualization;
- b) The syntactic and semantic structures reflect the conceptual structure: the sensory-motor experience, i.e., the image schema, the image structures (metaphor and metonymy) and prototypicality.
- c) The primary function of language is the world categorization.
- d) Language depends on the rest of cognitive skills, like perception, memory and attention.

#### 3.7.1 The Metaphors Theory

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in *Metaphors We Live By*, our thought is governed by concepts, that is, it is not just a matter of intellect. These concepts also govern the daily functioning, structure human perception, influence people's actions, as well as their relationships. In this way, the authors claim that the conceptual system has a fundamental role in the definition of everyday human realities.

According to the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor, metaphors are located in our mind. Though they may be perceived in language, they are used (said or expressed) to structure our mind.

In *Mental Spaces*, Fauconnier (1994) affirms that it is commonly accepted that sense is in words. However, words are just "the tip of the iceberg" (p.xviii), and



sense may be in many other hidden concepts in our mind. In *The Way We Think*, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) state that metaphorical thinking works in cognition, by showing uniform structures and dynamic principles. These mental operations developed during metaphorical processing happen at “lightning speed” (p.18) and they are highly imaginative, producing in this way identity awareness, equity and difference.

Every single day, we use expressions that metaphorically use different parts of human or animal bodies to describe parts of objects or entities. That happens, for example, with “the leg of the table”, “the eye of the hurricane”, “the arm of the sofa”, “the tail of the comet”. Those parts are related to elements that are pretty familiar to us, because they are included in our own body or the bodies of animals.

Through metaphor we conceptualize abstract domains in terms of familiar and concrete domains. That means that the conceptualization of abstract categories is, mainly based on our own daily concrete experiences.

### 3.7.2 Image Schema

From the Cognitive Linguistics perspective, concept is equivalent to the notion of *schema*, an abstraction formed by repeated patterns in our experience, which form our memory and structure our cognition (Langacker, 2004). In other words, these patterns keep information about everything related with our daily single experiences. (Johnson, 1987)

Image schema is, then, an abstraction originated from our body perception (in its different ways, though vision is one of the most important ones, may be because of its relevance in our lives) to space (for instance, the experience of standing or coming to a room).

Image schemas are schemas shared by speakers in general, and are motivated directly by the basic meaning from our experience. The image schemas are extremely productive for new constructions processing. Studying prepositions under this approach makes possible to understand the highly polysemic character of these particles. Prepositions polysemy is strongly related to different image schemas.

Let us imagine the image schema of the word “balance”, which includes the relation between body and space. Metaphorically, we associate the meaning of “balance” that we acquire in our lives, as a notion of a body kept in its normal posture without falling down. When we say that “someone is unbalanced”, we are not saying that person cannot stay standing, but that person is not mentally healthy. On the contrary, if we want to say that “someone is balanced”, we are meaning that person can overcome difficulties in life without losing emotional control. In this way, it is possible to verify each image schema reflects important aspects from our perceptual and sensorial experiences, as well as the one related to balance.

Evans and Green (2006, p. 179-89) carefully presented some of the image schema properties:

- a) They are pre-conceptual in their origin;
- b) An image schema may create more specific concepts;
- c) Image schemas derive from sensory-motor experiences and from observation of the world:
- d) They are inherent provided with sense;
- e) They are analogical representations;
- f) They are inner complex;
- g) They can suffer changes;

h) They can take place in web or groups.

Several semantic features of words are considered to affect the learning of these words. The fact of being concrete or abstract is much more valid, mainly when the lexical development is being carried out with the cognitive development. According to Ellis & Beaton (1993), what seems to influence learning is not the fact words may be concrete or abstract, but the existence of image representations associated to the concept to be learned.

### 3.8 Mental Lexicon

Since the 80's, with the arrival of the cognitive sciences and in particular, with Cognitive Linguistics as the new scientific paradigm, it is now possible not only to identify the mental processes inherent to L2 acquisition, but also to implement more efficient learning strategies, according to the functioning of our cognitive systems.

The mental lexicon or vocabulary concept has recently been revealed as an important tool for foreign language teaching.

At present, it is accepted, by the several disciplines of Cognitive Linguistics, that lexicon is central to language processing and acquisition. Lewis, that proposes a lexical approach for teaching, says: "Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar" (Lewis, 1993).

The mental lexicon considers that area of semantic memory, where all concepts are stored, that processes in an interactive way, all the information provided for every single word (to phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic level), by articulating concept and meaning of the word at these different levels.

Mental lexicon cannot be considered just as a mere lexical entries store that are represented in memory, and usually reactivated.

Mental representations are settled in concepts. These concepts have a very important role in the permanent organization of mental vocabulary, since they are the ones which make the linguistic processing possible, that is to say, linguistic items comprehension, retention and use.

When we talk about concepts, we have to make a distinction between cognitive meaning (mental units represented in the individual mental vocabulary), and the linguistic meaning (semantically organized units, socially fixed and shared by an entire linguistic community). That is the reason why, when talking about foreign language acquisition, some questions arise, mainly about the possibility that several conceptual units may correspond to one linguistic unit in a language. What happens when we are in front of expressions that are equivalent at semantic level, but very different cognitively speaking? Do we have the same conceptual structure in two languages; with a light difference in perspective, that is, for example, positive in German but negative in Spanish? And, when the conceptual structure is not the same, how does the learner come to the linguistic expression in L2, if the L1 conceptual base is organized in a very different way? Does his/her production come from interferences or negative transfer?

### 3.9 Resources for Teaching and Learning Prepositions

It cannot be denied that using pictures may make the whole difference to whom is learning. And dealing about prepositions, the use of images or pictures cannot be underestimated. Lindstromberg (1997) mentions some reasons why he prefers using icons (highly schematic designs whose features suggest their meaning):

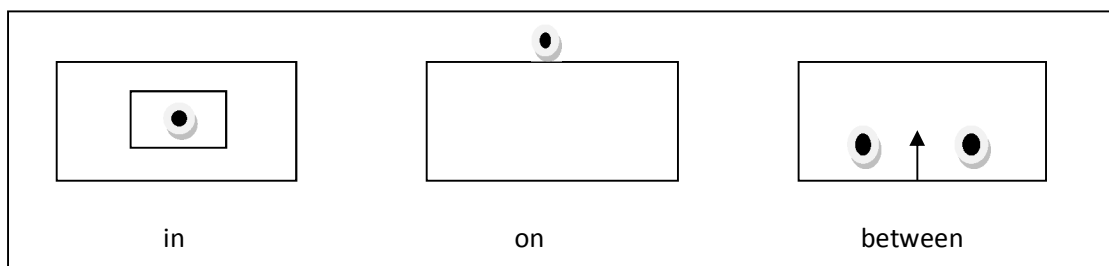
- Represent important differences in meaning, which are easily observed;
- They do not require especial abilities to be designed. Any student or teacher can use them;

- They require a little physical space (in a notebook) or may be in some posters;
- There is a big amount of evidence to support the importance of pictures/images associated to words to improve learning.

Icons, according to Lindstromberg, are not only used to introduce prototypical meanings. They can also be used to deal with non-prototypical and metaphorical meanings (1997).

### 3.9.1 Prototypical uses

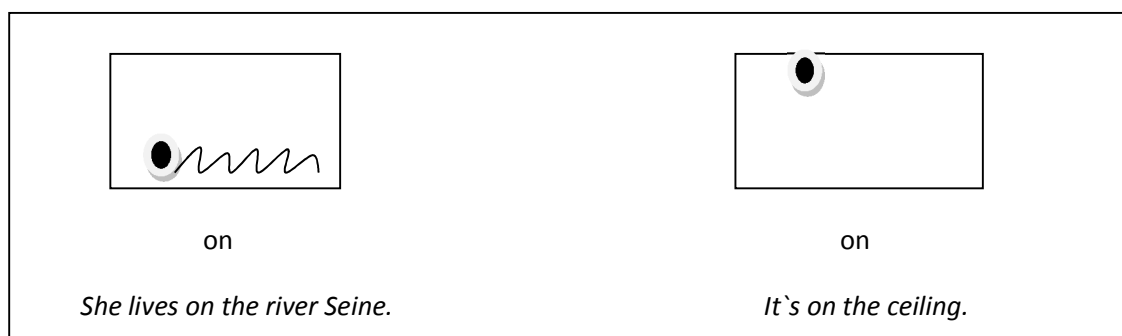
**Figure 1** - Examples of Icons to show prototypical uses of prepositions.



Source: Adapted from Lindstromberg (1997, p. 70, 91)

### 3.9.2 Non-prototypical uses:

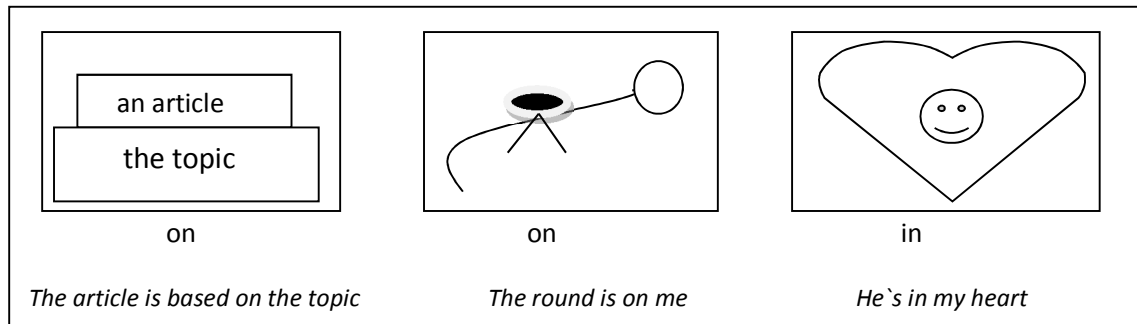
**Figure 2** – Examples of icons to show non-prototypical uses of prepositions



Source: Adapted from Lindstromberg (1997, p.70)

### 3.9.3 Methaphorical uses:

**Figure 3** - Examples of Icons showing metaphorical uses of prepositions



The first icon showing the metaphorical sense refers to an article based on a topic. That is why the words *the topic* are bigger and they are inside a bigger rectangle, because the topic is taken as the base for the article.

In the second icon refers to *the drinks are on my count*, so it is my responsibility. That is why a ball was drawn on a person.

In the third icon someone declares her affection for someone else. The heart, center of emotions, keeps the beloved person, therefore he is inside her.

In his effort to characterize English prepositions, Lindstromberg contends that schematic mental images are basic and essential in the characterization of prepositions. Besides, he also proposes that from these schematic images that depict spatial notions of prepositions derive varied notions with abstract meanings. Therefore, in his pedagogical innovation, he maintains the use of schemata series to show how prototype meanings hold through metaphorical extensions. Using schemata images in class, English teachers are able to concretize the abstract notions and thus help raise the students' level of understanding.

Though he provides a substantial compiler in the study of English prepositions, Lindstromberg (1997) achieves no further than downsizing the notions in the dictionary and making lists in an alphabetical order. Indeed the number of notions for a preposition is a lot smaller than that in the dictionary, but putting all the notions in an alphabetical order may not be an optimal terminal. Specifically, as his framework is based on schematic images and devoted to concretizing the abstract notions such as activity, basis, belonging, circumstance, focus of attention, manner, state, topic and valuation can be put under one category, say quality. Furthermore, some notions need to be clarified. For example, the notion of target may be divided into the notion of body (*Don't throw stones at me*), the notion of object (*He threw a stone at the ball*) and the notion of quality (*He threw an angry look at me*). In this way, the notions can be further categorized into body, object, activity, space, time and quality.

When having extended examples, the image schema can cover all of them, even though meaning appears to be different. In other words, considering Lindstromberg's view (2001), which emphasizes the importance of pictorial information of basic prepositional senses, other studies show that the representation of image schemata of spatial prepositions can facilitate the learners' comprehension and thus help learners accurately choose prepositions and understand their meanings

When thinking in details about the topic for this thesis, it was evident for me the urgent need for teachers to acquire a new attitude when teaching prepositions. Traditional grammar cannot solve problems and diminishes the chances for a real and efficient learning process. The Chilean learners lack of meaningful information for his/her interlanguage development. The available materials at present do not change this situation.

Prepositions do not have a specific and coherent area of meaning, and do not have equivalents in every language. It is not a list of words that the learner has to

memorize. It is necessary to consider contexts that may be understood and used in productions inside and outside the classroom.

Even though it is not about memorizing rules, it is possible to verify through uses that there is certain order in the English prepositional system. The metaphorical extensions of the prototypical uses prove this, and they guarantee an order in the apparent chaos in the use and exceptions of prepositions.

This fact is evident through observations from the linguistic tools. Cognitive Semantics' role is essential in this study, and to the evolution of the learner's interlanguage.



## 4. METHODOLOGY:

### 4.1 Corpus

#### 4.1.1 Subjects

All subjects of this study are primary and secondary students from The Deutsche Schule in Los Angeles, Chile. Twenty (20) students, ranging from very low beginner proficiency to very high native like proficiency, were considered for this project. The group was divided into four subgroups:

- Beginners: Five 11 year-old students belonging to 6<sup>th</sup> grades, in their third year learning English as a Foreign Language. In their weekly schedule, they have four English hours.
- Lower Intermediate: Five 14 year-old students belonging to 9<sup>th</sup> grades. In their weekly schedule, they have four English hours
- Upper Intermediate: Five 16-17 year-old students belonging to 11<sup>th</sup> grades. In their weekly schedule they have six English hours.
- Advanced: Five 17-18 year-old students belonging to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. In their weekly schedule, they have five English hours.

#### 4.1.2 Instruments

##### 4.1.2.1 Cloze Tests

A cloze test is a test where the student is required to fill in the blanks. This assessment contains vocabulary that might be unfamiliar to the learner. The purpose for including such a vocabulary is to test if unknown words may influence in the learner's preposition choice. A problem with this is the fact that the students might try to guess.

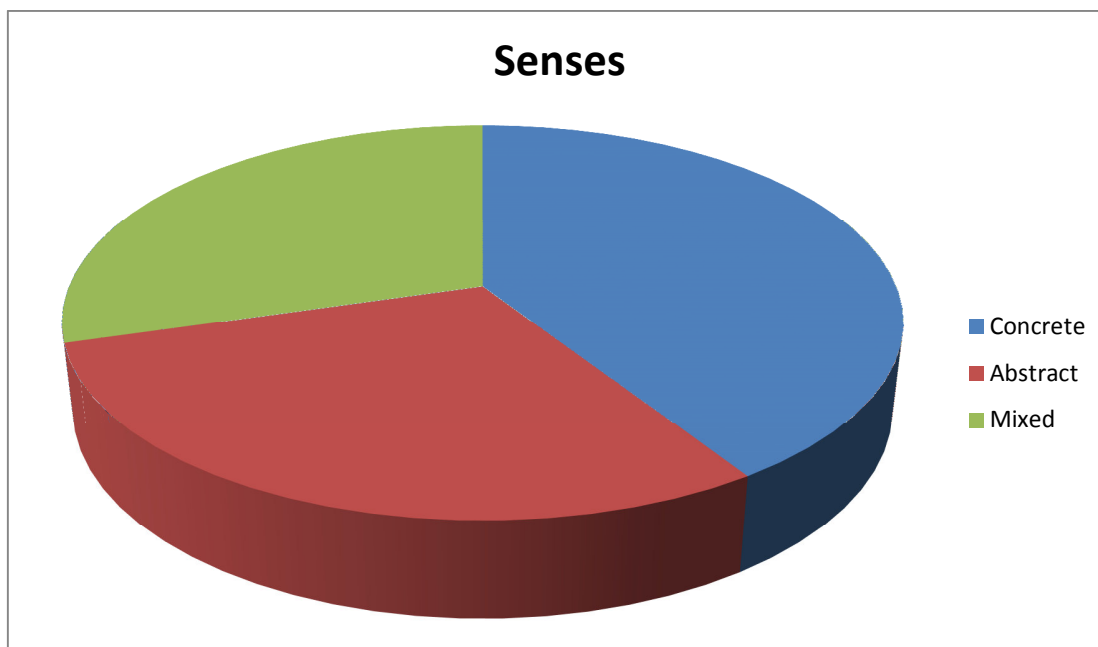
For this study, sentences with concrete, abstract and, as well, mixed referents or senses, were included in each Cloze Test.

