KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS

CHOICE OF PREPOSITIONS BY FORM THREE STUDENTS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving husband John, for his invaluable support and my two children, Brian and Mary, for being my greatest inspiration.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank many people whose support I got at different stages while I worked on this dissertation. I would like to particularly thank my supervisors, Dr. Purity Nthiga and Mr. Charles Gecaga, my academic advisors, for their incisive criticism on the various drafts of this work, their professional guidance and the invaluable knowledge that they imparted. I will forever be grateful.

With much pride, I also wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to my family. Their love trust, support and prayers have sustained me throughout the time I was working on this research. My beloved son, Brian, and my adorable daughter, Mary, have been my inspiration to push my academic pilgrimage in order to set the pace for them. My loving and supportive husband, John, who remained my greatest friend and companion while writing my dissertation, played a tremendous role in ensuring that I lacked nothing, both material and emotional. In this family effort too, a special feeling of gratitude, goes to my aunt and mentor, Professor Angelina Kioko, for her constant encouragement to push my academic levels to greater heights. My mother Mary, my father William, my sisters, brother and all my in-laws will forever be remembered for their unwavering support.

Above all I thank God for His everlasting love, guidance and his unfailing faithfulness as He started the journey with me and He walked me through it all. To Him be the Glory!
ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the choice of prepositions by form 3 students in Machakos County. Guided by the prototype and lexical semantics theories of linguistics, the study was based upon the following objectives: To establish the various ways in which form three students use prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions; to ascertain the factors that determine the students choice of prepositions; to determine the grammatical challenges that students face while using prepositions and finally, to find out the form three teachers of English views on the grammatical challenges faced by their students as they use prepositions. Data was collected from students and teachers through the use of questionnaires and testing exercises for students. Data analysis procedures were basically qualitative especially for describing the students' responses as well as the teachers of English views on the grammatical challenges facing their learners. Descriptive statistics came in handy to present the central tendency of usage of certain prepositions as well as the percentages of occurrence of certain challenges and the factors that learners used in making a choice of preposition. The results were presented in table format and graphs for easy drawing of conclusions. The main findings of the study revealed that the population under study experienced difficulties in choosing a preposition for the right syntactic and semantic functions. Because of this difficulty, the learners ended up relying on their knowledge of their first language or used guesswork while making a choice of the prepositions to use at any particular time. The study concludes that since most learners could not make the correct choice of a preposition from a given pair, then there is a deficiency in the learners' levels of competence in the use of this lexical item. The study therefore recommends that prepositional choice which falls under the teaching and learning of English grammar in Kenyan schools should be reviewed by curriculum developers in the way they are presented to learners in the instructional materials available for them. This study felt that this was of prime importance in order to incorporate proper rules of usage so that the students may be able to employ the correct factors in making a choice of the preposition to use. It is therefore hoped that the information collected in this study will go a long way in helping learners overcome the grammatical challenges that they face while using prepositions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Polysemy</td>
<td>The phenomenon whereby a single linguistic form is associated with a number of related but distinct meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical semantics</td>
<td>A branch of linguistics that studies how and what the words of a language denote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complement</td>
<td>That which brings to perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic sense</td>
<td>The meaning of individual words in relation to other words within a language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trajector</td>
<td>The element that is located with respect to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark</td>
<td>The entity that is construed as the reference point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototype</td>
<td>The central sense of a lexical item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>The degree to which a research instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>The precision and accuracy of collected data to produce stable and consistent results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION PAGE: ................................................................. ii
DEDICATION ............................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT............................................................. iv
ABSTRACT: ................................................................................ v
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS...................................... vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS............................................................. vii
LIST OF FIGURES................................................................. xi
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................. xii

**CHAPTER ONE** .................................................................... 1
**INTRODUCTION** ............................................................... 1
1.1 Introduction......................................................................... 1
1.2 Background to the study.................................................. 1
1.3 Statement of the problem............................................... 5
1.4 Objectives of the Study.................................................... 6
1.5 Research Questions......................................................... 7
1.6 Research Assumptions..................................................... 7
1.7 Rationale for the Study.................................................... 8
1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study................................. 9
1.9 Summary of Chapter One............................................... 10

**CHAPTER TWO** ................................................................. 11
2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Frame Work................. 11
2.1 Introduction........................................................................ 11
2.2 Literature Review........................................................... 11
2.2.1 Prepositions as a Syntactic Category.......................... 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Summary of the findings</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Recommendations</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Suggestions for further research</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Summary of Chapter Five</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 1: TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE and VIEWS</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE STUDENTS TEST 1 and RESPONSES</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE STUDENTS TEST 2 and RESPONSES</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 4: WORK PLAN</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 5: BUDGET</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 6: ETHICAL CONSIDERATION DOCUMENTS</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Marching of governed prepositions

Figure 2. Comparison of correct choices for boys and girls

Figure 3. Overlap with other word classes from all learners responses

Figure 4. Percentage proportion of students who marched prepositions correctly

Figure 5. Overlap with other word classes boys vs. girls
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.2.1 (A). Tabulation of correct choices as made by learners

Table 4.2.1 (B). Students' choices on confusing pairs

Table 4.3 Factors determining learners' choices

Table 4.4.3 Levels of confusion on usage of pairs of prepositions

Table 4.5 demographic information of teachers

Table 4.5.1 Teachers views on grammatical challenges facing students

Table 4.5.2 Most challenging prepositions to learners

Table 4.5.3 Students' levels of competence in their choice of prepositions
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This introductory chapter gives the background to the study by looking at the English language globally and nationally as well as the preposition as a syntactic category. It then transits to the statement of the problem for our study, the objectives, research questions and research assumptions. The rationale for the study and finally the scope and limitations of the study follows closely. At the end of the chapter, a summary of what the chapter entails is also presented.

1.2 Background to the Study

English language is the world’s most widely used language, (Quirk, 1989). In Kenya, the British variety of English is taught from upper primary through secondary to tertiary institutions. English is also used as the medium of instruction from upper primary to higher institutions of learning.

Prepositions form part of the grammatical systems in English and as such, are one of the nine word classes in English. That is, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, pronouns, and interjections. However, prepositions may seem unimportant to accord serious study since they do not denote concrete things as nouns do, are not action oriented as verbs, may not be as descriptive as adjectives or as mobile as adverbs, but they are worth to be studied because the information they convey is key in the interpretation of the overall meaning of a sentence.
It is prepositions that help users of English express a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, especially in terms of space and time.

A preposition can be defined as a part of speech or a syntactic category that introduces a prepositional phrase and serves the purpose of telling the reader how the prepositional phrase should be interpreted in the context of the sentence. Therefore the preposition is the first constituent of a prepositional phrase, (Sydney, 1996 p.159). Thus, *in the house*, is a prepositional phrase, in which, 'in', is the preposition and 'the house' is its complement. Prepositions chiefly take as their complements noun phrases or pronouns. Leech (1969:375) defines a preposition as a word that typically goes before a noun phrase or a pronoun to express a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, most often showing how the two parts are related in space or time.(Quirk and Greenbaum, 1989:p.143), notes that a preposition expresses a relation between two entities. The two entities can be related in terms of time, place, instrument, causes and direction.

From (Sydney, 1996, leech 1969, and Quirk, 1989) definitions, it is clear that prepositions can be looked at in two broad functions of usage that is, the syntactic and the semantic function. On the syntactic functions of usage, this study has looked at whether the form three students can place the prepositions in their correct syntactic positions, that is, preceding a noun phrase, a nominal -ing participle clause, or a nominal wh- clause (Sydney,1996 p.157).