### Beginners Cloze Tests

| TEST NUMBER | CONCRETE    | ABSTRACT    | MIXED       |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 01          | 4 sentences | 1 sentence  | 5 sentences |
| 02          | 6 sentences | 2 sentences | 2 sentences |
| 03          | 6 sentences | 3 sentences | 1 sentence  |
| 04          | 4 sentences | 3 sentences | 3 sentences |
| 05          | 4 sentences | 4 sentences | 2 sentences |

**Table I**

**Graph 1-** Average of Concrete, Abstract and Mixed Sentences included the Beginners Cloze Tests

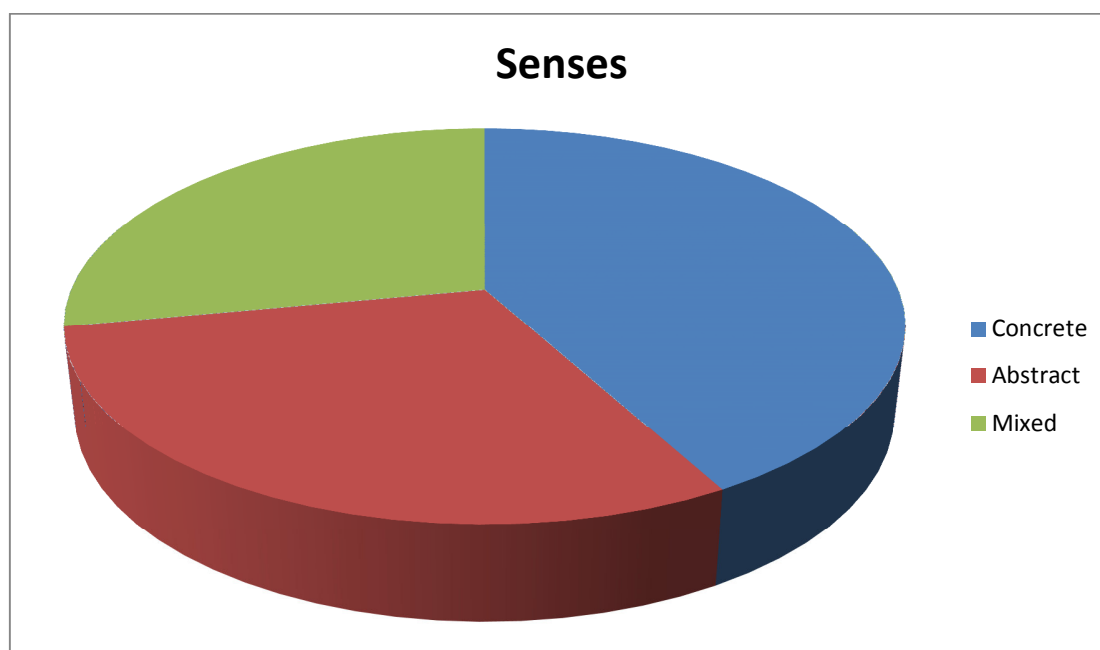


### Lower Intermediate Tests

| TEST NUMBER | CONCRETE    | ABSTRACT    | MIXED       |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 01          | 3 sentences | 1 sentence  | 6 sentences |
| 02          | 4 sentences | 4 sentences | 2 sentences |
| 03          | 3 sentences | 7 sentences | 0 sentence  |
| 04          | 5 sentences | 1 sentence  | 4 sentences |
| 05          | 6 sentences | 2 sentences | 2 sentences |

**Table II**

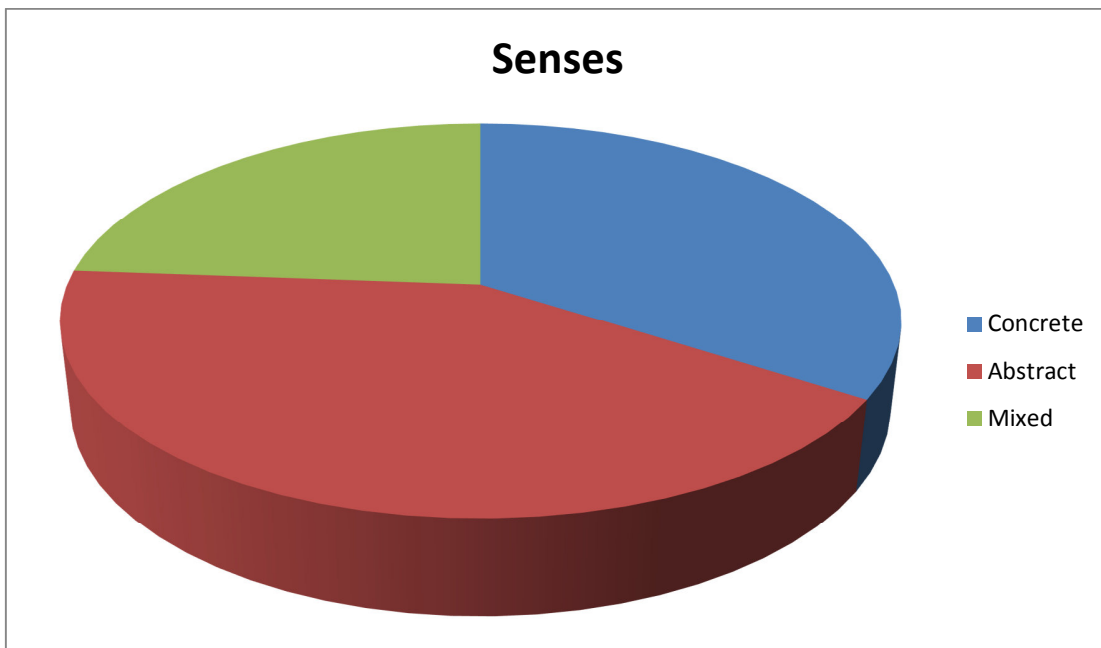
**Graph 2 -** Average of Concrete, Abstract and Mixed Sentences in the Lower Intermediate Cloze Tests



### Upper Intermediate Tests

| TEST NUMBER | CONCRETE    | ABSTRACT    | MIXED      |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 01          | 2 sentences | 7 sentences | 1 sentence |

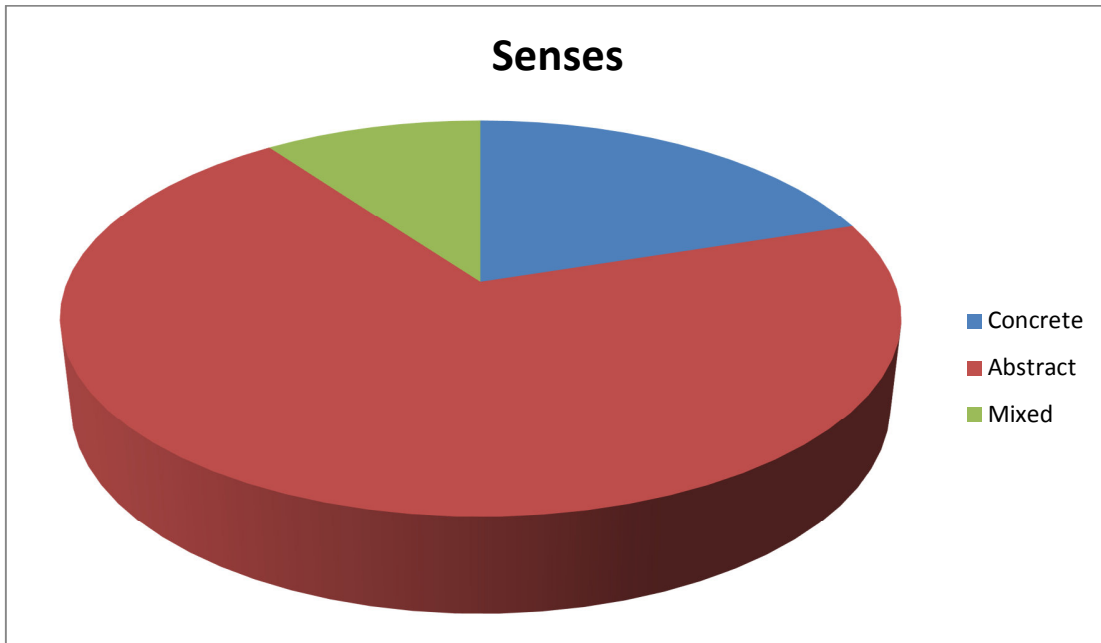
|           |             |             |             |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>02</b> | 0 sentence  | 4 sentences | 6 sentences |
| <b>03</b> | 2 sentences | 6 sentences | 2 sentences |

**Table III****Graph 3-** Average of Concrete, Abstract and Mixed Sentences in the Upper Intermediate Cloze TestsAdvanced Students Tests

| <b>TEST NUMBER</b> | <b>CONCRETE</b> | <b>ABSTRACT</b> | <b>MIXED</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>01</b>          | 4 sentences     | 6 sentences     | 0 sentence   |
| <b>02</b>          | 0 sentence      | 8 sentences     | 2 sentences  |

**Table IV**

**Graph 4 -** Average of Concrete, Abstract and Mixed Sentences in the Advanced Cloze Tests



#### 4.1.2.2 Verbal Reports

Participants were interviewed to reveal the strategies which they used in choosing prepositions by asking them to remember and describe their thoughts while they were filling out the test.

#### 4.2 Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of verbal reports shows that the EFL learner's responses were grouped into the following seven categories (Pakhomov, 1999):

- I Choose what feels natural ("feels right"), relying on one's IL competence

II Overgeneralization (Analogy) ("saw the phrase used with "in" many times"

This strategy also includes instances of substitution. e.g. "I used "of" here because I replaced "premise \_\_\_ his life" with "highlight of the day")

III Formula ("it is a set expression")

IV Transfer ("that's how I would say it in Spanish")

V Mental Imagery ("I used "on" because it is on the lawn" (hands are in motion) or "Society is like a box and students are in that box.").

VI Guess

VII Going by the Rule ("I used "of" because I always use it to combine two NP's,)

The following is an example:

|              | Feels Right | Overgeneralization | Formula | NL Transfer | Mental Image | Inference | Rule |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------|---------|-------------|--------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Total</b> | 25          | 19                 | 3       | 3           | 20           | 31        | 12   |

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

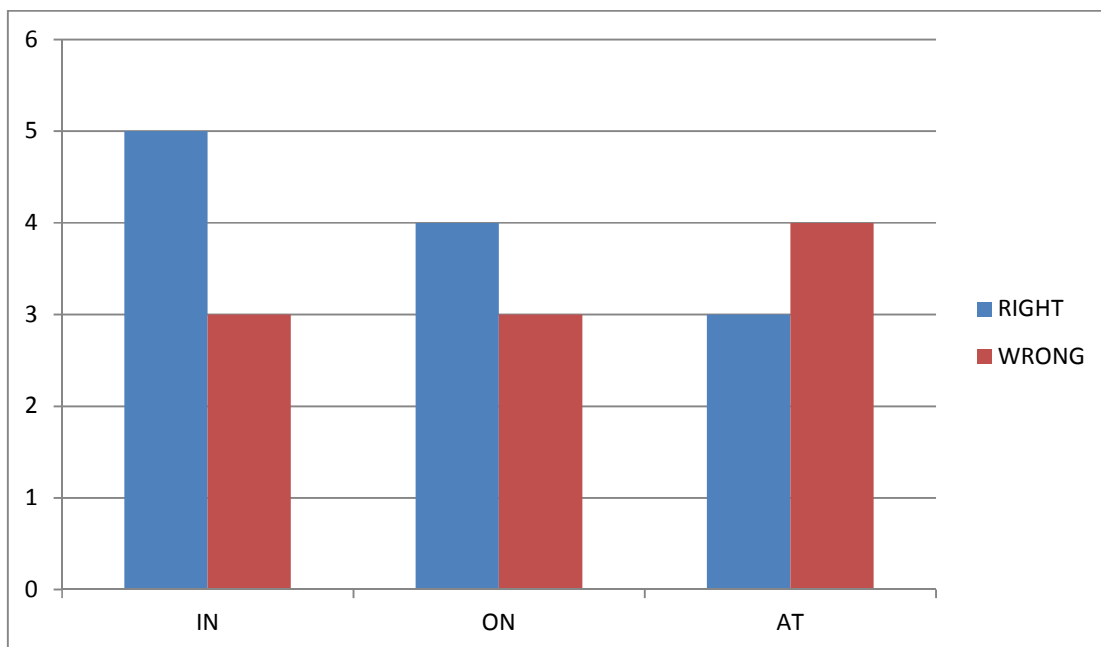
5.1 Results relating to answers given by the subjects:

5.1.1 Beginner Students:

| ANSWERS              | CONCRETE     | ABSTRACT     | MIXED        |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Right Answers</b> | <b>IN: 5</b> | <b>IN: 3</b> | <b>IN: 3</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 4</b> | <b>ON: 2</b> | <b>ON: 2</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 3</b> | <b>AT: 0</b> | <b>AT: 3</b> |
| <b>Wrong Answers</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> | <b>IN: 1</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 3</b> | <b>ON: 6</b> | <b>ON: 3</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 4</b> | <b>AT: 2</b> | <b>AT: 4</b> |

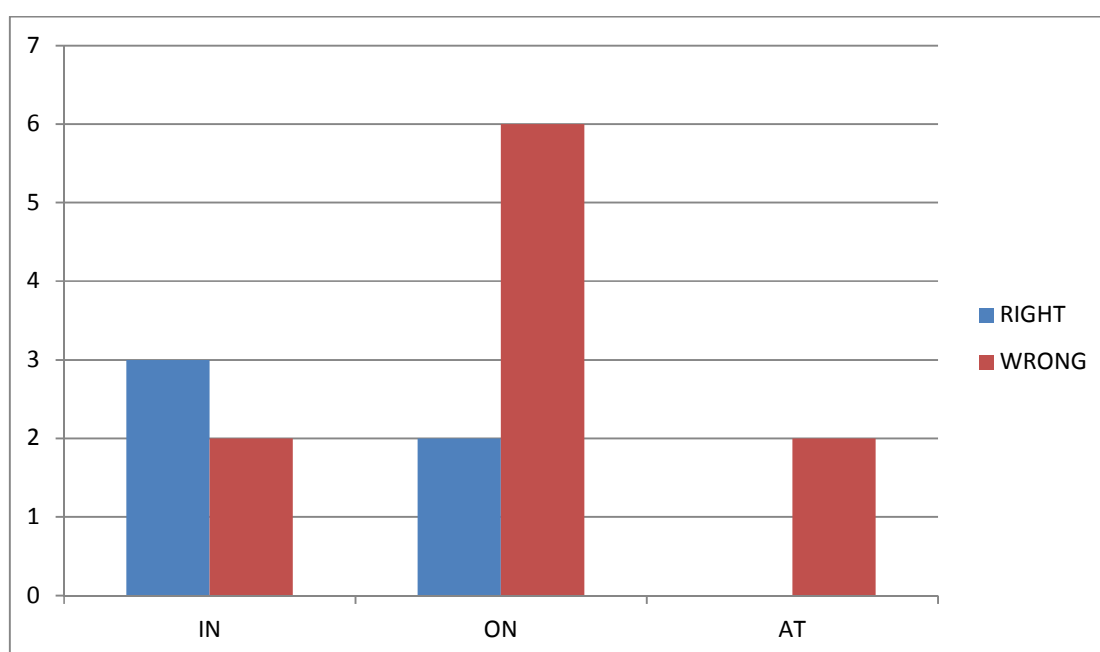
Table V

Graph 5- Beginner Students Results – Concrete Senses



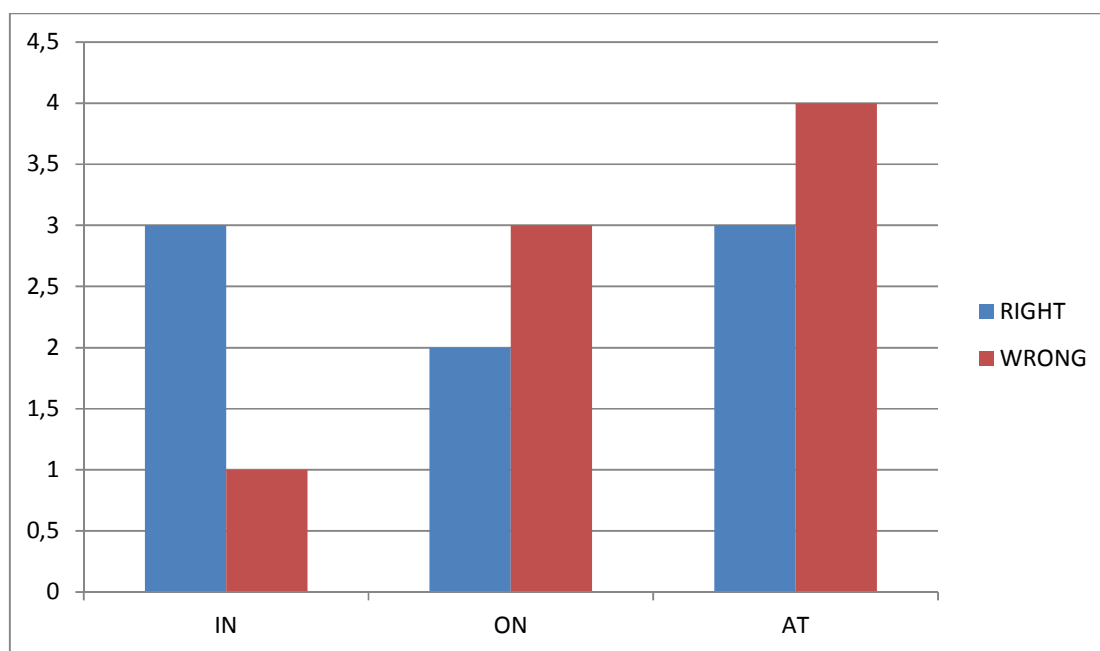
Graph 5 showed results relating to correctness in the use of the three prepositions of study at the beginner level. When using the prepositions *'in'* and *'on'* in the concrete sense, the students got good results, that is, 29% and 43% respectively. This is not the case of the preposition *'at'* which showed some difficulties students had in using this particle in the spatial sense (57% of errors).

**Graph 6 - Beginner Students Results – Abstract Senses**



In this Graph, results show a high proficiency in the abstract use of the preposition *'in'* (just 29% of errors). But differences arose relating the use of the prepositions *'on'* and *'at'* in abstract senses. The preposition *'on'* showed a 75% of errors, and the preposition *'at'* showed 100% of errors, though the different number of sentences with those senses considered for this test.



**Graph 7- Beginner Students Results – Mixed Senses**

In sentences where prepositions might have concrete as also abstract senses, students showed better results in the use of the prepositions *'in'* with 25% of errors. However, the prepositions *'on'* and *'at'* in mixed contexts got 60% and 57.1% respectively.

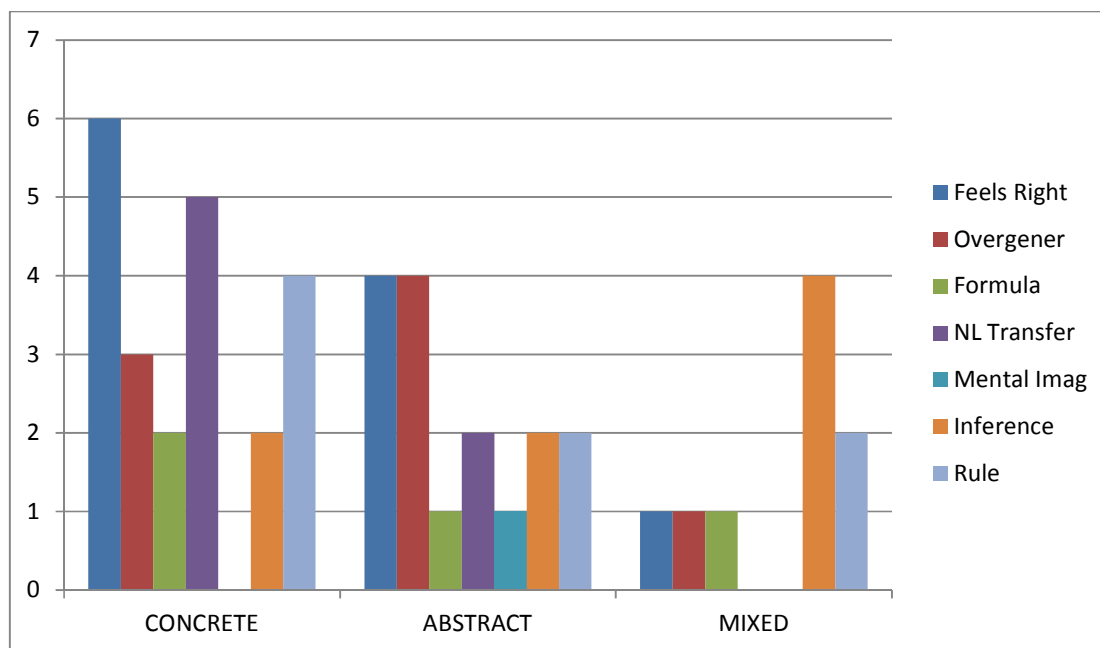
#### 5.1.1.2 Strategies used by Beginner Students

| <b>SENSES</b>   | <b>Feels Right</b> | <b>Overgen</b> | <b>Formula</b> | <b>NL Transfer</b> | <b>Mental Image</b> | <b>Inference</b> | <b>Rule</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Concrete</b> | 6                  | 3              | 2              | 5                  | 0                   | 2                | 4           |
| <b>Abstract</b> | 4                  | 4              | 1              | 2                  | 1                   | 2                | 2           |

|              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Mixed</b> | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Table VI**

**Graph 8- Strategies used by Beginner Students**



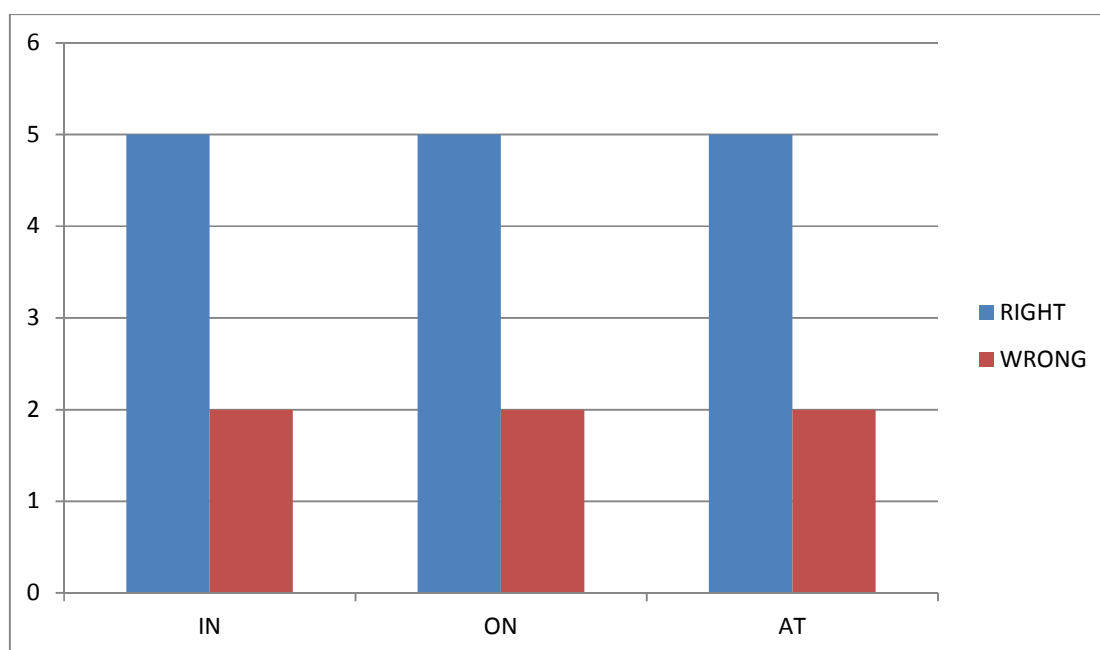
In concrete sense sentences, these students showed a high rate of self-confidence on their own competence, though the strategy they also recognized to use was NL Transfer, that is, since they did not know what preposition use in certain sentences, they applied Spanish rules to solve their problem and . In abstract sense sentences, they trusted their own competence and overgeneralized. This might explain the big amount of errors they've made. In mixed sense sentences, the students just guessed the answers. What called our attention is that no student used mental imagery to choose prepositions.

#### 5.1.1.2 Lower Intermediate Students:

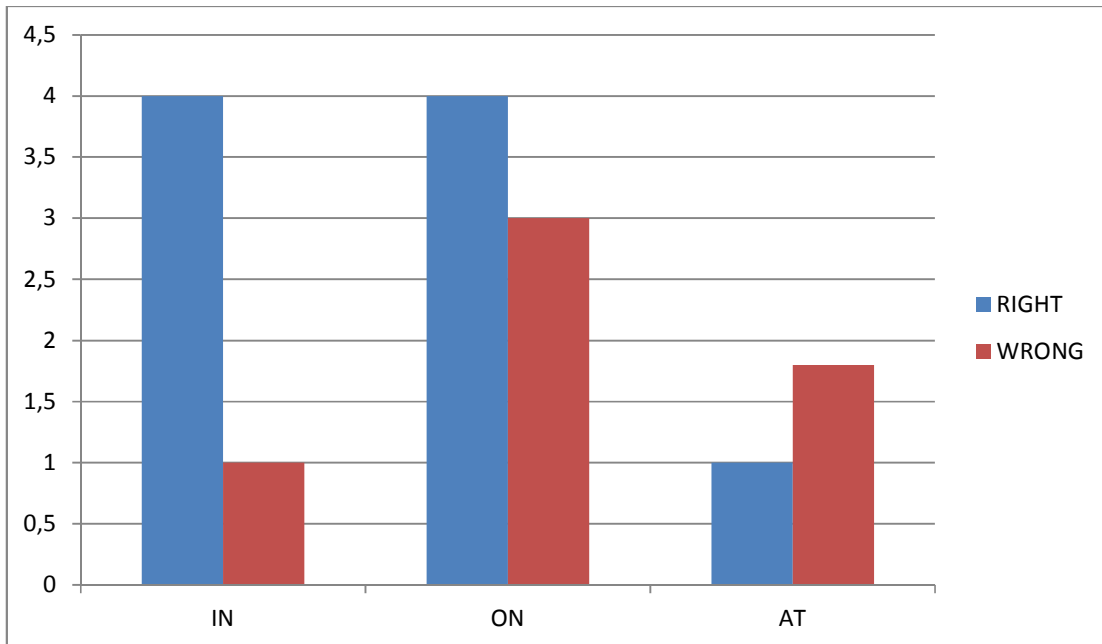
| ANSWERS              | CONCRETE     | ABSTRACT     | MIXED        |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Right Answers</b> | <b>IN: 5</b> | <b>IN: 4</b> | <b>IN: 5</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 5</b> | <b>ON: 4</b> | <b>ON: 2</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 5</b> | <b>AT: 1</b> | <b>AT: 1</b> |
| <b>Wrong Answers</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> | <b>IN: 1</b> | <b>IN: 1</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 2</b> | <b>ON: 3</b> | <b>ON: 3</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 2</b> | <b>AT: 2</b> | <b>AT: 2</b> |

Table VII

Graph 9- Lower Intermediate Students Results – Concrete Senses

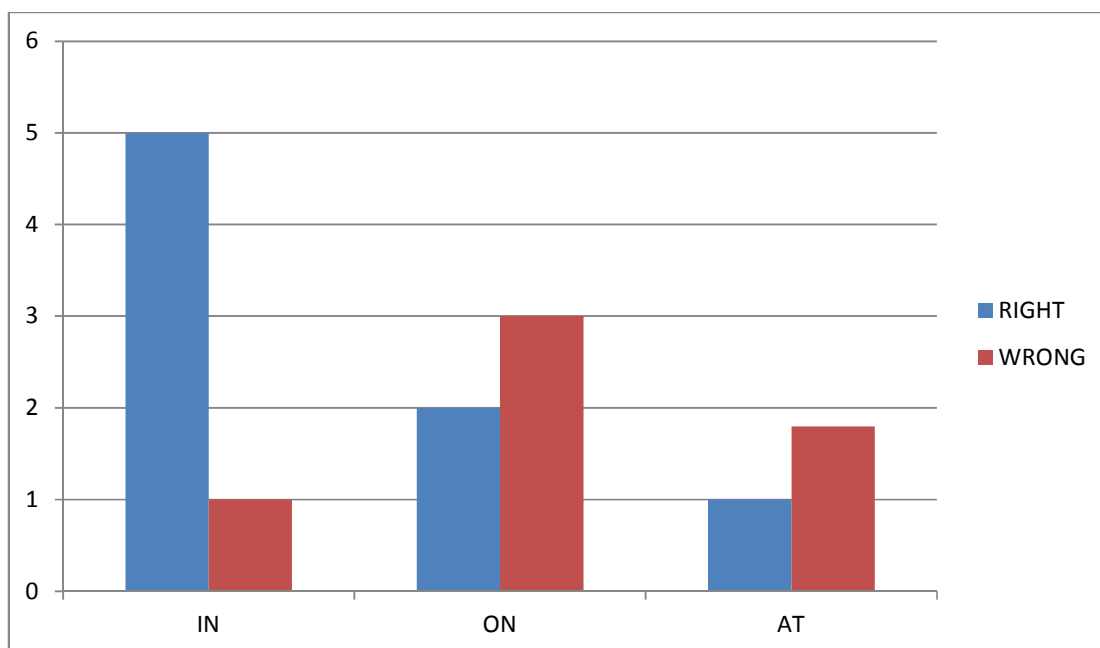


Graph 10 shows good results of Lower Intermediate Students using the three prepositions in concrete senses. (29% of errors each)

**Graph 10 - Lower Intermediate Students Results – Abstract Senses**

Graph 11 shows good results for Lower Intermediate Students in the use of the prepositions 'in' and 'on' in their abstract senses (20% and 42% of errors, respectively). However, when using the preposition 'at' in an abstract sense, the students failed in a 66.6%

**Graph 11 - Lower Intermediate Students Results – Mixed Senses**



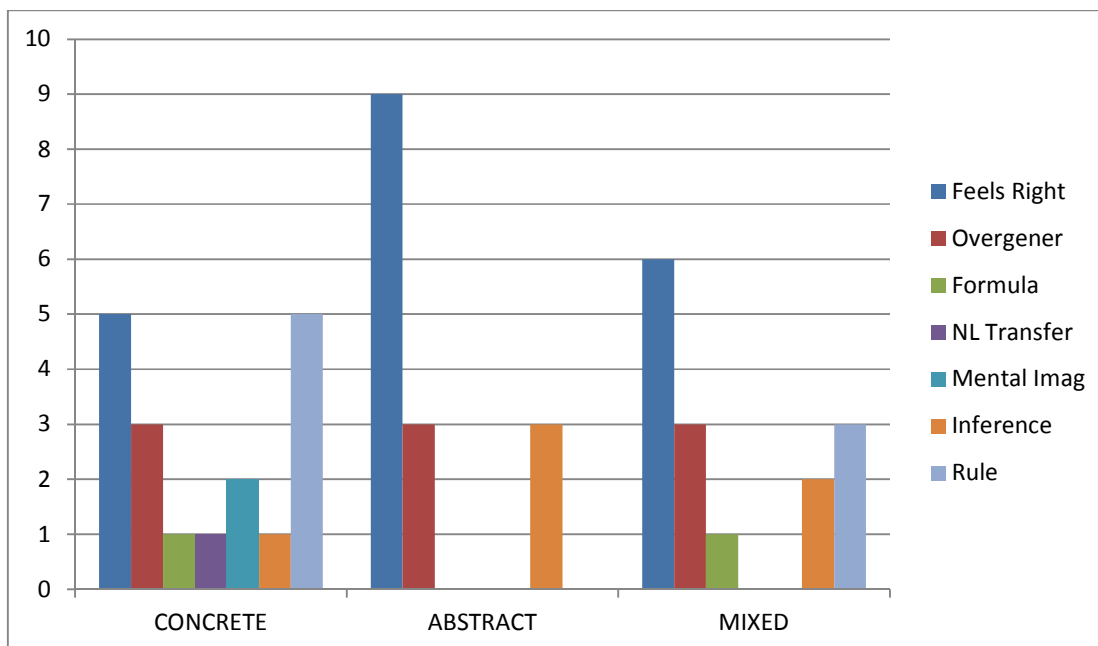
This graph shows the following results in the use of the prepositions in sentences with mixed senses: 'in' with just a 20% of errors, 'on' with 60% of errors and 'at' with 66.6% of errors.

#### 5.1.2.2 Strategies used by Lower Intermediate Students

| SENSES   | Feels Right | Overgen | Formula | NL Transfer | Mental Image | Inference | Rule |
|----------|-------------|---------|---------|-------------|--------------|-----------|------|
| Concrete | 5           | 3       | 1       | 1           | 2            | 1         | 5    |
| Abstract | 9           | 3       | 0       | 0           | 0            | 3         | 0    |
| Mixed    | 6           | 3       | 1       | 0           | 0            | 2         | 3    |

**Table VIII**

#### **Graph 12** - Strategies used by Lower Intermediate Students



In concrete senses, the students showed a high self-confidence rate as well in the application of rules. Since they just got a 29% of errors, one might conclude the students feel comfortable and absolute confident about what they know about how to use the three prepositions in spatial senses. They also used mental images as an important strategy in concrete situations. In relation to abstract senses, the students showed they are more competent in using the preposition *'in'*, more than in the use of *'on'* and *'at'* in similar senses. They kept feeling confident about the way they used the rules, however, they also guessed and overgeneralized in more sentences. This might explain the higher rate of errors (43%). In relation to the preposition *'at'* the students continued being self-confident, but also they showed a problems with rules application, since they overgeneralized more. That might explain the rate of 67%.