Still on the syntactic function, a word that takes the form of a preposition can be used as a preposition, a conjunction or an adverb particle.
It is what comes after it that differentiates its usage. Biber, (2000) highlights the overlap issue between prepositions and other word classes such as adverbs and conjunctions in; The Longman Grammar of spoken and written English (LGSWE) when he points out that prepositions, adverbs and particles can be used interchangeably hence the possibility of the three belonging to the same category.

This overlap issue is discussed in detail in our literature review of our study since we sought to find out if the sample population can clearly differentiate the usage of a word like ‘about’ and use it as preposition and not as an expression of quantity.

Semantic functions of usage entail using the correct preposition to express the correct relational meaning, and correctly using the right preposition for governed pairs of prepositions. Governed prepositions are those that can only take a particular word to complete its meaning. Prepositions can be governed by nouns, verbs or adjectives, as given by (Hunston & Francis, 2000).

Under usage of prepositions to bring out their rightful syntactic and semantic functions therefore, this study sought to find out if the form three students chosen for this study have the above collocational competence in using prepositions. This is important as it in turn goes a long way in building their competence in using lexical items as well as be a source of satisfaction in their writing skills.
Preposition usage is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for non-native speakers to master, a claim substantiated by various researchers of language, including (Celce- Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999: p. 410), who state that, prepositions are generally troublesome to learners for whom English is a second or foreign language, as the English prepositions may not have a one on one resemblance to those in their first language. Njoroge, (2006), too, observes that Kenyan students, from whom our sample population was drawn, make erroneous choice of prepositions hence the need for this research. This erroneous choice, as Njoroge, (2006) puts it can partly be attributed to the fact that learners make a direct translation of prepositional usage based on their first language and also the argument that prepositions serve similar relational meanings and therefore can be confusing to the learners. Takahaski, (1996) too believes that the correct usage of prepositions is the greatest problem for second learners of English.

In Kenya, research has been done on error analysis regarding the use of the preposition and the acquisition of the prepositional phrase, Njoroge, (2006 and Kariuki, (2007). It is what determines the choice of a certain preposition by the learners and not another, as well as the challenges they face in using the prepositions for the correct functions that formed part of our motive for this study. The form three teachers of English views concerning the difficulties faced by their learners were very useful in enabling us draw adequate conclusions concerning the complexities associated with this lexical item, as well as give recommendations on what needs to be done in order to address the grammatical challenges faced by the learners.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

Prepositions as lexical items form part of a larger group of grammatical morphemes called function words in English and are presented in three dimensions, namely the form, meaning and use. Of the three dimensions, the meaning and use were the critical ones in our study since most learners are able to identify a preposition by looking at its phonological form. In the meaning of various prepositions, there are other meaning extensions associated with a preposition especially spatial prepositions as observed by Quirk, (1985:p. 305) which are often more difficult to comprehend and apply than the form itself. These meaning extensions then build up on our investigation of the challenges surrounding the selection of the correct preposition to bring out the intended function.

This study was committed to investigate whether the form three students from two schools in Machakos County -Kenya, can choose the correct prepositions to bring out their intended syntactic and semantic functions in a given sentence. In bringing out their correct functions, learners may face various grammatical challenges. As Pulman, (2008: 169) points out, prepositions can be challenging to learners since they can appear to have an idiosyncratic behaviour which does not follow any predictable pattern even across nearly identical contexts. Therefore by identifying the patterns of usage by learners, then it would be easy to reveal the challenges that learners' face which when addressed will go a long way in improving their communicative competence.

This study was therefore necessitated by the fact that since prepositions formed part of the lexical items used in English, making the correct choice was therefore paramount in passing the correct information.
In finding out the factors that learners used, the researcher was committed to filling in the gap evident in the research done on prepositions in Kenya which was devoid of the grammatical challenges that learners face while using prepositions. This would be important in enabling learners to avoid the reliance on native intuition which prevents many second learners of English from mastering prepositions, Takahashi, (1969).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives;

1. To establish the various ways in which form three students use prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions.

2. To ascertain what determines the form three students’ choice of one preposition over another.

3. To determine the grammatical challenges that form three students face while using prepositions.

4. To find out the form three teachers of English views on the grammatical challenges faced by their students as they use prepositions.
1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions.

1. How do form three students use various prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions?
2. What factors determine the form three students' choice of one preposition over another?
3. What grammatical challenges do the form three students face while using prepositions?
4. What are the form three teachers of English views concerning the grammatical challenges faced by their learners as they used prepositions?

1.6 Research Assumptions

The study was guided by the following assumptions.

1. That form three students have diverse ways of using prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions.
2. That form three students have a range of factors that determine their choice of one preposition over another.
3. That form three students face various grammatical challenges while using prepositions.
4. That the form three teachers of English have varying views concerning the grammatical challenges faced by their learners as they use prepositions.
1.7 Rationale for the Study

This study has linguistic and pedagogic significance. Linguistically it has deepened our understanding of the relational meanings of the preposition as well as how to navigate around its usage. Linguists as well as textbook writers shall benefit from the findings of this study as it has given an in depth analysis of the grammatical challenges faced by learners as they used prepositions which when put into consideration may help in sorting out the difficulty experienced by learners in using prepositions. In terms of language pedagogy, knowing the nature of the preposition in terms of its syntactic position and its semantic idiosyncracies is vital to the teachers of English to ensure that some of the difficulties encountered by their learners are addressed. This could in turn serve as a guide to the teachers, textbook writers and syllabus designers, to help learners navigate easily around the usage of the preposition.

For several years, the researcher has been involved in the task of teaching English as a second language in various secondary schools in Kenya. In her teaching career, the researcher has been able to establish that the teaching of prepositions begins as early as standard two and continues being taught through secondary school and even at the university. Many of the language tests and examinations set by the teachers and by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) respectively test the learners’ knowledge of the correct use of preposition. Despite the interest that this grammatical item attracts from teachers and national examiners, little research has been done to ascertain how learners make a choice on which preposition to use and the challenges they face in making such choices.
The findings of this study could therefore be expected to help teachers and linguists in understanding the difficult areas in the usage of prepositions for the ESL learners of English. In fact, establishing ways of overcoming these challenges could be an area of interest for further research.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study focused on the choice of English prepositions by form three students at high school level in Kenya. It sought to determine the challenges that the learners faced while using this lexical item and the factors that they employed in making their choices. English has a large number of prepositions, Klammer, (2004) has listed 60 simple prepositions and 39 complex prepositions in; *Analysing English Grammar*, because of the limitation of time, this study focused on only 20 prepositions, 5 of which constituted governed pairs and the remaining 15 were simple prepositions serving various relational meanings.

The study was limited to form three students learning English at high school level in two county schools in Machakos- Kenya. The choice of form three students in county schools was based on the fact that they have covered all the basics on prepositions in form one (simple prepositions) and form two (complex prepositions) hence act as a good sample for the application stage of the usage of this lexical item.

The county schools were chosen because they admit students with an average mark of 280 to 350, hence any challenges that they may have in using prepositions would be representative of the average student in the country in terms of academic ability.
A sample of 40 students, selected through systematic random sampling, 20 from each of the two schools selected (a county boys’ school and a county girls’ school) was deemed appropriate for our study’s objectives. However, this sample size though considered appropriate may be enlarged in later researches. This is because the researcher noted that some of the learners did not give any responses for certain prepositions, which was a major challenge for the researcher because a slight reduction on the responses would lead to less data. However as the researcher found out later in data analysis, the students who did not give responses were simply unable to come up with a suitable one for the given question. This would later form part of the levels of difficulty experienced by learners in using prepositions.