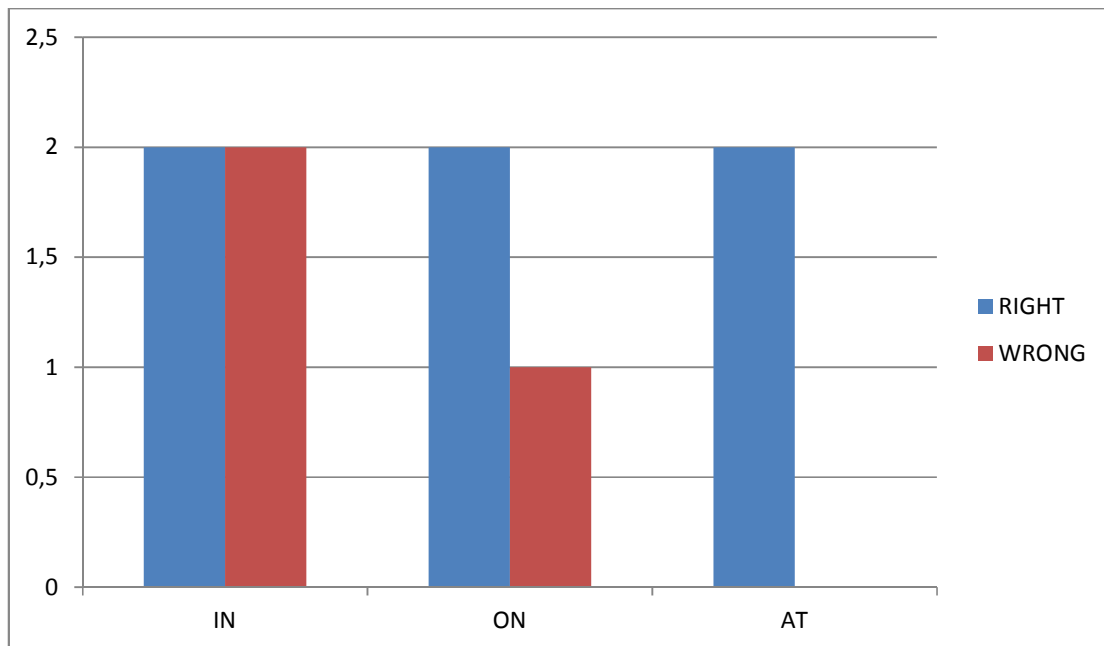
### 5.1.3. Upper Intermediate Students:

| ANSWERS | CONCRETE | ABSTRACT | MIXED |
|---------|----------|----------|-------|
|         |          |          |       |

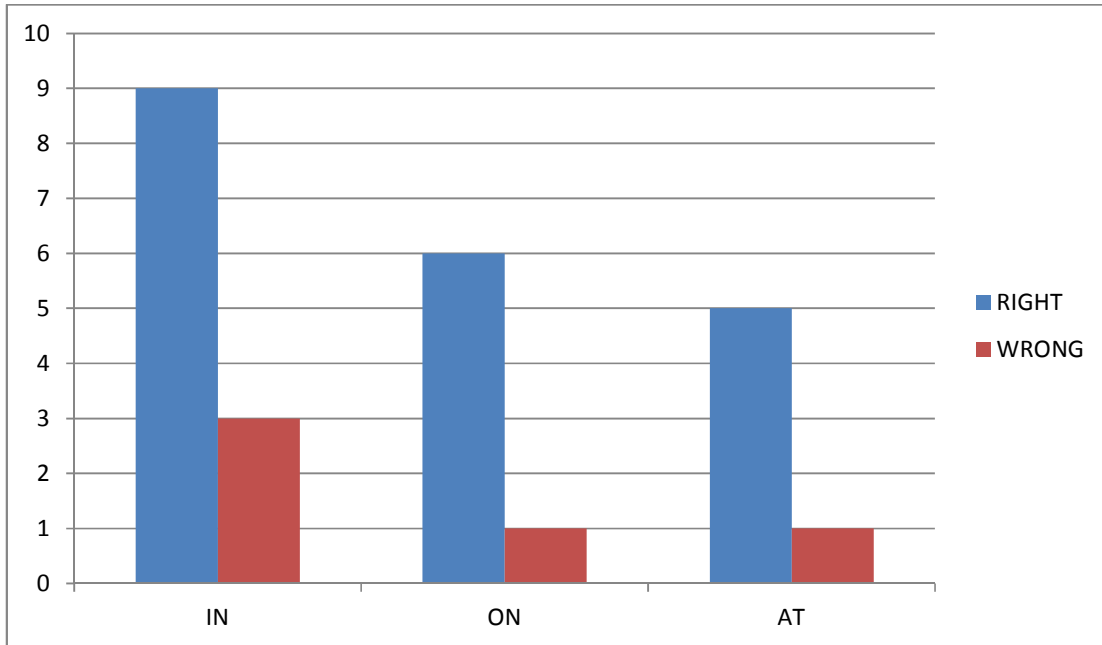
|                      |              |              |              |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Right Answers</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> | <b>IN: 9</b> | <b>IN: 4</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 2</b> | <b>ON: 6</b> | <b>ON: 4</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 2</b> | <b>AT: 5</b> | <b>AT: 3</b> |
| <b>Wrong Answers</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> | <b>IN: 3</b> | <b>IN: 2</b> |
|                      | <b>ON: 1</b> | <b>ON: 1</b> | <b>ON: 1</b> |
|                      | <b>AT: 0</b> | <b>AT: 1</b> | <b>AT: 3</b> |

Table IX

Graph 13- Upper Intermediate Students Results – Concrete Senses

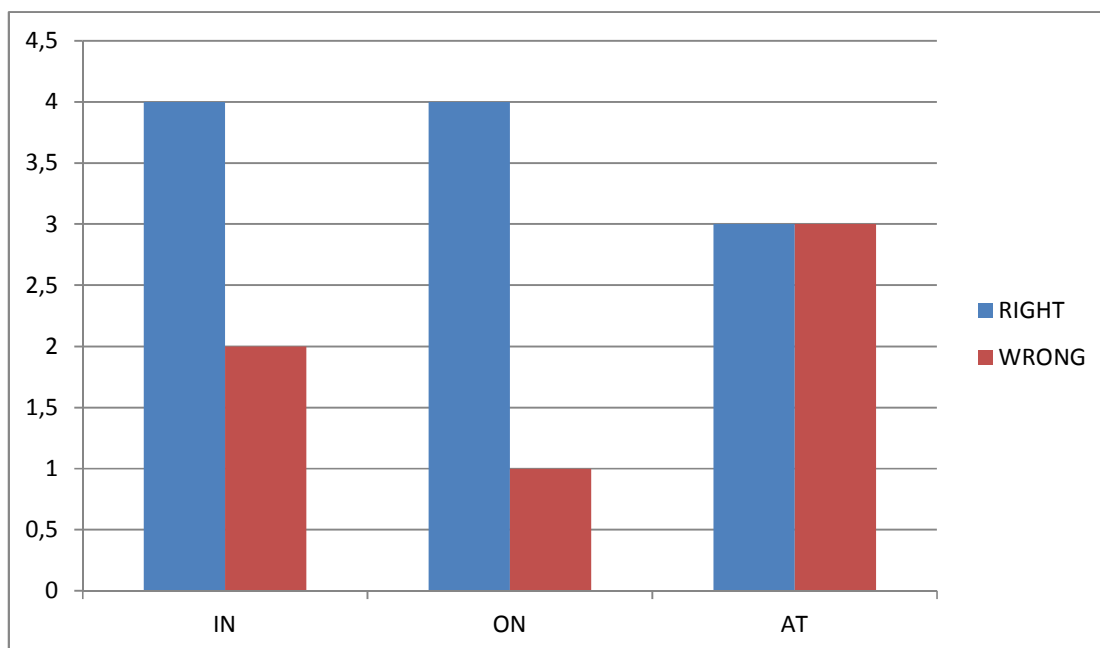


The students got a 50% of errors in the use of the preposition 'in' in the concrete sense. However, when using the prepositions 'on' and 'at' they show high rates of correctness and proficiency, with just 33.3% and 0% of errors, respectively.

**Graph 14-** Upper Intermediate Students Results – Abstract Senses

When using the three prepositions under study in abstract contexts, the students got 25%, 14% and 17% respectively.



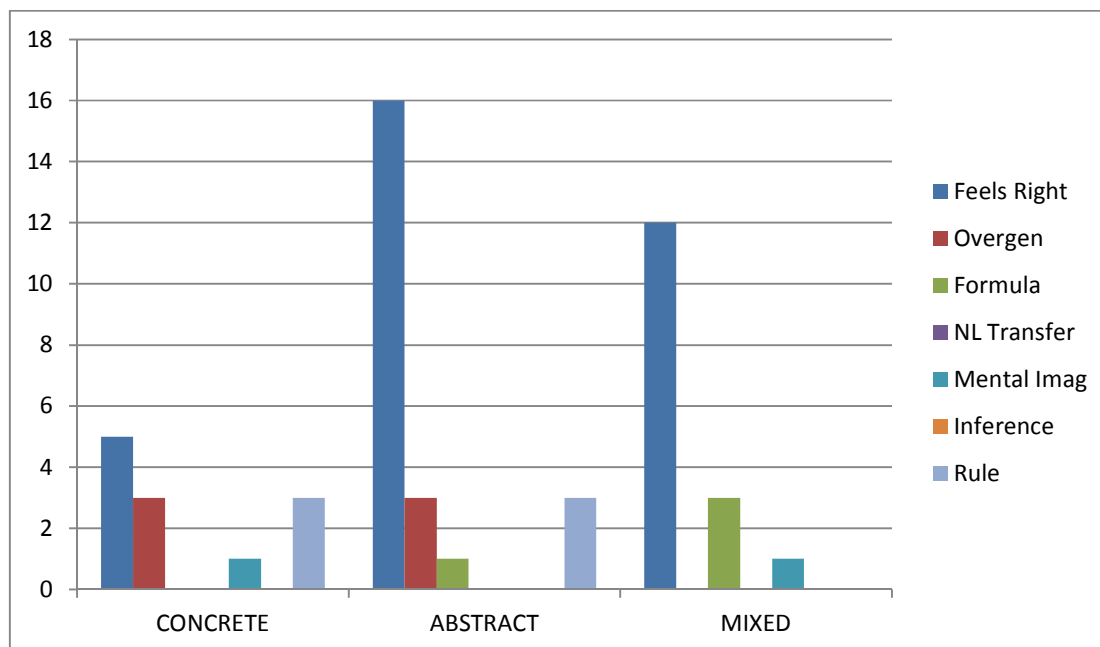
**Graph 15-** Upper Intermediate Students Results – Mixed Senses

When using the prepositions *'in'*, *'on'* and *'at'* in mixed senses, the Upper Intermediate Students got 30%, 20% and 50% respectively.

#### 5.1.3.2 Strategies used by Upper Intermediate Students

| SENSES   | Feels Right | Overgen | Formula | NL Transfer | Mental Image | Inferen | Rule |
|----------|-------------|---------|---------|-------------|--------------|---------|------|
| CONCRETE | 5           | 3       | 0       | 1           | 1            | 0       | 3    |
| ABSTRACT | 16          | 3       | 1       | 0           | 0            | 0       | 3    |
| MIXED    | 12          | 0       | 3       | 1           | 1            | 0       | 3    |

**Table X**

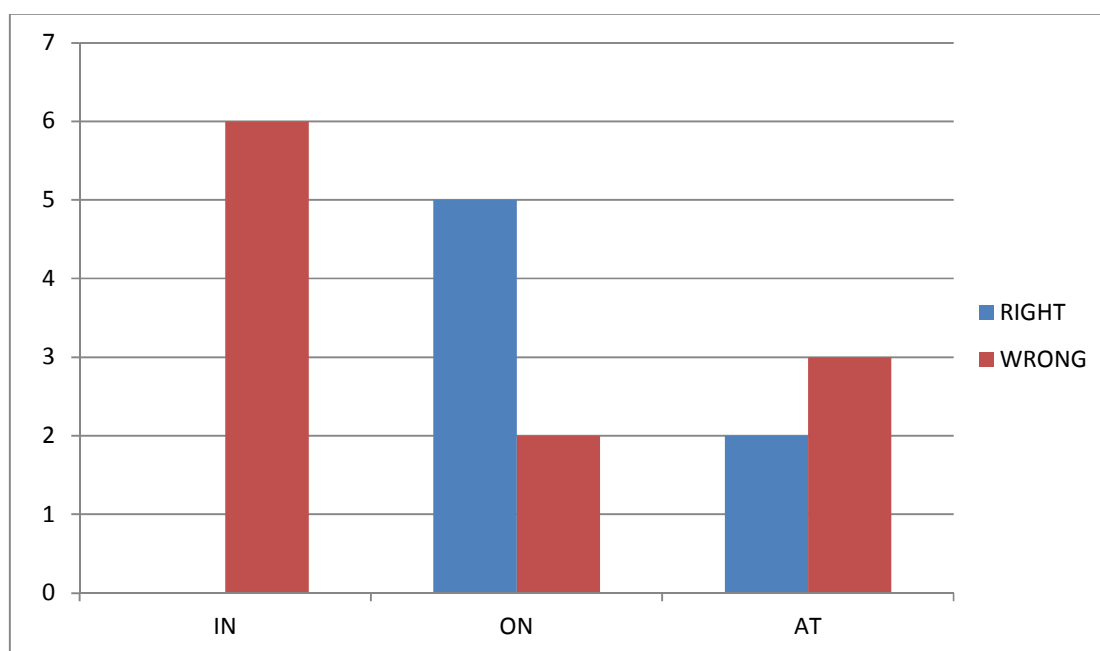
**Graph 16-** Strategies used by Upper Intermediate Students

This graph shows the Upper Intermediate students considered for this research using just a few strategies. When using prepositions in concrete senses, they trusted themselves, in their own competence. In concrete and mixed situations, the students used mental images, and in concrete and abstract situations they overgeneralized, though this did not affect the results considerably.

#### 5.1.4.1 Advanced Students:

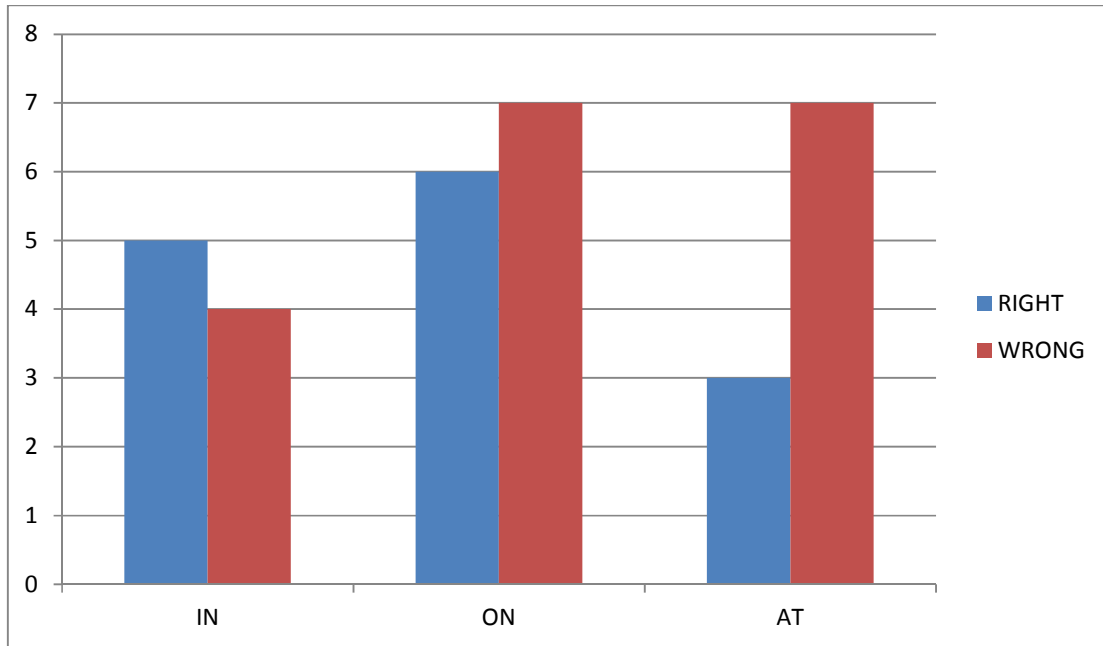
| <b>ANSWERS</b>       | <b>CONCRETE</b>                              | <b>ABSTRACT</b>                              | <b>MIXED</b>                                 |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Right Answers</b> | <b>IN: 0</b><br><b>ON: 5</b><br><b>AT: 2</b> | <b>IN: 5</b><br><b>ON: 6</b><br><b>AT: 3</b> | <b>IN: 0</b><br><b>ON: 0</b><br><b>AT: 0</b> |
| <b>Wrong Answers</b> | <b>IN: 6</b><br><b>ON: 2</b>                 | <b>IN: 4</b><br><b>ON: 7</b>                 | <b>IN: 0</b><br><b>ON: 1</b>                 |

|  |              |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | <b>AT: 3</b> | <b>AT: 7</b> | <b>AT: 2</b> |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|

**Table XI****Graph 17 - Advanced Students Results – Concrete Senses**

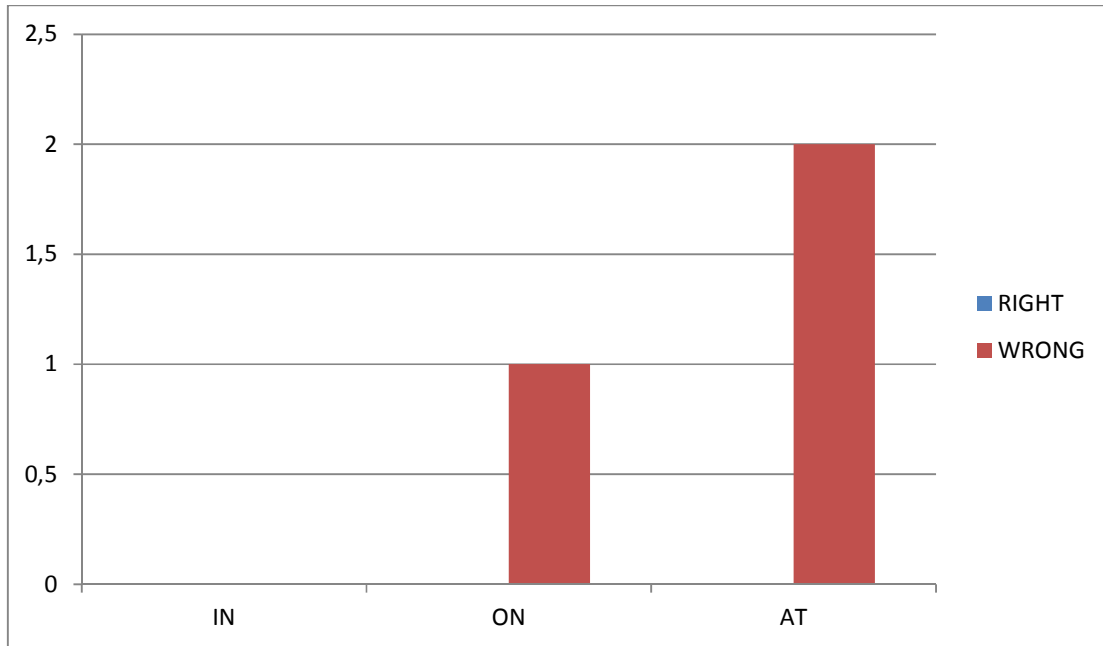
In relation to the use of the prepositions '*in*' and '*at*' in concrete senses, the Advanced students got 100% and 60% of errors, respectively. But in the use of the preposition '*on*' the students got just 29% of errors.