1.9 Summary of Chapter One

In this chapter, we have looked at the introductory aspects to this study which included; the background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and research assumptions. The rationale used for the study has also been discussed in detail and lastly the scope that this research explored and the limitations it had. In the next chapter we present our review of literature related to this study as well as the theoretical framework that we have used in our research.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This section has reviewed literature related to the category of prepositions as a lexical item and its subsequent overlap with other phonologically related word classes. It has also reviewed literature related to the challenges that ESL learners across the globe face as they use prepositions to bring out its various functions of usage. The section has also discussed in detail the relevance of the prototype and the lexical semantics theories to this current study.

2.2 Literature Review

The following section has looked at the various views about the category of prepositions, some of the research that has been done on prepositions, as well as the relationship that prepositions have with other word classes.

2.2.1 Prepositions as a Syntactic Category

The existence of the class of prepositions is generally accepted. However, problems arise as soon as linguists try to find a definition of the category Navarro, (1998: p. 20). Various linguists have tried to establish the number of prepositions as well as their functions Ljvnggren, (1951), Vestergaard, (1973). According to Quirk, (1985: 665-671) a comprehensive list of the items classified as English prepositions could number to 180-190, including simple and complex prepositions.
Dionysius Thrax was the first Traditional grammarian to consider prepositions as a distinct and separate word class. He provided the definition for it as 'a part of speech placed before other words in composition or in syntax. The class of prepositions was then traditionally characterised from three points of view Navarro, (1998:p.20).

1. Morphologically, prepositions have been regarded as invariable words that do not undergo inflectional processes.

2. Syntactically, they have generally been defined as ‘pre-posed’ words hence the name- preposition.

3. From the point of view of logic, they have been regarded as sense modifiers or just link words- following Aristotle – being included in the same class as co-ordinators and subordinators.

The Rank Theory which is engraved in the Functional Grammar Approach spells out the syntactic function of words in the clause Jespersen, (1924). The theory classifies word classes in terms of ranks. Nouns belong to the first rank, since they do not depend on other elements in a clause. Verbs and adjectives are on the second rank as they depend on nouns. Adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections belong to the third rank, since they syntactically depend on verbs or adjectives which are second rank elements. These elements also lack inflection. For Jespersen therefore, there is no reason to distinguish between prepositions and conjunctions, since in spite of usually having different complements these two groups are exchangeable.

For example:

The guests arrived after the Minister of Education. {Preposition}
The guests arrived after everyone had taken lunch. {Conjunction}

The structuralism grammarians led by Bloomfield (1993), include prepositions as one of the parts of speech different from subordinators and adverbs. These word classes are defined merely by their positions in syntax and not in terms of their correspondence with different aspects of the practical world Navarro, (1998, p.36). Quirk and his associates characterise prepositions in English according to syntactic or functional criteria as follows Quirk, (1985:p. 658)

a) Prepositions cannot take a subordinate –that clause, an infinite clause, or a subjective form of personal pronouns as complements.

b) On the one hand prepositions share a connective function and on the other hand share a semantic value and formal identity with some adverbs.

Having looked at the various attempts made by various linguists to classify prepositions, our study has looked at the preposition as a single category. In the next subsection, we have briefly discussed the overlap issue between prepositions and other word classes.

2.2.2 Overlap between prepositions and other word classes

There are several points of similarity between prepositions and other word classes and constructions in English grammar, in particular, conjunctions and adverbs. (Quirk, 1985: p.658). The discussion that follows has looked at the differences as well as the similarities which may advocate for them being merged or split.
2.2.2.1 Merging particles and adverbs as prepositions

One of the central arguments found in both Jackendoff (1973) and Emonds (1985) in favour of collapsing particles, adverbs and prepositions into a single category is the observation that there is a high degree of overlap that seems to exist between these categories.

Generally, this overlap is observed at three levels: the phonological level (they are the same words), the semantic level (they mean similar things), and the syntactic level (they show similar syntactic behaviour in some regards). The fact that particles and adverbs are phonologically identical to transitive prepositions is taken as an indicator that they must belong to the same category. Moreover, prepositions, particles and adverbs not only share a phonological form but also share core meanings (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989: p.305).

According to this argument, the word *up* has the same central meaning whether it is used as a preposition, particle or an adverb, meaning to find out something with your eyes open. Emonds, (1985: p 253) explicitly states that “when such a word is used as a directional adverb, it has the same intrinsic meaning whether or not it has an object or not” Consider the following example;

1a. she looked *up* the hill [preposition]

1b. she looked *up* the word [adverb particle]

2.2.2.2 Prepositions and Prepositional Adverbs

A prepositional adverb is a particle which shares the form, but not the syntactic status of a preposition. It is capable of standing alone as an adjunct,
disjunct, conjunct, or a post modifier, without the addition of a prepositional complement, Quirk (1972: p.305):

1. I drove past the door (past is a preposition)
2. A car drove past (past is a prepositional adverb)
3. Despite the fine weather, we stayed in all day (an adjunct)
4. The day before, I had met him in the street (post modifying where he was met)

The above quality whereby a lexical item can serve more than one word class depending on the meaning is called polysemy. This is considered in our study as one of the major grammatical challenges faced by students of English as a second language, especially when using prepositions because of their polysemous nature.

2.2.2.3 Prepositions and Subordinators

Both prepositions and subordinators have a relating or connecting function. Quirk, (1985 pg 661)

For example: The day when he arrived was a day of celebration. {When - conjunction}

The day of his arrival was a day of celebration. {Of - preposition}

In other cases, the same lexical item can be used as prepositions and as a subordinating conjunction.

For example: The guests arrived after the Minister of Education. {Preposition}

The guests arrived after everyone had taken lunch. {Conjunction}
One distinguishing criterion between the two word classes is that prepositions introduce complements which are nominal or nominalised, whereas the corresponding conjunctions (subordinators) introduce a subordinate clause which is characterised by having a verbal head. The above discussion shows how a preposition as a syntactic category has elicited various views from linguists. Therefore, our assumption for the study was that, if the linguists have had varying views concerning the classification of this lexical item then, it is then possible that it is challenging too for learners to know when to use it as a preposition and when to use it as a different lexical category.

2.2.3 Prepositions and their usage in the English language

This study has looked at prepositional choice under the British variety of English which is the recommended variety to be taught in Kenya. Only thirty commonly used simple prepositions have been used for our study. The choice of these prepositions was based on the fact that they served similar relational meanings or they carried multiple meanings which would pose a challenge to learners. This is one third of all English prepositions as quantified by Klammer, (2004).

We have presented the prepositions in form of pairs because they are either confusing or challenging to second learners of English according to the researcher. Alongside each preposition we have given its core meaning.
2.2.3.1 Prepositions used in our study

1. below/ beneath/ under/underneath:

The four prepositions basically have the same meaning, i.e., 'lower than' but in different degrees. For instance, *below* may mean that one object is on a lower level than the other; *beneath* in or to a lower position than somebody/something; *under* is the opposite of *over* and shows direct vertical relationship; *underneath* is the opposite of 'on top of' and often means that one object is actually touching the other (Leech & Svartvik, 1994:96).

On the other hand, each one has its distinct reference. *Below* shows 'the lesser rank or importance than someone/thing' and 'less/ fewer than':

For instance

- In a hospital setting for instance, a nurse comes *below* a sister; a sister comes *below* a matron. (Lesser rank) - (Hall, 1986:18).

According to Hall (1986:18, 19, 80), *under* has four more indications:

i. less/ fewer than

ii. according to certain conditions

iii. as *below* but the subject is closer

iv. in the field of

- Shopkeepers are asked to keep their price increases *below/ under* the rate of inflation.
- The cheque was sent *under* separate cover.
- In a few years there may be a tunnel *under* the sea for transmitting communication signals.
• Look for the word under linguistics if it isn’t filed under language.

2. **between/among:**

*Between* is used to ‘show the relation of two people or things’ and it can be used ‘of more than two when there is a definite number in mind’. *Among*, however, ‘relates a person/ thing to more than two others’, normally we have no definite number in mind. (Thomson and Martinet, 1986:101):

- You can sit *between* Joyce and James
- He was happy to be *among* his family members again.

3. **during/in:**

Leech and Svartvik (1994, 83) say that the two prepositions are more or less equivalent in expressing time relation;

- You can come back tomorrow *in/during* visiting hours.

But, only *during* can be used to mean ‘in the course of’ before nouns like (say, visit, meal, conversation, etc. referring to an event lasting some time):

- We went to the zoo *during* our stay in Nairobi

4. **Across/along**

*Across* refers to movement from one side of something or place to the other, while *along*, denotes the movement from one end to or towards the other end of something (Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 99),

- He walked *across* the field
- They walked *along* the road
5. beside/ besides:

Beside means 'at the side of' whereas besides means 'in addition to' or 'as well as' (Thomsom and Martinet, 1986:100-101):

- We camped beside a lake.
- I do all the cooking and besides that I help John tutor the kids.

6. above/ over:

The prepositions (above and over) have the same meaning 'higher than' (Swan, 1980:4):

- Can you see the helicopter above/over the building under siege?

On the other hand, they are different in some senses. Above indicates the following:

(i) Measurement on a vertical scale

(ii) The height of land

- The temperature is three degree above zero. (Measurement)
- The summit of Everest is over 8000 metres above sea - level. (Height of land)

According to (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:98-99), over, however, also refers to the following:

(i) destination

(ii) orientation (in which a reference not only to two factors but to a third one)

(iii) resultative meaning

(iv) passage

(v) pervasive meaning

- She flung the door open and ran over the grass. (destination)
• We live over the road. (orientation = on the other side of)
• The horses are over the fence. (resultative meaning)
• We passed over the bridge. (passage)

7. at/ to:

To, is used to express ‘motion from one place to another’, while at is used to denote ‘position’ (Fitikides, 2000:83):

• We come to school every day.
• We are standing at the door.

8. to/ till:

We use to with ‘distance’ but till (until) with ‘time’ (Fitikides, 2001:83)

• I walked to the river and back.
• I’ll stay here till next month.

9. at/ in/ on:

According to Alexander (1994:16-17), such prepositions may be discussed from the point of view of two norms, that is;

(1) Place

At can be used with ‘point’.

In is used with an area or a volume and for towns, large areas, rooms and particular nouns like bed, hospital),

On may be used with ‘surface’:

• We waited at the door.
• There was an unpleasant atmosphere in the dentist’s waiting room.
• Don’t leave your dirty laundry on the floor.

(ii) Time:

We can use at with the following (at 10 o’clock/ lunch/ Easter, etc.).

On is used in such expressions as (on Monday/ May 1st/ that day, etc.).

In can be used in the following (in March/ 2020/ the morning, etc.)

• I’ll see you at 10 o’clock
• I’ll see you on Monday.
• I’ll see you in March.

10. in/into:

In is used for position without movement; into is used to talk about movement which ends in a particular place (Swan, 1980: 315):

• My mother’s the woman in the chair by the window.
• He came into the room laughing, but he went out crying.

11. for/ at:

We use for if the actual sum is mentioned, while at is used if the actual sum is not given (Fitikides, 2000: 85):

• I bought a book for fifty pence.
• I can’t buy it at such a high price.

12. by/ with:

When we want to express ‘the means or the instrument with which the action is done’, with is used. By indicates ‘the doer of the action’ (Leech & Svartvik, 1997: 102-104):
• The thief was shot by the police.
• The police shot the thief with the gun.

On the other hand, we can use with ‘in deliberate actions’; by is used to denote something that happened accidentally (Alexander, 1994:28):

• He was killed with a knife.
• He was killed by a falling stone

13. from/ by:
After the passive form, by is used to show ‘the doer of the action’. From denotes the ‘source or the point of origin’ (Hall, 1986:75):

• The new shopping centre was built by a private company.
• She comes from Indonesia.

14. for/ about:
The chief use of for is to convey the idea of ‘in favour of’ (Fitikides, 2000:86):

• Are you for the government or against it? (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:201)

About means ‘concerning a particular subject’ (Hall, 1986:73):

• Why on earth are you talking about politicians?

15. with/ in:
According to Alexander (1994:198), with is used to mean carrying, while the meaning of in is ‘wearing’:

• Who is the man with the stick?
• Who is the woman in the red dress?
16. in/ within:

We use *in* ‘after the end of’, whereas *within* ‘before the end of’ (Fitikides, 2000:87):

- I’ll come back *in* an hour. (If you mean at the end of)
- I’ll come back *within* an hour. (if you mean before the end of an hour)

17. since/ for:

*Since* is used with ‘time reference’ since Friday/ Christmas/ etc.’ However, *for* is used with ‘period of time’ for three days/a long time/etc.’ (Alexander, 1994:169):

- I haven’t seen Sheila *since* January.
- I haven’t seen Sheila *for* six months.

18. since/ from:

According to Thomson and Martinet (1986:95), *since* is used for ‘time’, never for place and means ‘from time referred to’ By contrast, *from* can be used for ‘place’ and ‘time’ with (to or till/until):

- Where do you come *from*? (Place)

19. for/ to:

According to Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:201, *for* and *to* can be used similarly before indirect object, but each of them has its own restriction. In other words, *for* can be used with such verbs as (book, build, cook, buy, bake, boil, fry, fetch, find, get, keep, knit, leave, make, order, and reserve). As for *to* the following verbs are suitable with it (bring, give, hand, lend, offer)

- I’ll get a drink *for* you.
- I gave a map *to* Yvonne.
20. **Against/at**

*Against* has the meaning of pressure or contact while *at* is generally used with the idea of aiming.

- She threw the ball *against* the wall
- She threw the ball *at* the wall

21. **Towards/to**

*Towards* has a sense of direction while *to* generally refers to destination

- They ran *towards* the scene of crime
- They ran *to* the scene of crime

22. **Of/off**

*Of* is used when describing something that belongs to someone or relating to something while *off* is used is mostly used to refer to something away from a place or a distance in space or time, (Leech and Svartvik, 1994:101)

- The love *of* a mother for her child cannot be severed.
- Visitors are advised to keep *off* the grass.