**Graph 18- Advanced Students Results – Abstract Senses**



In relation to the use of these prepositions, the poor results obtained by the students, in comparison with Upper Intermediate students, show difficulties that need to be analyzed. When using *'in'*, they got 44% of errors. In relation to prepositions *'on'* and *'at'*, they got 54% and 70% of errors, respectively.

**Graph 19-** Advanced Students Results – Mixed Senses

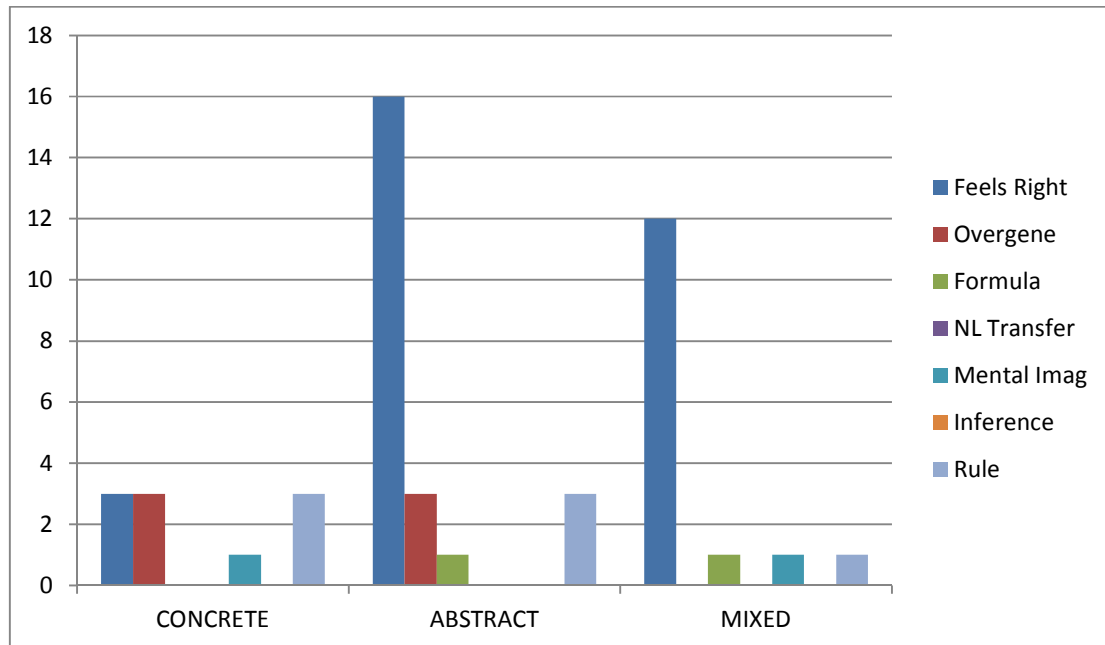


This graph shows some results that might lead to concern, but there are also some other variables that should be considered if going into analysis of these results. For instance, no sentences with the preposition 'in' in a mixed sense were included in this test. Then, in relation to the use of the prepositions 'on' and 'at', students got 100% of errors in each of these prepositions in mixed senses.

#### 5.1.4.2 Strategies used by Advanced Students

| <b>SENSES</b>   | <b>Feels Right</b> | <b>Overgen</b> | <b>Formula</b> | <b>NL Transfer</b> | <b>Mental Image</b> | <b>Inference</b> | <b>Rule</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>CONCRETE</b> | 3                  | 3              | 0              | 0                  | 1                   | 0                | 3           |
| <b>ABSTRACT</b> | 16                 | 3              | 1              | 0                  | 0                   | 0                | 3           |
| <b>MIXED</b>    | 12                 | 0              | 1              | 0                  | 1                   | 0                | 1           |

**Table XII**

**Graph 20-** Strategies used by Advanced Students

What called my attention the most was the fact that Advanced students got 100% of errors when using the preposition *'in'* in concrete senses, something that is considered to be easier for them. May be they found too many unfamiliar vocabulary that confused them. When considering the strategies they declared to use, we can see that they just considered four of them. Some of them trusted their own competence, some others overgeneralized, and there were others that misapplied rules. A few of them used mental images to choose the prepositions.

In Abstract senses, they got better results when using the preposition *'in'*, but worse results when using *'at'*. Most of them trusted their own competence when choosing a preposition in abstract senses. But some of them overgeneralized and misapplied rules.

In mixed senses, it was not possible to include sentences with the preposition *'in'*. That is the reason why there were just sentences with the prepositions *'on'* and *'at'*. However, in both cases, the students just got very bad results: a 100% of errors.

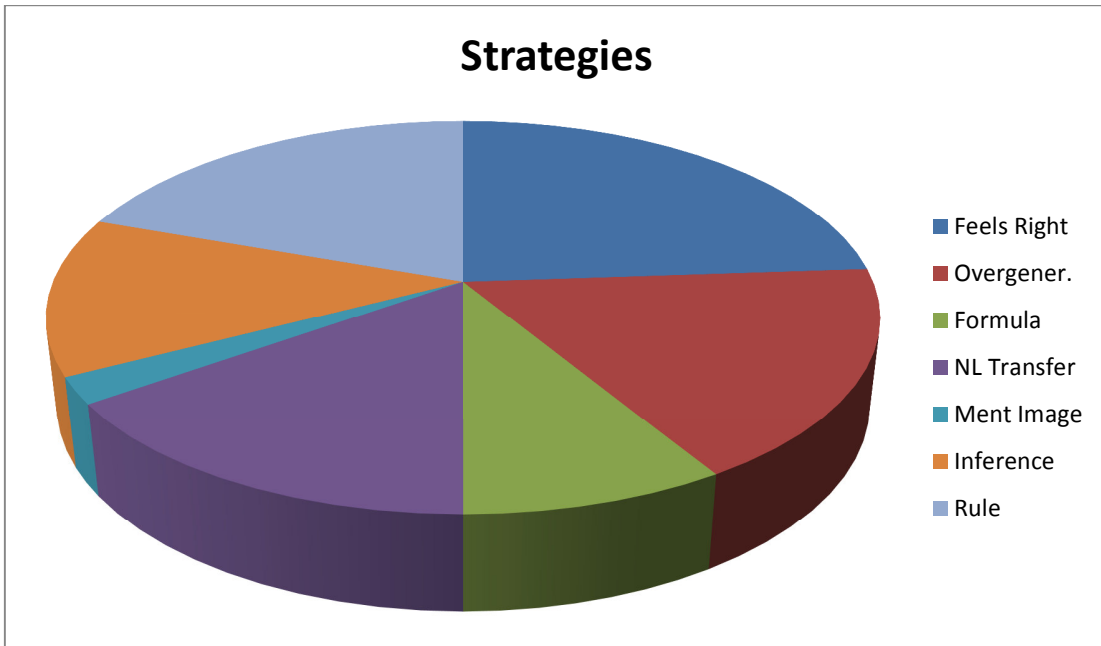
Most of the students trusted their own competence to choose the right preposition in their cloze tests. But some others, when reading the sentence to fill in the blanks, thought it looked like a typical English expression; and some others saw images in their minds to choose the prepositions.

#### 5.1.5 Strategies used by EFL learners to select prepositions:

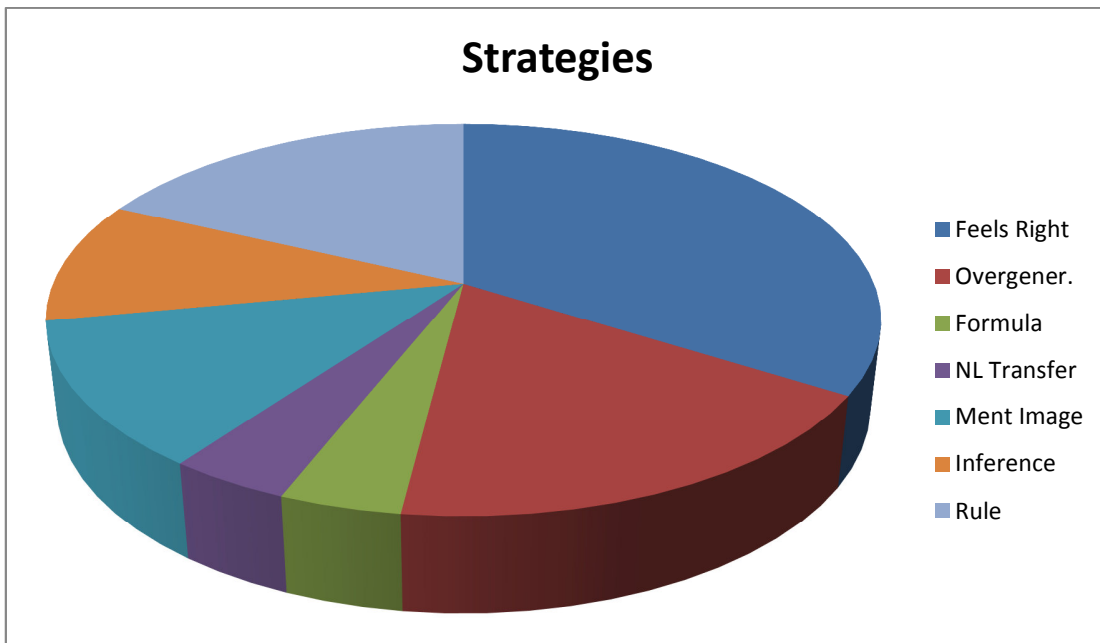
| <b>LEVEL</b>       | <b>"Feels Right"</b> | <b>Overgeneralization</b> | <b>Formula</b> | <b>NL Transfer</b> | <b>Mental Image</b> | <b>Inference</b> | <b>Rule</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Beginner           | 11                   | 8                         | 4              | 7                  | 1                   | 6                | 9           |
| Lower Intermediate | 17                   | 9                         | 2              | 2                  | 6                   | 5                | 9           |
| Upper Intermediate | 24                   | 6                         | 4              | 2                  | 4                   | 3                | 7           |
| Advanced           | 25                   | 5                         | 3              | 3                  | 5                   | 5                | 4           |

**Table XIII**

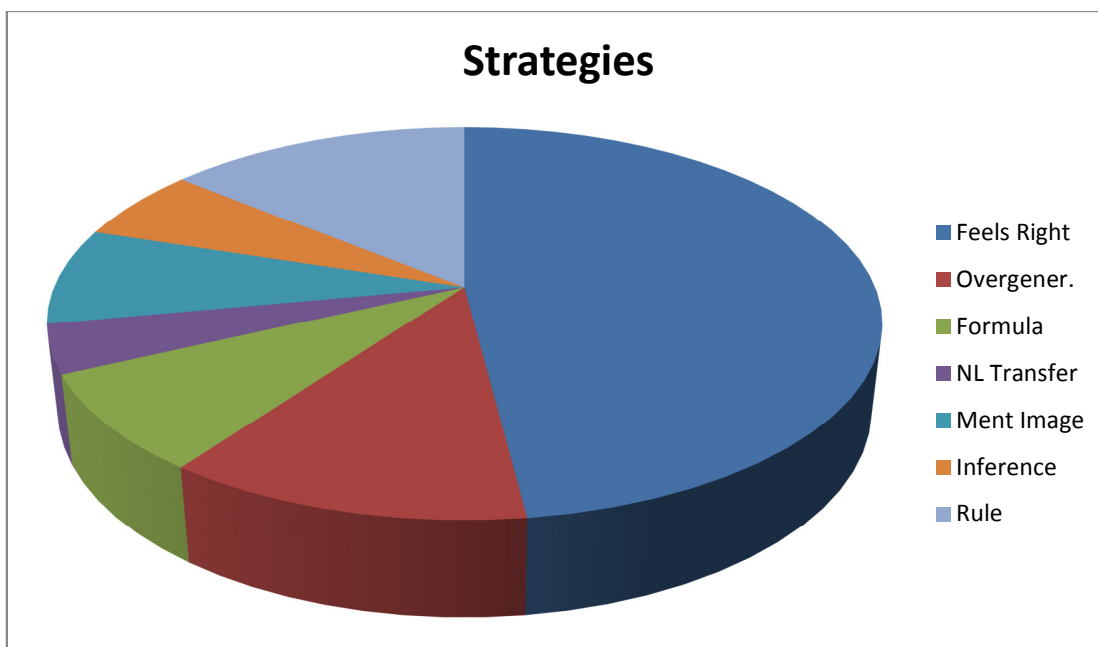
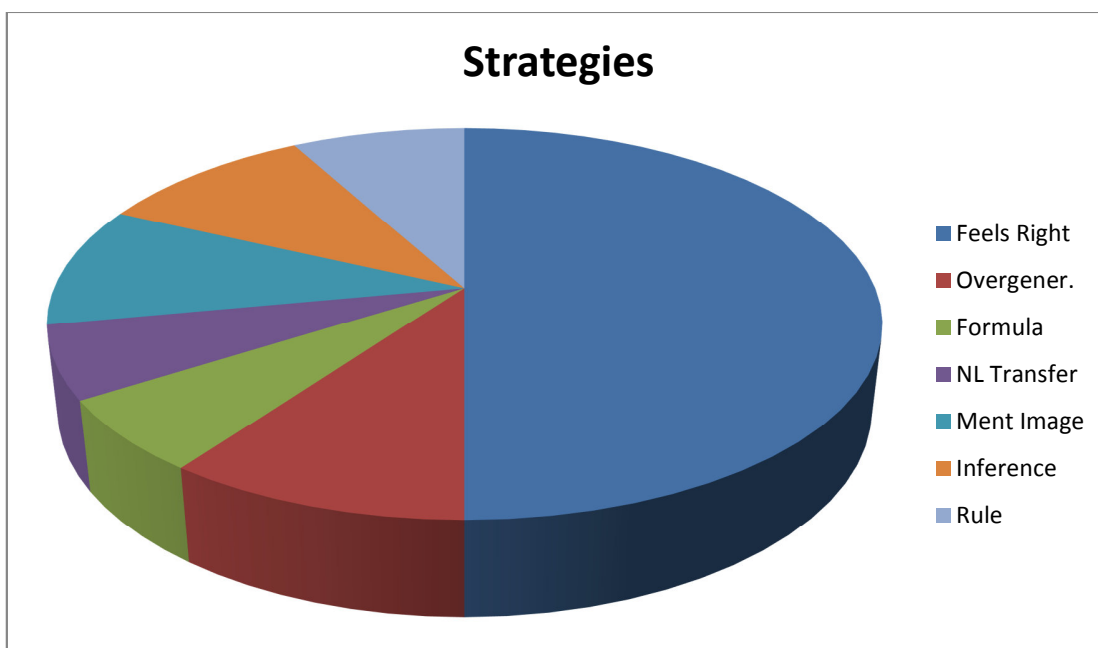
#### **Graph 21-** Strategies used by Beginner Students

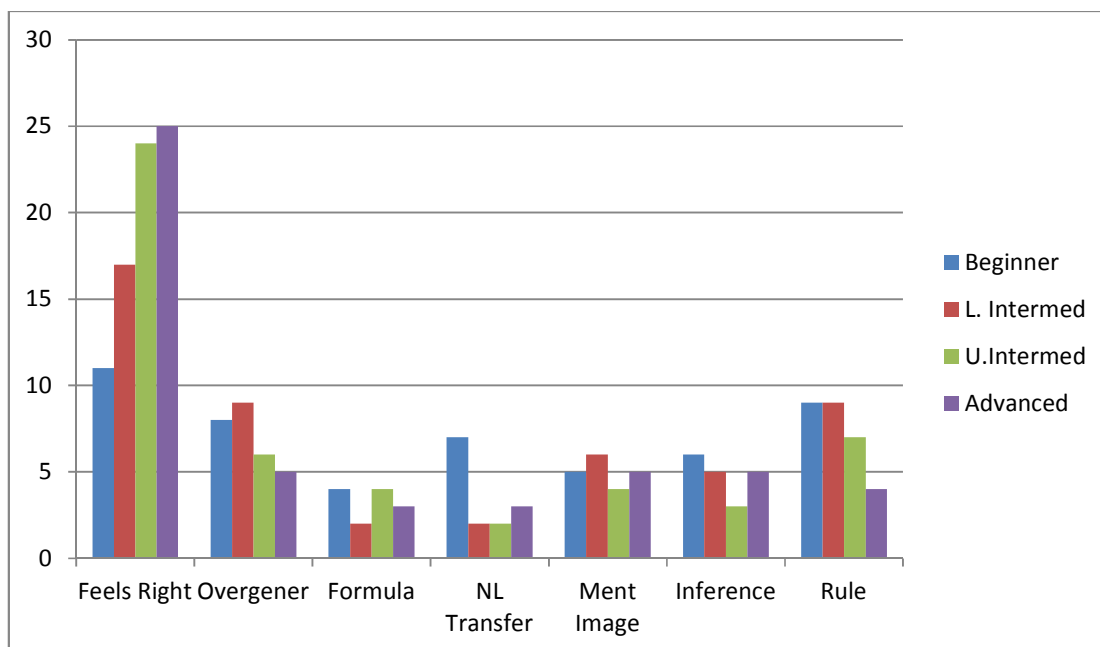


**Graph 22-** Strategies used by Lower Intermediate Students





**Graph 23-** Strategies used by Upper Intermediate Students**Graph 24-** Strategies used by Advanced Students

**Graph 25 - Strategies used by all levels students**

Graph 25 exemplifies the total number of instances of the eight types of responses identifies through verbal reports so far.