Having discussed in detail the prepositions that we have used in our study as well as the place of a preposition as a grammatical unit in English, we now turn our attention to the usage of this lexical item which is a key concern in our study. Thornbury, (2002) defines prepositions as grammatical words or function words that mainly contribute to the grammatical structure of the sentence. Quirk, (1989) gives a simplified way of classifying prepositions in terms of the relationships that they serve. These include time, location, and manner, means quantity/measure, purpose, and state or condition. The following sentences highlight these relational meanings of usage.
1. She arrived at five o’clock (time)
2. We waited in the bus. (place)
3. We drove towards the crowd (direction)
4. We left in confusion (manner)
5. He cut the bread with a knife (instrument/means)
6. He loved her for her thoughtfulness (purpose/cause)
7. They are by themselves (state)
8. We drove for twenty miles (measure)

In line with the above relational meanings expressed by prepositions, mastering the correct preposition to use in a sentence is crucial as the perceptual meaning of a sentence is changed, sometimes drastically by replacing one preposition with another Derek Dailey, (2008).

For instance the following sentences which can be considered minimal pairs since they only differ in terms of one element — preposition — have fundamentally different meanings;

I saw the girl by the swimming pool

I saw the girl in the swimming pool

Clearly the sentences above evoke different perceptions with regard to the position of the girl and what she could be doing. The perception of the swimming pool therefore acts as a reference point for the location of the girl. Additionally, the position of the girl relative to the swimming pool seems to imply something about the activity and perhaps the feelings of the girl. Therefore the choice of a preposition in a sentence is important not only semantically but also for evoking the intended perception.
2.2.3.2 Previous works on challenges faced by learners while using prepositions

Studies on prepositions have made it obvious why prepositions cause such difficulty for students of English as a second language. This can be attributed to the fact that, many words described as prepositions can also be used as other parts of speech as discussed in the previous subsection. Whether or not a word is a preposition depends on how it is used in a sentence. As Wahlen (2001) observes, the above situation is made worse by the fact that, English prepositions do not have a neat set of rules governing their use.

A claim substantiated by Swan, (1980: p.19). When he says that; even when these rules occur they are complex and may not be able to ensure accuracy, he further adds by saying that ‘since there aren’t many rules to help one choose correctly, such expressions can only be learned separately’

Lawal, (2004) stresses that the correct use of preposition often poses difficulties to learners as there are not many rules guiding the use of prepositions. He added that the only potent weapon against the problems encountered in their usage is to learn them by rote. Takahashi, (1969) in his article on “Perception of Space and Functions of Certain English Prepositions” stresses that, these short simple innocent looking prepositions of English are, in fact very tricky when he says;

"Aside from the correct usage of particles, the greatest problem facing students of English as a second language is no doubt the correct usage of prepositions"
An obvious reason that we may give for the above notion of difficulty is that the number of prepositions used in English is limited but they serve a variety of relational meanings. A classic example is given by Hudson, (1985) when he came up with seven functions or meanings of the preposition ‘at’

1) Used to locate an object in space.
   • The paper is lying at my feet
2) Used to locate an object in time.
   • She was here at one o’clock
3) Used to indicate a state, condition, or engagement in a particular activity.
   • The men are at work
4) Used to indicate a cause or source of an action or a state.
   • She wept at the bad news
5) Used to indicate direction toward a goal or objective.
   • The man winked at her
6) Used to express a skill (or lack of it) in relation to a particular occupation.
   • He is very fast at computing mathematical problems
7) Used to indicate a relative amount, degree, value or position on a scale.
   • He retired at 65.

If the above illustration is anything to go by, then the learning and subsequent use of the various meanings and meaning extensions of prepositions could perhaps be one of the greatest challenges to ESL learners of English who include Kenyan students. The strategies that the learners employ as they use prepositions are discovered through their filled in tests as well as the constructed sentences. A pedagogical strategy that enables students to pay attention to the co-occurrence, collocations and discourse behaviour of
prepositions in facilitating learners’ proficiency in the use of these Lexico-grammatical forms (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), may therefore be a suitable gap to research on by linguists. This is why one of this study’s objectives was to find out the teachers’ views concerning the challenges faced by their learners.

2.2.3.3 Complexities associated with Prepositions’ relational meanings

Prepositions express a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement. The relational meanings served by prepositions include those of space, time, instrument and cause. Sometimes prepositions exhibit several senses and meaning extensions as observed by (Quirk et al, 1972:p.315) when he gives a stage by stage extension of metaphorical usage of ‘in’ using the following illustrations.

- **In** shallow water (purely literal)
- **In** deep water (metaphorical to mean in trouble)
- **In** a spot (metaphorical to mean in a difficult situation)

In an attempt to simplify the understanding of prepositional meanings, Lakoff (1980, and Langacker, (1987), used the terms Trajectory (the element that is located with respect to it, and Landmark (the entity that is construed as the reference point) to show how the entities in a sentence relate to one another. E.g., when we say that someone is ‘in trouble’ we are treating trouble as a container and themselves as a contained object.
A practical study on the usage of prepositions was carried out by Wahlen (1995) for the purpose of teaching English as a second language. This study showed that there were some prepositions like 'over' and 'with' which have many senses. This calls for a close scrutiny into the study of the semantic features of the complements that come after the preposition in order to convey the correct relational meaning.

At times also, some prepositions especially spatial prepositions have various non literal uses which is also a challenge to learners of English as a second language as expounded by Lindner, (1982), when she gives puzzling aspects of spatial prepositions.

1. The same preposition can express opposite meanings

   E.g. The stars are out (are visible)

   The fire is out (not visible / extinguished)

2. Opposite meanings can be expressed by unrelated prepositions

   E.g. They rolled up the carpet (folded)

   They rolled out the carpet (spread)

3. Prepositions that normally express opposite meanings can express unrelated meanings

   E.g. The students dropped in (visited)

   The students dropped out (surrender a course)

4. Similar meanings can be expressed by unrelated prepositions

   Consider;

   Lots of people turned up for the party

   Lots of people turned out for the party
2.2.3.4 Factors that determine prepositional choice

Derek D. (2008) in his literature review and analysis of preposition choice determinants gives the following as the factors that should determine the preposition choice. These are:

1. Axises
2. Frames of reference
3. Variances in ground and functional determinants

2.2.3.4.1 Axises

The ability to use various prepositions is considered a milestone in linguistic development, and as such, a topic that has been widely researched. A research done by (Johnston and Slobin, 1979) on the acquisition of prepositions among children between the ages of 24-56 months in various native languages, seemed to indicate the existence of an axis in the mind that determines prepositional development.

In other words prepositions that indicate objects on a vertical axis (E.g. in, on or under) are easier hence faster to learn and use than prepositions indicating that objects are on a horizontal axis (E.g. beside, by, or near). In the following expression therefore, a child would easily understand,

1. The cat is on the table
   
   (Before he understands)

2. The cat is by the table
The above research indicates the existence of an axis in the mind that determines prepositional development and its subsequent use. Our research therefore sought to ascertain whether indeed the students will choose one preposition over another simply because they are guided by a mental axis or what exactly determines their choice.

2.2.3.4.2 Frames of reference

At times prepositions may exhibit some existence of ambiguity in their use. Researchers claim that prepositional ambiguity that exists with some prepositions is due to the role of reference points in determining the preposition used to describe the location of objects and ordering events in physical, temporal and abstract space.

For instance;

a) The chick is by the hen (ambiguous)

b) The chick is on the hen (clear)

In the above sentences reference points allow us to access and define the parameters of one conceptual entity (target) by invoking another conceptual entity Dailey, (2008). The reference point is the conceptual entity that is used to define a target Langacker, (1993). For instance; in the above examples, the preposition ‘by’ indicates that the choice exists in relative proximity to the hen. However, the absolute distance between the two entities may not be clearly determined.
Frames of reference therefore come in handy in distinguishing the projective and topological classes of spatial / locative prepositions. This will be crucial in our study in distinguishing the usage of confusing pairs of prepositions E.g. in and on which are topological and by which is projective. The topological class defines a relation that does not change across frames of reference. The projective class which dwells much with spatial prepositions is highly affected by changes on the ground hence may proof more technical to master how to use.

Talmy, (1983) uses the terms Ground and Figure as the distinguishing characteristics which affect the use of prepositions within a particular class. For instance, 'in' and 'on' which belong to the same topological class are distinguished from one another by many other features which takes us to the next determinant.

### 2.2.3.4.3 Variances in ground determinants

Ground and figure characteristics also affect prepositional use within a particular class.

For example, the prepositions in and on both belong to the Topological class but are distinguished from one another by many features.

Among these are the geometry of the Ground (Talmy, 1983), the geometry of the Figure Brown, (1994), the geometrical relation between the Figure and the Ground (Bennett, 1975; Talmy, 1983), and the functional relation between the Figure and the Ground, (Coventry, Carmichael, & Garrod, 1994). For example, the functional determinants can easily experience an ambiguity that exists between in and on. For instance, if someone lays his or her hand flat on
a table with the palm facing up and the fingers stretched out, followed by placing a banana on the palm of the hand. The situation is ambiguous. This is because one would wonder if the banana is on or in the hand. In fact, it may seem incorrect to the reader for me to say on the palm of the hand.

Indeed, the situation is accurately described by saying that the banana is on the palm of the hand but the mind cannot decide whether it should replace on with preposition in. That is because there is an established function between the objects and the palm. The palm holds objects in the hand. The situation becomes increasingly clear as one begins to close one’s fingers around the banana. Eventually a decision is passed that completely negates the usage of on and the situation can only be described by saying the banana is in the palm. In other words, the placement of the banana coincides with the typical function of the hand- to enclose things within itself not on the surface.

The above discussion gives an insight in to some of the basic requirements that should come in to play as one makes a choice concerning which preposition to use and in what context.
2.3.0 THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

This part looks at the basic assumptions as well as the effectiveness of the theories that were used in our study. These were the prototype theory and the lexical semantics theory.

2.3.1 The Prototype Theory

The main proponent of this theory Eleanor Rosch, (1975) asserts that human beings and other organisms deal cognitively with their perception of the world 'out there'. That is, human beings perceive the world from a spatial perspective locating and describing things as they occur. Geeraerts, (1997) claims that the prototype theory which originated in the mid-1970's with Eleanor Rosch's research into the internal structure of categories (p. 587), offer a principled approach to the exemplification of form-meaning relationships within language. The prototype theory has two basic principles,

1. It endeavors to achieve maximum differentiation with the prototypical instance of a category in order to distinguish it from all other categories.

2. To work towards avoiding cognitive overload which could result from over differentiation and consequently loss in flexibility in grouping those things which share important characteristics while being in other respects alike.

Geeraerts further claims that the prototype theory has caught the attention of linguists because its insights can be used to develop a model for dealing with such semantic phenomena as "the fuzzy boundaries of lexical categories, the existence of typicality scales for the members of a category, the flexible and..."
dynamic nature of word meanings, as well as the importance of metaphor and metonymy as the basis of that flexibility...” Geeraerts, (1997, p. 590).

In other words, the polysemous properties of lexical items could be handled through the application of such insights. He defines a polysemous item as one which has a number of distinct, yet related, senses.

Geeraerts, (2007:168) points out the four hypotheses which help in identifying the prototypical meaning of a lexical item,

- Physiological
- Referential
- Statistical
- Psychological

The physiological hypothesis is exemplified by the experiments conducted by Berlin and Kay, (1969) and Rosch, (1973), whose results suggest a connection between physiological salience in colours and the establishment of the mental lexicon. However, this hypothesis is unlikely to apply to examination of the prototype of prepositions. This is because there is no physiological system here, in contrast to sight for the light frequencies of colours, to perceive the differences of prepositional senses, which vary from locative to metaphorical.

The referential hypothesis is concerned with the attributes shared by the members of category. This hypothesis states that the prototype shares a maximum number of attributes with the non - prototypical members of a category. Preposition through is assumed to have an attribute of ‘Traversal’, e.g. ...with light coming through a pane of glass.
The attribute of physically traversing an object seems less likely to be shared by the ‘by means of’ sense, as in; *The key... went through the hole* Kamakura, (2011).

The statistical hypothesis states that the prototype is the most frequently experienced member in the category and that its frequency in relation to the other members determines its prototypicality.

Many linguists have however argued that this proposition is controversial, as frequency may relate to prototypicality, but not in a straightforward way. Kamakura (2011), Geeraerts, (2007), Gibbs, (2006). Taylor (2003: 56) further argues that high frequency does not necessarily determine which the prototype is because high frequency “may well be a symptom of prototypicality, not its cause”. A prototype is therefore likely to originate in our innate ability to categorize, though to many language users high frequency may be a plausible explanation for a prototype, but that may not be the case.

The psychological hypothesis is favored by Geeraerts, (2007) due to cognitive economy in categorization, that is, “the most information can be provided with the least cognitive effort”. Rosch, (1975) cites in Geeraerts, (2007: 169), that a prototype can incorporate the members bearing similar nuances into an individual concept. For this reason, a core concept framed by language users can be sought by means of eliciting tasks which will give them a chance to use a certain item in many environments. In our study therefore, as we look at how learners make a choice in using prepositions for various functions, the psychological hypothesis will come in handy in helping us understand the cognitive parameters that come in to play in the mind of the learner as they use this lexical item.
2.3.1.1 The Prototype Theory and the Study of Prepositions

In the study of prepositions, the prototype theory claims that prepositions have multiple meanings, but one meaning is thought to be the most dominant, or prototypical. In the case of prepositions, the spatial, physical meaning is considered to be the prototype. For example, the preposition on has multiple meanings, but the prototypical definition is “contact of an object with a line of surface” Lindstromberg, (1996, p. 229).

The prototype theory contends that the polysemous nature of prepositions can be explained through analysis of the prototypical meaning; all non-prototypical meanings are thought to be related to the prototype. These meanings are classified under the metaphorical extension meaning of prepositions Lindstromberg, (1996, 228).

For every preposition in English, there is usually the central or prototypical sense that is usually taught by teachers and also entered in the dictionary as the core meaning of the preposition. For instance the central meaning of the preposition ‘in’ is to indicate an enclosed space that is considered an area, such as a geographical location, a room, or a building.

For Example,

• The children played in the park.

But the above preposition has many other meaning extensions too that the learner of English as a second language is also expected to master. These meanings can be illustrated as follows;
1. Use of the preposition in with objects that act as containers.
   - The key is in my pocket

2. Use of the preposition in when describing what is contained within liquids or other substances
   - Would you like sugar in your coffee?

3. The preposition in can also be used with phrases about time. Use in when it is followed by these words: the past, the present, the future, the morning, a month, a year, a century.
   - Grandma needs to go for a walk in the morning.

4. Use of in to describe the amount of time needed to do something.
   - I will be ready in a few minutes.

5. Use of in to indicate that something is part of something else.
   - There are new clothes in the litter.

The above illustration shows that the prototypical sense, is highly general but it came in handy in our research as we attempted to find out whether learners can use one preposition to bring out its distinct meanings depending on the intended function by the sentence.