The numbers in Table T show that EFL learners' responses in this test cluster around the following categories:

| LEVEL              | "Feels Right" | Overgeneralization | Formula | NL Transfer | Mental Image | Inference | Rule |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|-------------|--------------|-----------|------|
| Beginner           | 22%           | 16%                | 8%      | 14%         | 10%          | 12%       | 18%  |
| Lower Intermediate | 34%           | 18%                | 4%      | 4%          | 12%          | 10%       | 18%  |
| Upper              | 48%           | 12%                | 8%      | 4%          | 8%           | 6%        | 14%  |

|              |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |
|--------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| Intermediate |     |     |    |    |     |     | %  |
| Advanced     | 50% | 10% | 6% | 6% | 10% | 10% | 8% |

**Table XIV**

Against to what was expected, EFL learners did not prefer using spatial imagery. Some of them used this strategy when working with concrete senses. Those that used it in abstract senses, constructed a mental image of a situation that involved an abstract sense, then, they used a metaphorical extension of the objects and relationships, simply because they realized abstract concepts do not have any graphic representation on their own. However, we can see that most of the students, even advanced learners, have shown to practice avoidance strategies towards the use of metaphor, highlighting that this is a particularly difficult area for them.

It should be noted that the answer “Feels Right” got the highest scores. That situation simply shows the learner chose what made him/her feel natural, relying on his/her own competence.

Another type of errors is found within the structure of the target language itself and through reference to strategies by which a second language is acquired or learned. These are errors that reflect the general characteristics of rule learning. Under this category of errors, it is found incomplete application of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, misanalysis, exploiting redundancy, hypercorrection, and overgeneralization (James, 1998).

Substitution was also found among the most common errors made by the subjects. This includes the substitution of the preposition *in* for *at*, and *in* for *on* in certain contexts. The findings show that this kind of substitution occurred with both advanced and beginner students. The occurrence of these errors relates basically to native language interference or the learners' knowledge inadequacy of the target language, or even the multiple meanings and functions of English prepositions.

Prepositions such as *in*, *at*, *on*, are considered as inseparable indicators for time, seasons, years, months, places, and items in most of the situations and purposes (locative and spatial), whether exact or general. This conclusion may make the learners assume that the use of prepositional words *in*, *on*, *at*, is for all cases regardless of the purpose, object, and situation stands for as well the case for other prepositions.

In relation to overuse, we also found cases where even advanced learners overused central spatial prepositions and avoid using variants the native speaker would opt for.

Through the analysis of the Tables and Graphs it is possible to consider some other variables like the way students understood sentences, may be in a different way to what was expected by the researcher. This might lead to errors, without necessarily meaning that there is a lack of knowledge.

For the interviews, notes were taken when talking to the students, when they tried to explain the reasons why they chose certain prepositions. As we were talking, the students were reading their own answers on the Cloze Test, and I made some questions. There were several occasions when students change their answers when trying to explain the reasons why they chose prepositions. I also considered their gestures, since they might contribute to the explanations the students were giving at that moment.

What was interesting was the fact that there were some students that declared to know the rule, but they finally chose a different preposition since "it sounded much better" than the preposition grammar could tell it was the most appropriate.

There were some other students that gave one of the most expected answers, for instance, when considering using the preposition '*in*'. They said: "I thought of the idea of something being inside another thing". That was good when talking about place or position. But there were problems in abstract senses, and the students continued considering that image. This behavior reflects a common strategy,

overgeneralization. And here, we as teacher, could stop and think about our possible failure when teaching these senses.

It is important to consider the strategy that got the highest scores: the students' self-confidence. They used intuition and followed the decision they'd made since "it feels right".

## 1. CONCLUSIONS:

During all this study, the main purpose has been to help the reader to think about English prepositions acquisition among Chilean learners, about our reality, and try to get some conclusions, so as to make a contribution, though small, to EL teaching in own classrooms.

These three prepositions were chosen for the study because they are among the most used prepositions in the English language, and because of the fact that their most basic meanings are known by most of our students, which does not necessarily mean that their uses are totally clear.

The results from the tests show that Chilean EFL learners may choose different prepositions, and they may differ in their answers. This fact may be due to not knowing how to apply the rules, overgeneralization, or just, because they thought “it felt right” when choosing certain preposition.

Certain order was observed through some strategies –to which students showed to use frequently. One of these was a frequent use of the preposition ‘*in*’ meaning “inside” and ‘*on*’ meaning “contact”. Most of the students showed the prototypical used of these two prepositions. The abstract senses showed not to be clear enough to the students. They showed a tendency to interpret the sentences by thinking of the concrete senses or adapting what they already know. It is important also to mention that the learners, mainly the upper intermediate and advanced ones, tried to impose their reason to the language they are learning, and this may be more related to intuition and to students’ experience than to the application of grammar rules they already know.

The students’ competence on various senses of a specific preposition showed that concrete senses like the spatial sense generally cause less difficulty to the students than the temporal sense and other senses that are more abstract. That is

because concrete senses are of more semantic transparent than abstract senses, thus causing less difficulty to learners.

This work also suggests, because of the results that show the low rate of use of mental imagery, that Chilean learners of English are not really acquiring or building new concepts when learning English prepositions. Instead, what is learned is the schema mappings that make the sense the students know different. What happens here is in fact a kind of reconstruction on something already existing that is based on their previous sensory-motor experiences.

The findings are also interpreted as evidence that the principle of prototypicality underlies the structure of all languages as well as the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition (Ijaz, 1986).

This research made with primary and secondary students was considered, by the English teachers at the school, to be a chance to get useful information about FL teaching. The data gathering in the classrooms has also been considering enriching and most teachers are eager to read about the final conclusions from this work.

In spite of the already mentioned difficulties with prepositions, no research work, up to present, has stressed the reasons why Chilean students chose this or that preposition. Therefore, this work might be a useful tool, not only for reading and learning, but also, as a motivation for future research.

The access to what our students really think when choosing certain preposition may really change our own concepts about the topic. Teaching and learning are modified, when we get closer to a student who is the builder of his/her own knowledge. In this way, learning turns meaningful, because students' previous knowledge are included in the curriculum, by using the strategies as teaching resources to prevent errors, and also, to help the learner to know more about his/her own cognitive processes. Behold a challenge for English language students and teachers.

## 6.1 Pedagogical Implications

The difficulty in learning the English prepositions necessitates classroom strategies and techniques (as early as the basic education level) that will distinguish the various senses of the prepositions. These strategies and techniques call for using the preposition in context; engaging learners in authentic communication to promote their learning. It is hoped that this early exposure to the forms and functions of the English prepositions will result in their imbibing the target forms without much reference to the L1.

This study has confirmed what was above mentioned, that learners will learn more prototypical senses of polysemous items before less prototypical senses; and furthermore, that when they encounter a less prototypical sense, they are more likely to misinterpret its meaning for one more prototypical. These findings can have implications for classroom teaching depending on the type of texts a teacher uses. What the students need is a comprehension strategy to deal with unfamiliar senses.

The teacher can provide the students with a text containing polysemous items whose senses the students can be expected to find difficult. The teacher can check their comprehension of these senses and if the students do not understand them, then the teacher can see if textual cues in the larger context can help the students discern the meaning. If the students cannot fix the error themselves then the teacher can intervene by using actions or pictures to explain the sense, or by providing extra-textual information to help with explanation.

By intervening, the teacher's purpose is to provide the students with enough information to disambiguate the meaning. If the polysemous word in question was over, then some students may benefit from a description of the different senses and how they relate to one another. Other students may find such a description confusing and may prefer pictures to describe the different senses, much as



Lindstromberg (1996, 2001) has advocated for teaching spatial prepositions. Furthermore, pictures can also be used for checking whether the students have understood the meaning of not.

If the teacher is aware of the possible difficulty polysemous items pose for students, the above strategy can also be taught in a general comprehension lesson. As in the planned lesson, the teacher would check for comprehension of a polysemous sense. If they don't understand the meaning then the students are encouraged to fix the error themselves using cues from the larger textual context.

If they still cannot understand the meaning then the teacher can intervene with actions or drawing pictures, or by providing extra-textual information. This strategy is efficiently taught using polysemous words, but once learned, the students will be able to use the strategy to help them in their general comprehension of unfamiliar language.

The access to the student's knowledge, his/her own ideas and impressions can modify teaching and learning processes. In this way, the learning process becomes meaningful, since the student's knowledge is included in the curriculum, using the student's strategies as teaching resources to prevent errors, and also, helping the student to know about his/her own cognitive processes.

It is also important to consider English language learning in relation to the way prepositions have been taught in Chilean classrooms. There are two very common traditions, whose pedagogical consequences are devastating for L2 learning: the first one consists of leaving the new vocabulary or expressions in a vacuum, and, the second one, of translating them into L1 immediately. In the first case, the learner is not able to contextualize the preposition or to associate them to conceptual networks from his /her mental vocabularies. In the second situation, the teacher always provides his/her own interpretation of an expression, through paraphrase, an explanation or even, translation, and he/she is stealing the learner the chance to discover by him/herself the meaning of the unknown items.

If the traditional approaches for language teaching are focused on the final product, instead on the process of decoding to reach that product, the cognitive approach offers the chance to discover the meaning of new items by using the cognitive mechanisms of the learner.

This skill requires training and should be practiced in L2 classroom context, though it might seem to be a slow process. It is not worthy to hurry, if that does not mean real results, in the medium and long term.

In this process, some insufficiencies occur. Among the most frequent ones, we have quick and wrong reading, that usually leads to wrong inferences, and even, too high self-confidence.

It is necessary to mention that the student will learn easily the meaning he discovered by himself, that the one that was simply given by someone.

The experiences we have had at schools relating to EFL teaching show us that we cannot start by teaching isolated words or grammar rules to make our students to acquire English and will be able to communicate fluently. According to Lewis (1993), the secret to acquire fluency in a foreign language is in the quantities of lexical items we have stored in our mental lexicon, as well as the ability to recover those items quickly through communication. This words file allows us to automatically identify a word or expression we need for speaking or writing, or for understanding an oral or written text.

Fluency does nothing to do with grammar rules or with memorizing contents from textbooks used at schools. It does not make sense to the student to memorize lists of isolated words.

Teachers frequently claim about their students' lack of motivation for the activities their teachers have carefully prepared. Teachers express their frustration when failing in their attempt to motivate their students and make them get enthusiastic about learning English. Lewis (2000) suggests a possible solution to this problem:

the use of “chunks” – language extensions which involve collocations (words that usually “go together”), phrasal verbs, and idioms.

Indeed, students will only learn when they are able to make a connection with previous knowledge.

It may happen in our classroom that our students are talking about games, and, suddenly, one of them interrupts by making a question: “Teacher, why the words “game over” appear once the game has finished?” These are precious opportunities we should take advantage of to explore vocabulary, not in an isolated way, but by making the possible relations to the expression “game over”. In some way, this student is making lexical relations. There is a lot we could do starting from a single question: What is a game? And by making the relations, we could introduce chunks, and when showing them to the students, we could make a table on the whiteboard so as to help the students to get the entire picture and to continue making more relations.

It is important for us, as teacher always remember the role of motivation when learning a new language. Students are daily exposed to English through movies, radio and TV programs, books, the internet, and magazines. It is not an artificial or invented language, but words, phrases and expressions commonly used by our students.

Finally, I would like to point that EFL classroom should not only an orientation towards results, that is, linguistic and communicative competence, but also, it should be addressed to some other very important objectives as well. It is important also to consider the access to cognition and the development of across competences, through interlinguistic thinking, reason development and the abilities to infer, making the student be a discoverer of the cognitive links involved in the language he/she is learning, and not just a mere passive receptive being of a second conceptualization of the world.

All these points mentioned in this section, this thesis researcher would like to leave on the reader's mind.

## 6.2 Limitations to the study and suggestions for further research

Several aspects of the present study are limited and thus desirable for further research.

First, the present study was a small-scale one involving four classes (40 students in total) from The Deutsche Schule, a private school in Los Angeles, Chile. To achieve a more convincing result, a comprehensive study including a larger size of sample is desired.

Besides, the subjects involved in the present study were high school students whose English proficiency was generally high, compared to public schools. The results of the study were thus hard to generalize to learners with different English proficiency levels.

For teachers to clearly identify the main source of errors in their students, it would have been desirable to make a clearer distinction in concrete sense prepositions, that is, spatial and temporal.

Much more needs to be done in terms of refining the instruments for this kind of study. For further research, the cloze tests should include more examples with abstract referents from the beginner's level, to find out the way they face them, though their low and poor level of proficiency.

Though difficulties with prepositions are not something new, what is really important about this research is the fact of being considered as an useful tool and as a motivation for future research, so as the prepositions may be considered less and less difficult.

Considering the importance given to English learning and teaching, there should be more action research done in the area of errors. Future studies must consider

more accurate and more varied data elicitation techniques, increased number of data and more precise categorization of errors for more generalizability and refinement of the findings.

## 7. REFERENCES:

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## Appendixes



Universidad de Chile  
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Magíster en Lingüística

### CLOZE TEST 01- B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) There were a lot of people .....the party.
- 2) Mr. and Mrs. Barton live ..... Oak Street.
- 3) I think there is a map ..... the glove compartment.
- 4) The controller for Acme Corp. testified ..... the Senate hearing today.
- 5) When did life .....Earth begin?
- 6) I read about it ..... the newspaper.
- 7) I met an old school friend .....the dentist´s.
- 8) We had a very nice evening ..... María´s last night.
- 9) I met Bob .....my way home from work.
- 10) Is anything good ..... TV this evening?



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### CLOZE TEST 02-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) I was .....hospital in March.
- 2) You´ll have to excuse me. I´m going to grab a cup of coffee.....  
Sturbucks before work.
- 3) The television is .....the living room.
- 4) When the weather is nice Mrs. Brutner sits .....her balcony.
- 5) What features should one look for .....a laptop?
- 6) Have you plotted your data .....on a graph?
- 7) Where do you eat when you´re .....the road?
- 8) We had dinner .....an Italian restaurant last night.
- 9) Our company has stored .....12 states.
- 10)The same data can be found.....different servers.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) Put the rubbish.....the bin.
- 2) The driver became very nervous.....the police checkpoint.
- 3) Mr. Norton is a partner .....a prestigious New York law firm.
- 4) How many people work.....that advertising agency?
- 5) Norma has invested quite a bit of money.....the stock market recently.
- 6) Several participants.....the study were unable to continue.
- 7) The company's profits increased substantially .....fiscal year 2012.
- 8) Mark is studying law .....Harvard.
- 9) The expiration date is printed.....the bottom of the box.
- 10) Have you ever ridden.....a donkey?



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### CLOZE TEST 04-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) That singer has been .....several talk shows recently.
- 2) .....a recent study, researchers found a link between playing violent video games and violent behavior.
- 3) She was out of breath when she arrived .....the office.
- 4) Mr. Norton gave his presentation.....the meeting yesterday.
- 5) Look! There´s a cat .....the roof.
- 6) Milan is .....the north of Italy.
- 7) Senator Johnson spoke .....the memorial service last Friday.
- 8) There was another protest.....campus yesterday.
- 9) The horses are running .....the field.
- 10)Put the notice .....the noticeboard.



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### CLOZE TEST 05-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) Turn left .....the traffic lights.
- 2) Wolfgang met Michaela .....the way to work.
- 3) I stayed in a nice hotel.....London.
- 4) I work .....the city centre.
- 5) Heat two tablespoons of olive oil .....a skillet oven medium heat.
- 6) Jane doesn't spend much money .....clothes.
- 7) We might need more food depending.....how many people turn up.
- 8) She smiled .....him.
- 9) A stitch.....time saves nine.
- 10) John lives .....357 North Highland Drive.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) Henrietta met her boyfriend.....the bus from Washington to Miami.
- 2) I have never seen such a gigantic nose.....my whole life.
- 3) We will go dancing .....midnight.
- 4) Hank made many mistakes .....the past.
- 5) The whole family goes out for breakfast .....Sunday mornings.
- 6) I think that Horace's father was arrested .....the fall.
- 7) Don't pay attention at that fortuneteller. She has no idea about events  
.....the future.
- 8) She met her best friend .....September 1999 in Seoul.
- 9) The plane finally arrived .....5:46 p.m.
- 10) I didn't stay in late. I was asleep .....midnight.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at, in** or **on**.

- 1) Anita moved of Rome ..... 2006.
- 2) In this moment, Ushbek is studying .....Bunker Hill Community College.
- 3) My mother and father don't drive .....the dark.
- 4) I think I left my laptop.....the couch.
- 5) I get up in the morning .....weekdays.
- 6) My wife spent the milk money .....cigarettes.
- 7) There hast been a slight decrease .....gas prices lately.
- 8) Hosni Mubarak was.....power in Egypt for 30 years.
- 9) Roger's company specializes .....the management of young musicians.
- 10) I will go .....vacation next month.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) I wasn't able to focus .....my work because of the noise.
- 2) We are looking for someone who is skilled .....giving presentations.
- 3) The company president didn't want to comment .....the scandal.
- 4) These boots were .....sale last week.
- 5) Greg is involved .....organized crime.
- 6) Grace is .....her forties.
- 7) She spends all her money ..... luxury goods.
- 8) The best selling products.....their restaurant were hamburgers.
- 9) Peter is playing tennis .....Sunday.
- 10) My brother's birthday is .....the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.





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### CLOZE TEST 04-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) My birthday is .....May.
- 2) We are going to see my parents .....the weekend.
- 3) .....1666, a great fire broke out in London.
- 4) The fiscal year ends .....September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) .....the afternoon, Donald covers the phones.
- 6) Stop staring .....me.
- 7) The flowers will bloom .....spring.
- 8) The movie starts .....6 p.m.
- 9) Jim works .....the top floor of an office block.
- 10).....the supermarket, she buys groceries.



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### CLOZE TEST 05-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) The movie starts .....2.30.
- 2) The restaurants opens .....the evening only.
- 3) The restaurants closes .....midnight.
- 4) He leaves New York .....Friday.
- 5) The train is not .....time so we will be late.
- 6) Will we be .....time to catch it?
- 7) They eat dinner .....the evening.
- 8) We stay up late .....New York's Eve.
- 9) What were you doing .....1989?
- 10) I'll see you .....a few weeks.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) Joshua stayed .....his announced topic.
- 2) She took a quick glance .....her reflection.
- 3) There is a wasp .....the room.
- 4) You didn't laugh .....his joke.
- 5) I'm looking .....the computer monitor.
- 6) I couldn't buy the book because the shop didn't have it .....stock.
- 7) Because of the huge traffic jam on the main road, traffic was .....at standstill.
- 8) We rejoiced .....his safe rescue.
- 9) The goods were sold cheaply because they were .....sale.
- 10) The gambler did not pick his horses carefully or thoughtfully. He selected them  
.....random.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) The pretty girl smiled .....you.
- 2) If you smoke, you are .....danger of getting ill.
- 3) Drinks are cheaper .....board.
- 4) The cars were moving round the track .....high speed.
- 5) I have the job .....hand and should complete it by late afternoon.
- 6) He sold his shares .....a profit.
- 7) Greg went .....a trip yesterday to Vienna.
- 8) On the way there, she was driving her car .....a speed of 110 km per hour.
- 9) There was a sharp turn, and his car slid off the icy road. His life was.....stake.
- 10) Later they realized the tires were .....bad shape.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) So he went to a car shop that specializes .....high performance tires.
- 2) Laura can't concentrate .....her research because she is stressed out about her marriage.
- 3) I have a view .....Prague Castle from my apartment.
- 4) Mahmoud read a book .....the Russian revolution.
- 5) That woman is staring .....the man.....the other table.
- 6) I am more than willing to share my thoughts with you .....this regard.
- 7) Peter insisted .....seeing her.
- 8) Oh! The bus is finally here. Let's get .....!
- 9) He does not smoke, and he enjoys eating and drinking.....healthy moderation.
- 10)Both true and false, that information circulates .....the Internet.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-AD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) Modern life is so complicated I wouldn't mind being cast away .....a desert island.
- 2) He told his secretary to hold the reports .....readiness.
- 3) The inhabitants of a small community are more likely to take pride .....its appearance.
- 4) Salesmanship comes naturally to the New Yorker: it runs .....his blood.
- 5) The lookout saw that the Titanic was bearing down .....the iceberg.
- 6) The government can find no painless way to hold inflation.....check.
- 7) I had to resign. I couldn't get .....with the boss.
- 8) In the warm spring sunshine, the plants came .....quickly.
- 9) The yacht was riding .....anchor in the bay.
- 10) The salesman did not have to pay for his car as it was promised .....his company's expense.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-AD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) I couldn't understand a thing about they were talking about. I was all .....the sea.
- 2) Doctors must expect to have their lives interrupted when they are .....call.
- 3) I can't stand the sound of bagpipes. It sets my teeth .....edge.
- 4) Traffic was backed up for six kilometers as a result of the jam .....the main road.
- 5) The footballers were down .....heart after losing such an important match.
- 6) If he reported your private conversation to the boss, he was definitely .....the wrong.
- 7) Why are those noisy children shouting .....the tops of the voices?
- 8) Joshua stayed .....his announced topic.
- 9) Mahmud read a book .....the Russian revolution.
- 10) A stitch .....time saves nine.

## CLOZE TESTS KEYS:

### CLOZE TEST 01- B

- 1) There were a lot of people .....**AT**...the party.
- 2) Mr. and Mrs. Barton live ...**ON**... Oak Street.
- 3) I think there is a map ...**IN**..... the glove compartment.
- 4) The controller for Acme Corp. testified ...**AT**.. the Senate hearing today.
- 5) When did life .....**ON**.....Earth begin?
- 6) I read about it ...**IN**.. the newspaper.
- 7) I met an old school friend .....**AT**.....the dentist's.
- 8) We had a very nice evening ...**AT**..... María's last night.
- 9) I met Bob .....my way home from work.
- 10)Is anything good .....**ON**..... TV this evening?



CLOZE TEST 02-B

- 1) I was ...**IN**.....hospital in March.
- 2) You´ll have to excuse me. I´m going to grab a cup of coffee...**AT**.....  
Sturbucks before work.
- 3) The television is ...**IN**.....the living room.
- 4) When the weather is nice Mrs. Brutner sits ...**ON**.....her balcony.
- 5) What features should one look for ...**IN**.....a laptop?
- 6) Have you plotted your data .....**ON**..... a graph?
- 7) Where do you eat when you´re ...**ON**.....the road?
- 8) We had dinner ...**AT**.....an Italian restaurant last night.
- 9) Our company has stored ...**IN**.....12 states.
- 10)The same data can be found...**ON**.....different servers.

CLOZE TEST 03-B

- 1) Put the rubbish...**IN**.....the bin.
- 2) The driver became very nervous...**AT**.....the police checkpoint.
- 3) Mr. Norton is a partner ...**AT**.....a prestigious New York law firm.
- 4) How many people work...**IN**.....that advertising agency?
- 5) Norma has invested quite a bit of money.....**IN**.....the stock market recently.
- 6) Several participants...**IN**.....the study were unable to continue.
- 7) The company's profits increased substantially ...**IN**.....fiscal year 2012.
- 8) Mark is studying law ...**IN**.....Harvard.
- 9) The expiration date is printed...**ON**.....the bottom of the box.
- 10) Have you ever ridden...**ON**.....a donkey?

## CLOZE TEST 04-B

- 1) That singer has been ...**ON**.....several talk shows recently.
- 2) ...**IN**.....a recent study, researchers found a link between playing violent video games and violent behavior.
- 3) She was out of breath when she arrived ...**IN**.....the office.
- 4) Mr. Norton gave his presentation...**AT**.....the meeting yesterday.
- 5) Look! There´s a cat ...**ON**.....the roof.
- 6) Milan is ...**IN**.....the north of Italy.
- 7) Senator Johnson spoke ...**AT**.....the memorial service last Friday.
- 8) There was another protest...**ON**.....campus yesterday.
- 9) The horses are running ...**IN**.....the field.
- 10)Put the notice ...**ON**.....the notice board

CLOZE TEST 05-B

- 1) Turn left ...**AT**.....the traffic lights.
- 2) Wolfgang met Michaela ...**ON**.....the way to work.
- 3) I stayed in a nice hotel...**IN**.....London.
- 4) I work ...**IN**.....the city centre.
- 5) Heat two tablespoons of olive oil ...**IN**....a skillet over medium heat.
- 6) Jane doesn't spend much money ...**ON**.....clothes.
- 7) We might need more food depending...**ON**.....how many people turn up.
- 8) She smiled ...**AT**.....him.
- 9) A stitch...**IN**.....time saves nine.
- 10) John lives ...**AT**...357 North Highland Drive.

CLOZE TEST 01-LI

- 1) Henrietta met her boyfriend...**ON**.....the bus from Washington to Miami.
- 2) I have never seen such a gigantic nose...**IN**.....my whole life.
- 3) We will go dancing ...**AT**.....midnight.
- 4) Hank made many mistakes ...**IN**.....the past.
- 5) The whole family goes out for breakfast ...**ON**.....Sunday mornings.
- 6) I think that Horace's father was arrested ...**IN**.....the fall.
- 7) Don't pay attention at that fortuneteller. She has no idea about events  
...**IN**..the future.
- 8) She met her best friend ...**IN**.....September 1999 in Seoul.
- 9) The plane finally arrived ...**AT**.....5:46 p.m.
- 10)I didn't stay in late. I was asleep ...**IN**....midnight

## CLOZE TEST 02-LI

- 1) Anita moved of Rome ...**IN**..... 2006.
- 2) In this moment, Ushbek is studying ...**AT**.....Bunker Hill Community College.
- 3) My mother and father don't drive ...**AT**.....the dark.
- 4) I think I left my laptop...**ON**.....the couch.
- 5) I get up in the morning .....**ON**.....weekdays.
- 6) My wife spent the milk money ...**ON**.....cigarettes.
- 7) There has been a slight decrease ...**IN**.....gas prices lately.
- 8) Hosni Mubarak was...**IN**....power in Egypt for 30 years.
- 9) Roger's company specializes ...**IN**.....the management of young musicians.
- 10)I will go ...**IN**.....vacation next month.

CLOZE TEST 03-LI

- 1) I wasn't able to focus ...**ON**.....my work because of the noise.
- 2) We are looking for someone who is skilled .....**IN**.....giving presentations.
- 3) The company president didn't want to comment ...**ON**.....the scandal.
- 4) These boots were ...**ON**.....sale last week.
- 5) Greg is involved ...**IN**.....organized crime.
- 6) Grace is ...**IN**.....her forties.
- 7) She spends all her money ...**ON**..... luxury goods.
- 8) The best selling products...**AT**.....their restaurant were hamburgers.
- 9) Peter is playing tennis ...**ON**.....Sunday.
- 10) My brother's birthday is ...**ON**.....the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.

## CLOZE TEST 04-LI

- 1) My birthday is ...**IN**.....May.
- 2) We are going to see my parents ...**AT**.....the weekend.
- 3) ...**IN**.....1666, a great fire broke out in London.
- 4) The fiscal year ends ...**ON**.....September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) ...**IN**.....the afternoon, Donald covers the phones.
- 6) Stop staring ...**AT**.....me.
- 7) The flowers will bloom ...**IN**.....spring.
- 8) The movie starts ...**AT**.....6 p.m.
- 9) Jim works ...**ON**.....the top floor of an office block.
- 10)...**AT**.....the supermarket, she buys groceries.



## CLOZE TEST 05-LI

- 1) The movie starts ...**AT**.....2.30.
- 2) The restaurants opens ...**IN**.....the evening only.
- 3) The restaurants closes ...**AT**.....midnight.
- 4) He leaves New York ...**ON**.....Friday.
- 5) The train is not ...**ON**.....time so we will be late.
- 6) Will we be ...**IN**.....time to catch it?
- 7) They eat dinner ...**IN**.....the evening.
- 8) We stay up late ...**ON**.....New York's Eve.
- 9) What were you doing ...**IN**.....1989?
- 10) I'll see you ...**IN**.....a few weeks.

## CLOZE TEST 01-UI

- 1) Joshua stayed ...**ON**.....his announced topic.
- 2) She took a quick glance ...**AT**.....her reflection.
- 3) There is a wasp .....**IN**.....the room.
- 4) You didn't laugh ...**AT**.....his joke.
- 5) I'm looking ...**AT**.....the computer monitor.
- 6) I couldn't buy the book because the shop didn't have it ...**IN**...stock.
- 7) Because of the huge traffic jam on the main road, traffic was .**AT**.at  
standstill.
- 8) We rejoiced ...**AT**.....his safe rescue.
- 9) The goods were sold cheaply because they were ...**ON**.....sale.
- 10)The gambler did not pick his horses carefully or thoughtfully. He selected  
them ...**AT**.....random.

## CLOZE TEST 02-UI

- 1) The pretty girl smiled ...**AT**.....you.
- 2) If you smoke, you are ...**IN**....danger of getting ill.
- 3) Drinks are cheaper ...**ON**.....board.
- 4) The cars were moving round the track ...**AT**.....high speed.
- 5) I have the job ...**IN**.....hand and should complete it by late afternoon.
- 6) He sold his shares ...**AT**.....a profit.
- 7) Greg went ...**ON**.....a trip yesterday to Vienna.
- 8) On the way there, she was driving her car ...**AT**....a speed of 110 km per hour.
- 9) There was a sharp turn, and his car slid off the icy road. His life was...**AT**.stake.
- 10) Later they realized the tires were ...**IN**...bad shape.

### CLOZE TEST 03-UI

- 1) So he went to a car shop that specializes ...**IN**.....high performance tires.
- 2) Laura can't concentrate **ON**...her research because she is stressed out about her marriage.
- 3) I have a view ...**ON**.....Prague Castle from my apartment.
- 4) Mahmoud read a book ...**ON**.....the Russian revolution.
- 5) That woman is staring ...**AT**....the man...**AT**.....the other table.
- 6) I am more than willing to share my thoughts with you ...**IN**..this regard.
- 7) Peter insisted ...**ON**.....seeing her.
- 8) Oh! The bus is finally here. Let's get ...**ON**.....!
- 9) He does not smoke, and he enjoys eating and drinking...**IN**...healthy moderation.
- 10)Both true and false, that information circulates ...**ON**....the Internet.

## CLOZE TEST 01-AD

- 1) Modern life is so complicated I wouldn't mind being cast away ...**ON**....a desert island.
- 2) He told his secretary to hold the reports ...**IN**.....readiness.
- 3) The inhabitants of a small community are more likely to take pride ...**IN**...its appearance.
- 4) Salesmanship comes naturally to the New Yorker: it runs ...**IN**....his blood.
- 5) The lookout saw that the Titanic was bearing down ...**ON**....the iceberg.
- 6) The government can find no painless way to hold inflation...**IN**.....check.
- 7) I had to resign. I couldn't get ...**ON**.....with the boss.
- 8) In the warm spring sunshine, the plants came ...**ON**.....quickly.
- 9) The yacht was riding ...**AT**.....anchor in the bay.
- 10)The salesman did not have to pay for his car as it was promised ...**AT**....his company's expense

## CLOZE TEST 02-AD

- 1) I couldn't understand a thing about they were talking about. I was all  
...**AT**....the sea.
- 2) Doctors must expect to have their lives interrupted when they are  
...**ON**...call.
- 3) I can't stand the sound of bagpipes. It sets my teeth ...**ON**.....edge.
- 4) Traffic was backed up for six kilometers as a result of the jam ...**ON**....the  
main road.
- 5) The footballers were down ...**AT**...heart after losing such an important  
match.
- 6) If he reported your private conversation to the boss, he was definitely  
...**IN**....the wrong.
- 7) Why are those noisy children shouting ...**AT**.....the tops of the voices?
- 8) Joshua stayed ...**ON**.....his announced topic.
- 9) Mahmud read a book ...**ON**.....the Russian revolution.
- 10) A stitch ...**IN**.....time saves nine.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) I was .....hospital in March.
- 2) You´ll have to excuse me. I´m going to grab a cup of coffee.....  
Sturbucks before work.
- 3) The television is .....the living room.
- 4) When the weather is nice Mrs. Brutner sits .....her balcony.
- 5) What features should one look for .....a laptop?
- 6) Have you plotted your data .....on a graph?
- 7) Where do you eat when you´re .....the road?
- 8) We had dinner .....an Italian restaurant last night.
- 9) Our company has stored .....12 states.
- 10)The same data can be found.....different servers.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at, in** or **on**.

- 1) Put the rubbish.....the bin.
- 2) The driver became very nervous.....the police checkpoint.
- 3) Mr. Norton is a partner .....a prestigious New York law firm.
- 4) How many people work.....that advertising agency?
- 5) Norma has invested quite a bit of money.....the stock market recently.
- 6) Several participants.....the study were unable to continue.
- 7) The company's profits increased substantially .....fiscal year 2012.
- 8) Mark is studying law .....Harvard.
- 9) The expiration date is printed.....the bottom of the box.
- 10) Have you ever ridden.....a donkey?





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### CLOZE TEST 04-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) That singer has been .....several talk shows recently.
- 2) .....a recent study, researchers found a link between playing violent video games and violent behavior.
- 3) She was out of breath when she arrived .....the office.
- 4) Mr. Norton gave his presentation.....the meeting yesterday.
- 5) Look! There´s a cat .....the roof.
- 6) Milan is .....the north of Italy.
- 7) Senator Johnson spoke .....the memorial service last Friday.
- 8) There was another protest.....campus yesterday.
- 9) The horses are running .....the field.
- 10)Put the notice .....the noticeboard.