Lakoff, (1987) argues that a prototype represents a ‘good example’ in the category and it is a simple concept without detailed information which reflects the mental representation of language users. This theory was therefore suitable for the needs of our research as it provided a framework within which it was possible to solve at least some of the problems associated with describing the meaning extensions of some prepositions which are away from the prototype.
2.3. 2 Lexical Semantics Theory

The proponents of this theory include Geeraerts, (2010), Langacker, (1987) and Cruse, (2002) who noted that word meanings are regarded as mental entities. Lexical semantics therefore is an academic discipline concerned with the meaning of words. That is, what words mean, why they mean what they mean, and how they are represented in speakers minds Geeraerts, (2010).

Lexical semantics works under five fundamental theoretical assumptions, but our study was be guided by only three to achieve our objectives.

1. That words have meaning

2. That there is a relation between words and their meanings

3. That words are stored together with their meanings

This study could have used several other semantic theories which include; The Sense Relations Theory Cruse, (1986) but, our research was not be entirely on the distinction between senses of words although we looked at the polysemous nature of the preposition.

The Contrastive Analysis Theory is another theory that could have been used to help us in determining the errors, but this study was not entirely confined to describing learner errors as they use the English prepositions, but on the factors that come into play as they make a choice.

Lexical semantics therefore was deemed fit for this research as it enabled us to study words with similar kinds of meaning, which behave similarly from a syntactic point of view. Thus studying how word meaning interacts with the
syntactic structures in a sentence was key in getting the correct data for our study. This is because, prepositions play a very important role in the overall interpretation of a sentence as they have many connections with many other syntactic categories as discussed in our literature review.

Lexical semantics which is a facet of cognitive linguistics can help us make the concept of learning and using prepositions less unruly by initiating the use of an image schema as advocated by Lakoff, (1980) and Langacker, (1987). For instance, in the preposition ‘\textit{out}’, its core meaning involves an image schema with an entity (Trajector) located outside a container (landmark). The ‘\textit{out}’ relationship can therefore be either static, (the cat is \textit{out} of the house) or sometimes abstract (the secret is \textit{out}). The latter will involve someone’s cognitive field rather than their perceptual field.

Lexical semantics as a theory used in the cognitive perspective, therefore enabled the researcher to identify the areas of concern in the students perception of prepositions and how they understand them. The prototype theory on the other hand took in the aspects of the polysemic nature of prepositions and all the non-prototypical meanings thought to be related to the prototype, often through metaphorical extension Lindstromberg, (1996, p.229).
2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter considered the present study against available literature on prepositional usage. The theories relevant to this study, which are the lexical semantics theory and the prototype theory of linguistics have also been explored in detail. The literature review and the theoretical framework discussions have provided the grounds for data analysis, discussion and presentation. The next chapter looks at the research design and methodology.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has focused on the procedures that were followed in conducting this research. It presents the research design, site of the study, target population, sampling techniques and sample size. Methods of eliciting data, research instruments, data analysis and presentation have also been discussed here.

3.2 Research Design

Orodho, (2003) defines a research design as a scheme, outcome or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection and analysis of data. This study generally adopted the qualitative design then used descriptive statistics to present the findings that were arrived at in our study. The qualitative design enabled us to explore and describe the various ways in which learners use prepositions and the challenges they face. In qualitative research the researcher does not seek to predict or control phenomena but rather to understand and describe phenomena. Mertens, (1998), maintains that a valid reason for choosing qualitative method relates to the nature of the research problem.

The essence of using a largely qualitative methodology, therefore, matched the purpose of this study which was to understand the challenges that form three students face while using prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions. The qualitative methodology was also appropriate because the
research was conducted at the students’ natural setting – at school- where the events that the researcher was interested in occurred naturally. We then used descriptive statistical methods to analyse the data collected from the sample size and draw conclusions.

3.3 Target Population and Site of the Study.

Mugenda, (2003), defines target population as that population which the researcher wants to use in order to generalize the results of the study. The researcher’s target population was Form 3 students learning English as a second language in Kenya, and those teachers of English teaching the form threes. The choice of this target population was based on the fact that, form three students have covered the basics on prepositions in forms 1 and 2 hence would serve as a good sample for the application stage on the use of prepositions. In addition, the teachers of English handling the form threes were also thought as very useful. This is because they are the ones with first hand information pertaining to the challenges that they have noted in their students as they use prepositions, which was part of our core business in this study. The researcher drew the target population from Masinga area of Machakos County–Kenya. This area was targeted since the researcher wanted to use extra-county schools and for easier sampling there were only two extra-county schools in the sub county, which are, Masinga Boys’ Secondary School and Masinga Girls’ Secondary School. This would enable the researcher have all other variables constant except the sex variable which is given consideration in the discussion of the findings.
The choice of the two schools extra-county schools suited the purpose of this study as the schools enrolled students from all over the country. This ensured that factors like location, socio-economic background do not affect our data as extraneous variables, because the students admitted in these schools are chosen from all-over the country and on the basis of performance. This therefore meant that the findings of this research could be generalized across the country, as both schools are government sponsored schools which are adequately staffed with trained teachers, and with adequate learning resources. Syllabus coverage was also deemed effective in both schools. It was therefore assumed that the students have covered a good portion of the English content in the secondary curriculum and thus could provide adequate and reliable information for this study.

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling involves a process of selecting a subsection of a population that represents an entire population in order to obtain information regarding the phenomenon of interest. A sample is therefore a sub-section of the population which is selected to participate in a study. This study used the systematic random sampling. This method was used because it was most likely to yield a sample that truly represented the population as each subject had an equal and independent chance of being selected Brink (1996: 136)

There were altogether 40 form 3 students and 6 teachers of English handling the form threes. The students sample constituted 20 boys and 20 girls. The selection of the students sample was done through systematic random sampling. Since both schools are three streamed schools, to pick 20 students
from each school, votes were cast whereby pieces of paper labelled 1-10 were folded and mixed vigorously in a box. Class prefects from each stream were then called and whoever chose number 5, their class was chosen for the study. We assumed that each stream had 40 students. To obtain a sample of 20, we used the systematic random sampling method using the formula; \( K = \frac{N}{n} \).

\[
K = \frac{N}{n} \\
N - \text{Total population} \\
n - \text{Sample size} \\
k - \text{Kth number} \\
K = \frac{40}{20} = 2 \text{ (Kth no.)}
\]

We then randomly selected every 2\text{nd} student from the school attendance registers such that, by the time we got to 40 we had attained our sample size of 20 from each school. The teachers of English sample of 6 were however purely randomly selected from each school. This is because each of the schools had all together 5 teachers of English, all of whom were handling form threes in various sections of English. Their minimal number therefore proved difficult to systematise.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection is a systematic way of gathering information, which is relevant to the research questions or purpose Vogt, (1993). In order to fulfil the main purpose of this study, a written test of two levels (recognition and production) was designed to investigate the difficulties faced by ESL learners when using the chosen prepositions of study. Tests were preferred for students since they would produce a true picture of how the students used prepositions. Two tests were given to the students; the first test consisted of two questions, the first
question consisting of twenty items, each item containing various alternatives. In the second question, the subjects were asked to make meaningful sentences by using thirty prepositions from the ones under investigation, (see appendix 3). The above instruments were reliable for eliciting the required data from the students since each student gave their responses individually which would then be expected to be a representative of the entire population under study. Their responses were then used to ascertain the challenges that the learners faced as well as the factors that they used as they brought out the syntactic and semantic functions of prepositions.