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### CLOZE TEST 05-B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) Turn left .....the traffic lights.
- 2) Wolfgang met Michaela .....the way to work.
- 3) I stayed in a nice hotel.....London.
- 4) I work .....the city centre.
- 5) Heat two tablespoons of olive oil .....a skillet oven medium heat.
- 6) Jane doesn't spend much money .....clothes.
- 7) We might need more food depending.....how many people turn up.
- 8) She smiled .....him.
- 9) A stitch.....time saves nine.
- 10) John lives .....357 North Highland Drive.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**.

- 1) Henrietta met her boyfriend.....the bus from Washington to Miami.
- 2) I have never seen such a gigantic nose.....my whole life.
- 3) We will go dancing .....midnight.
- 4) Hank made many mistakes .....the past.
- 5) The whole family goes out for breakfast .....Sunday mornings.
- 6) I think that Horace's father was arrested .....the fall.
- 7) Don't pay attention at that fortuneteller. She has no idea about events  
.....the future.
- 8) She met her best friend .....September 1999 in Seoul.
- 9) The plane finally arrived .....5:46 p.m.
- 10) I didn't stay in late. I was asleep .....midnight.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at, in** or **on**.

- 1) Anita moved of Rome ..... 2006.
- 2) In this moment, Ushbek is studying .....Bunker Hill Community College.
- 3) My mother and father don't drive .....the dark.
- 4) I think I left my laptop.....the couch.
- 5) I get up in the morning .....weekdays.
- 6) My wife spent the milk money .....cigarettes.
- 7) There hast been a slight decrease .....gas prices lately.
- 8) Hosni Mubarak was.....power in Egypt for 30 years.
- 9) Roger's company specializes .....the management of young musicians.
- 10) I will go .....vacation next month.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) I wasn't able to focus .....my work because of the noise.
- 2) We are looking for someone who is skilled .....giving presentations.
- 3) The company president didn't want to comment .....the scandal.
- 4) These boots were .....sale last week.
- 5) Greg is involved .....organized crime.
- 6) Grace is .....her forties.
- 7) She spends all her money ..... luxury goods.
- 8) The best selling products.....their restaurant were hamburgers.
- 9) Peter is playing tennis .....Sunday.
- 10) My brother's birthday is .....the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.



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### CLOZE TEST 04-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) My birthday is .....May.
- 2) We are going to see my parents .....the weekend.
- 3) .....1666, a great fire broke out in London.
- 4) The fiscal year ends .....September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) .....the afternoon, Donald covers the phones.
- 6) Stop staring .....me.
- 7) The flowers will bloom .....spring.
- 8) The movie starts .....6 p.m.
- 9) Jim works .....the top floor of an office block.
- 10).....the supermarket, she buys groceries.



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### CLOZE TEST 05-LI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) The movie starts .....2.30.
- 2) The restaurants opens .....the evening only.
- 3) The restaurants closes .....midnight.
- 4) He leaves New York .....Friday.
- 5) The train is not .....time so we will be late.
- 6) Will we be .....time to catch it?
- 7) They eat dinner .....the evening.
- 8) We stay up late .....New York's Eve.
- 9) What were you doing .....1989?
- 10) I'll see you .....a few weeks.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) Joshua stayed .....his announced topic.
- 2) She took a quick glance .....her reflection.
- 3) There is a wasp .....the room.
- 4) You didn't laugh .....his joke.
- 5) I'm looking .....the computer monitor.
- 6) I couldn't buy the book because the shop didn't have it .....stock.
- 7) Because of the huge traffic jam on the main road, traffic was .....at standstill.
- 8) We rejoiced .....his safe rescue.
- 9) The goods were sold cheaply because they were .....sale.
- 10) The gambler did not pick his horses carefully or thoughtfully. He selected them  
.....random.





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### CLOZE TEST 02-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) The pretty girl smiled .....you.
- 2) If you smoke, you are .....danger of getting ill.
- 3) Drinks are cheaper .....board.
- 4) The cars were moving round the track .....high speed.
- 5) I have the job .....hand and should complete it by late afternoon.
- 6) He sold his shares .....a profit.
- 7) Greg went .....a trip yesterday to Vienna.
- 8) On the way there, she was driving her car .....a speed of 110 km per hour.
- 9) There was a sharp turn, and his car slid off the icy road. His life was.....stake.
- 10) Later they realized the tires were .....bad shape.



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### CLOZE TEST 03-UI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) So he went to a car shop that specializes .....high performance tires.
- 2) Laura can't concentrate .....her research because she is stressed out about her marriage.
- 3) I have a view .....Prague Castle from my apartment.
- 4) Mahmoud read a book .....the Russian revolution.
- 5) That woman is staring .....the man.....the other table.
- 6) I am more than willing to share my thoughts with you .....this regard.
- 7) Peter insisted .....seeing her.
- 8) Oh! The bus is finally here. Let's get .....!
- 9) He does not smoke, and he enjoys eating and drinking.....healthy moderation.
- 10)Both true and false, that information circulates .....the Internet.



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### CLOZE TEST 01-AD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) Modern life is so complicated I wouldn't mind being cast away .....a desert island.
- 2) He told his secretary to hold the reports .....readiness.
- 3) The inhabitants of a small community are more likely to take pride .....its appearance.
- 4) Salesmanship comes naturally to the New Yorker: it runs .....his blood.
- 5) The lookout saw that the Titanic was bearing down .....the iceberg.
- 6) The government can find no painless way to hold inflation.....check.
- 7) I had to resign. I couldn't get .....with the boss.
- 8) In the warm spring sunshine, the plants came .....quickly.
- 9) The yacht was riding .....anchor in the bay.
- 10) The salesman did not have to pay for his car as it was promised .....his company's expense.



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### CLOZE TEST 02-AD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

Read carefully each of the following sentences and complete them using **at**, **in** or **on**

- 1) I couldn't understand a thing about they were talking about. I was all .....the sea.
- 2) Doctors must expect to have their lives interrupted when they are .....call.
- 3) I can't stand the sound of bagpipes. It sets my teeth .....edge.
- 4) Traffic was backed up for six kilometers as a result of the jam .....the main road.
- 5) The footballers were down .....heart after losing such an important match.
- 6) If he reported your private conversation to the boss, he was definitely .....the wrong.
- 7) Why are those noisy children shouting .....the tops of the voices?
- 8) Joshua stayed .....his announced topic.
- 9) Mahmud read a book .....the Russian revolution.
- 10) A stitch .....time saves nine.

CLOZE TESTS KEYS:

CLOZE TEST 01- B

- 1) There were a lot of people .....**AT**...the party.
- 2) Mr. and Mrs. Barton live ...**ON**... Oak Street.
- 3) I think there is a map ...**IN**..... the glove compartment.
- 4) The controller for Acme Corp. testified ...**AT**.. the Senate hearing today.
- 5) When did life .....**ON**.....Earth begin?
- 6) I read about it ...**IN**.. the newspaper.
- 7) I met an old school friend .....**AT**.....the dentist's.
- 8) We had a very nice evening ...**AT**..... María's last night.
- 9) I met Bob .....my way home from work.
- 10)Is anything good .....**ON**..... TV this evening?

CLOZE TEST 02-B

- 1) I was ...**IN**.....hospital in March.
- 2) You´ll have to excuse me. I´m going to grab a cup of coffee...**AT**.....  
Sturbucks before work.
- 3) The television is ...**IN**.....the living room.
- 4) When the weather is nice Mrs. Brutner sits ...**ON**.....her balcony.
- 5) What features should one look for ...**IN**.....a laptop?
- 6) Have you plotted your data .....**ON**.... a graph?
- 7) Where do you eat when you´re ...**ON**.....the road?
- 8) We had dinner ...**AT**.....an Italian restaurant last night.
- 9) Our company has stored ...**IN**.....12 states.
- 10)The same data can be found...**ON**.....different servers.

CLOZE TEST 03-B

- 1) Put the rubbish...**IN**.....the bin.
- 2) The driver became very nervous...**AT**.....the police checkpoint.
- 3) Mr. Norton is a partner ...**AT**.....a prestigious New York law firm.
- 4) How many people work...**IN**.....that advertising agency?
- 5) Norma has invested quite a bit of money.....**IN**.....the stock market recently.
- 6) Several participants...**IN**.....the study were unable to continue.
- 7) The company's profits increased substantially ...**IN**.....fiscal year 2012.
- 8) Mark is studying law ...**IN**.....Harvard.
- 9) The expiration date is printed...**ON**.....the bottom of the box.
- 10)Have you ever ridden...**ON**.....a donkey?

## CLOZE TEST 04-B

- 1) That singer has been ...**ON**.....several talk shows recently.
- 2) ...**IN**.....a recent study, researchers found a link between playing violent video games and violent behavior.
- 3) She was out of breath when she arrived ...**IN**.....the office.
- 4) Mr. Norton gave his presentation...**AT**.....the meeting yesterday.
- 5) Look! There´s a cat ...**ON**.....the roof.
- 6) Milan is ...**IN**.....the north of Italy.
- 7) Senator Johnson spoke ...**AT**.....the memorial service last Friday.
- 8) There was another protest...**ON**.....campus yesterday.
- 9) The horses are running ...**IN**.....the field.
- 10)Put the notice ...**ON**.....the notice board



CLOZE TEST 05-B

- 1) Turn left ...**AT**.....the traffic lights.
- 2) Wolfgang met Michaela ...**ON**.....the way to work.
- 3) I stayed in a nice hotel...**IN**.....London.
- 4) I work ...**IN**.....the city centre.
- 5) Heat two tablespoons of olive oil ...**IN**....a skillet over medium heat.
- 6) Jane doesn't spend much money ...**ON**.....clothes.
- 7) We might need more food depending...**ON**.....how many people turn up.
- 8) She smiled ...**AT**.....him.
- 9) A stitch...**IN**.....time saves nine.
- 10) John lives ...**AT**...357 North Highland Drive.

CLOZE TEST 01-LI

- 1) Henrietta met her boyfriend...**ON**.....the bus from Washington to Miami.
- 2) I have never seen such a gigantic nose...**IN**.....my whole life.
- 3) We will go dancing ...**AT**.....midnight.
- 4) Hank made many mistakes ...**IN**.....the past.
- 5) The whole family goes out for breakfast ...**ON**.....Sunday mornings.
- 6) I think that Horace's father was arrested ...**IN**.....the fall.
- 7) Don't pay attention at that fortuneteller. She has no idea about events  
...**IN**..the future.
- 8) She met her best friend ...**IN**.....September 1999 in Seoul.
- 9) The plane finally arrived ...**AT**.....5:46 p.m.
- 10)I didn't stay in late. I was asleep ...**IN**....midnight

## CLOZE TEST 02-LI

- 1) Anita moved of Rome ...**IN**..... 2006.
- 2) In this moment, Ushbek is studying ...**AT**.....Bunker Hill Community College.
- 3) My mother and father don't drive ...**AT**.....the dark.
- 4) I think I left my laptop...**ON**.....the couch.
- 5) I get up in the morning .....**ON**.....weekdays.
- 6) My wife spent the milk money ...**ON**.....cigarettes.
- 7) There has been a slight decrease ...**IN**.....gas prices lately.
- 8) Hosni Mubarak was...**IN**....power in Egypt for 30 years.
- 9) Roger's company specializes ...**IN**.....the management of young musicians.
- 10)I will go ...**IN**.....vacation next month.

CLOZE TEST 03-LI

- 1) I wasn't able to focus ...**ON**.....my work because of the noise.
- 2) We are looking for someone who is skilled .....**IN**.....giving presentations.
- 3) The company president didn't want to comment ...**ON**.....the scandal.
- 4) These boots were ...**ON**.....sale last week.
- 5) Greg is involved ...**IN**.....organized crime.
- 6) Grace is ...**IN**.....her forties.
- 7) She spends all her money ...**ON**..... luxury goods.
- 8) The best selling products...**AT**.....their restaurant were hamburgers.
- 9) Peter is playing tennis ...**ON**.....Sunday.
- 10) My brother's birthday is ...**ON**.....the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.

## CLOZE TEST 04-LI

- 1) My birthday is ...**IN**.....May.
- 2) We are going to see my parents ...**AT**.....the weekend.
- 3) ...**IN**.....1666, a great fire broke out in London.
- 4) The fiscal year ends ...**ON**.....September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) ...**IN**.....the afternoon, Donald covers the phones.
- 6) Stop staring ...**AT**.....me.
- 7) The flowers will bloom ...**IN**.....spring.
- 8) The movie starts ...**AT**.....6 p.m.
- 9) Jim works ...**ON**.....the top floor of an office block.
- 10)...**AT**.....the supermarket, she buys groceries.

## CLOZE TEST 05-LI

- 1) The movie starts ...**AT**.....2.30.
- 2) The restaurants opens ...**IN**.....the evening only.
- 3) The restaurants closes ...**AT**.....midnight.
- 4) He leaves New York ...**ON**.....Friday.
- 5) The train is not ...**ON**.....time so we will be late.
- 6) Will we be ...**IN**.....time to catch it?
- 7) They eat dinner ...**IN**.....the evening.
- 8) We stay up late ...**ON**.....New York's Eve.
- 9) What were you doing ...**IN**.....1989?
- 10) I'll see you ...**IN**.....a few weeks.

## CLOZE TEST 01-UI

- 1) Joshua stayed ...**ON**.....his announced topic.
- 2) She took a quick glance ...**AT**.....her reflection.
- 3) There is a wasp .....**IN**.....the room.
- 4) You didn't laugh ...**AT**.....his joke.
- 5) I'm looking ...**AT**.....the computer monitor.
- 6) I couldn't buy the book because the shop didn't have it ...**IN**...stock.
- 7) Because of the huge traffic jam on the main road, traffic was .**AT**.at  
standstill.
- 8) We rejoiced ...**AT**.....his safe rescue.
- 9) The goods were sold cheaply because they were ...**ON**.....sale.
- 10)The gambler did not pick his horses carefully or thoughtfully. He selected  
them ...**AT**.....random.

## CLOZE TEST 02-UI

- 1) The pretty girl smiled ...**AT**.....you.
- 2) If you smoke, you are ...**IN**....danger of getting ill.
- 3) Drinks are cheaper ...**ON**.....board.
- 4) The cars were moving round the track ...**AT**.....high speed.
- 5) I have the job ...**IN**.....hand and should complete it by late afternoon.
- 6) He sold his shares ...**AT**.....a profit.
- 7) Greg went ...**ON**.....a trip yesterday to Vienna.
- 8) On the way there, she was driving her car ...**AT**....a speed of 110 km per hour.
- 9) There was a sharp turn, and his car slid off the icy road. His life was...**AT**.stake.
- 10) Later they realized the tires were ...**IN**...bad shape.



## CLOZE TEST 03-UI

- 1) So he went to a car shop that specializes ...**IN**.....high performance tires.
- 2) Laura can't concentrate **ON**...her research because she is stressed out about her marriage.
- 3) I have a view ...**ON**.....Prague Castle from my apartment.
- 4) Mahmoud read a book ...**ON**.....the Russian revolution.
- 5) That woman is staring ...**AT**....the man...**AT**.....the other table.
- 6) I am more than willing to share my thoughts with you ...**IN**..this regard.
- 7) Peter insisted ...**ON**.....seeing her.
- 8) Oh! The bus is finally here. Let's get ...**ON**.....!
- 9) He does not smoke, and he enjoys eating and drinking...**IN**...healthy moderation.
- 10)Both true and false, that information circulates ...**ON**....the Internet.

## CLOZE TEST 01-AD

- 1) Modern life is so complicated I wouldn't mind being cast away ...**ON**....a desert island.
- 2) He told his secretary to hold the reports ...**IN**.....readiness.
- 3) The inhabitants of a small community are more likely to take pride ...**IN**...its appearance.
- 4) Salesmanship comes naturally to the New Yorker: it runs ...**IN**....his blood.
- 5) The lookout saw that the Titanic was bearing down ...**ON**....the iceberg.
- 6) The government can find no painless way to hold inflation...**IN**.....check.
- 7) I had to resign. I couldn't get ...**ON**.....with the boss.
- 8) In the warm spring sunshine, the plants came ...**ON**.....quickly.
- 9) The yacht was riding ...**AT**.....anchor in the bay.
- 10)The salesman did not have to pay for his car as it was promised ...**AT**....his company's expense

## CLOZE TEST 02-AD

- 1) I couldn't understand a thing about they were talking about. I was all ...**AT**....the sea.
- 2) Doctors must expect to have their lives interrupted when they are ...**ON**...call.
- 3) I can't stand the sound of bagpipes. It sets my teeth ...**ON**.....edge.
- 4) Traffic was backed up for six kilometers as a result of the jam ...**ON**....the main road.
- 5) The footballers were down ...**AT**...heart after losing such an important match.
- 6) If he reported your private conversation to the boss, he was definitely ...**IN**....the wrong.
- 7) Why are those noisy children shouting ...**AT**.....the tops of the voices?
- 8) Joshua stayed ...**ON**.....his announced topic.
- 9) Mahmud read a book ...**ON**.....the Russian revolution.
- 10) A stitch ...**IN**.....time saves nine.