Other instruments of collecting data included teachers’ questionnaires, which were used to find out the views of those teachers of English handling the form threes, concerning the challenges that their learners faced while using prepositions. The researcher chose to use the questionnaires for the teachers because questionnaires are more reliable, anonymous and they usually encourage greater honesty Bruce, (2001). To ensure efficiency of the questionnaires, the researcher piloted them in order to refine their contents, wording and length. In addition, to test for validity and reliability of the other research instruments, the researcher piloted them to ensure that they yielded the required data as well as minimise random error. These multiple sources were used to provide comprehensive data for studying the issues stipulated in our research questions and also assist in drawing conclusions.
3.5.1 Validity
According to Polt and Hungler, (1993: 253), validity refers to the degree to which an instrument of collecting data measures what it is supposed to be measuring. In this research content validity was of prime importance to ensure that the questions asked to both the students and the teachers of English elicited enough information for the researcher to meet all the objectives of this study. The research instruments were therefore tested for validity by piloting them before the actual collection of data commenced.

3.5.2 Reliability
Reliability is a concept that is often used for testing or evaluating quantitative research. However, according to Nahid Golafshani, (2003: vol. 8), the idea of reliability is also used with all kinds of research. In our study, reliability was considered in terms of ensuring that the instruments of collecting data were precise and accurate in collecting the right information. This was done by having the tests for the students appended in our proposal for the academic supervisors to vet them for proper phrasing of each question to avoid ambiguity. The respondents too were carefully informed on the purpose of the research to ensure that they gave the appropriate feedback.

3.5.3 Pilot study
A pilot study is a trial run of the major study. Vogt (1993) defines a pilot study as a preliminary test or study to try out procedures and discover problems before the main study began. He further says that, this enables researchers to make last minute corrections and adjustments. For our research the pilot study was mainly carried out to check the time taken to fill in the questionnaires, whether they were too long or too short, too difficulty or too easy, as well as check the clarity of the questionnaire items.
3.6 Data Elicitation Procedures

To elicit data, the researcher sought permission from the principals of the schools involved in our study in order to administer the assessment tests to students, and questionnaires to the teachers. This involved production of letters of permission to conduct research from the offices of the country Commissioner and County Director of Education in Machakos County our area of study (see appendix 6). The researcher then liaised with the teachers of English in those schools to know when their lessons will be, in order to administer the two tests (see appendices 2 and 3) as well as plan for the appropriate time to give the questionnaires. This was necessary in order to have the students in their natural settings and with the subject teacher present. The researcher therefore entered the class as a friend of a friend, (Milroy 1980) which ensured that the students comfort was not disturbed by having a new person administer a test to them. If this was not taken care of, it would have resulted in anxiety hence production of inappropriate responses. The researcher then explained the purpose and objectives of the study to the teachers in advance, so that they could have the students adequately co-operating during the lessons as well as having the teachers themselves fill in the questionnaires appropriately.

After the administration of the tests, the researcher got data by looking at the students responses in the assessment tests in order to get the ways in which the students had used prepositions. This was primarily for objective one of our study. Secondly, the researcher went through the students' constructed sentences to ascertain the challenges that the learners encountered in using the
given prepositions, as well as establish a pattern of usage of the given prepositions which would be a key pointer into the factors that the learners may have used in making a choice of preposition. This was geared towards meeting objective two and three of our study. Lastly the researcher looked at the form three teachers of English responses from the questionnaires to get their views on the challenges faced by their learners as they used prepositions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations
The researcher ensured proper rules of conduct were followed as summarized by Belmont, (1974) in his report on basic ethical principles relevant to research involving human subjects. Of prime importance, the researcher ensured that the subjects for the study were made fully aware of the nature of the study as well as the risks and any benefits that one may incur by participating in the study. This included the pedagogic and linguistic significance of the study to the target population. Since the researcher was mostly dealing with persons of limited autonomy (students), permission was sought from the principals of the schools involved in order to administer the assessment tests to students, and the questionnaires to the teachers. This involved production of a letter of introduction from the University, a Research Permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation, and authorization letters to conduct research in Machakos County from the County Commissioner as well as from the County Director of Education (see appendix 6). To curb conflict of interest, Belmont, (1974) the researcher did not take part in filling in the questionnaires as a teacher of English as this would amount to gross misconduct in research and production of skewed results.
3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation procedure

In this study, data analysis was basically qualitative but aspects of descriptive statistics were used in summarising the data. This was done especially when giving the frequencies of occurrence of certain challenges or specific areas of difficulty. The various ways of usage of certain prepositions and the presentation of the percentage that used prepositions to bring out their correct functions was also done statistically.

The students' responses in the assessment tests were marked and categorised depending on proper or improper choice. This led to a tabulation based on correct and incorrect choices which helped meet our objective one - to establish whether the students could use prepositions appropriately to bring out the syntactic and semantic functions.

The researcher then proceeded to the second objective of the research which was to determine the factors that the students employed in giving their choices. This was done by looking at whether the students had put into consideration the polysemic nature of the prepositions before giving their choice as well as the collocational coherence required for the governed prepositions. The prototype theory came in handy here to ascertain which meaning of the preposition the students were conversant with and the challenges they faced in making their choices, which was evident in the kind of responses that they had given. This was then linked to the teachers' views to see if there was in any way a correlation between the factors that the students seemed to have used and the teachers' views.
In the analysis of the teachers’ responses, especially on the likert scale questions we looked at the pattern of occurrence of certain responses especially on what factors the learners used in making a choice of the prepositions to use as well as the challenges that they faced while doing so. These factors and challenges were then put in percentages from the highest in occurrence to the least. It is this percentage presentation that was presented in table format and graphs that enabled us draw our conclusions and recommendations for further research.

3.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we described the research design and the methodology that we have used in our study. The sampling technique as well as the sample size was also explored in this chapter. The researcher also brought out clearly the methods of collecting data, how they were administered to the target population and the procedures used in the analysis of data. To ensure that the researcher abides by the ethics of conducting research, the researcher outlined the measures that had been put in place to secure a research permit and permission from the relevant authorities in the area of research. The next chapter is on a discussion of the findings and the conclusions arrived at in our research.
4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings, interpretations and discussion of the data collected according to the objectives of this study. It therefore focuses on; firstly, the ways in which learners use prepositions to bring out their intended syntactic and semantic functions. Secondly, a description of the factors that appear to have determined the choice of preposition in the learners as well as the challenges that they faced while doing so. Lastly the teachers’ views are carefully analysed and summarised then linked to the outcome of the students’ tests in order to come up with reasonable conclusions and practical recommendations for our study.

4.2 Description of areas of concern in Prepositional choice and Function

Prepositional choice in English is ideally determined by the complement that comes after it as well as the relational meaning expressed. Being able to choose the correct preposition and ensuring that it is followed by the correct complement—a noun phrase or a pronoun—brings us to the first objective of our study which was primarily concerned with how form three learners used prepositions to bring out the intended syntactic and semantic function.

4.2.1 Semantic Function

The semantic function of prepositions ideally requires a learner to use a preposition to convey a certain relational meaning. In order to ascertain this,
the researcher used test 1 (refer to Appendix 2) which comprised of multiple choice questions. In each of those questions, the learner was expected to choose only one of the prepositions given to complete the sentence.

In total there were 20 questions from test 1 which gave a total of 800 responses from the learners' population of 40 students. The researchers' intention of using test 1 was to find out whether at recognition level the form three students can choose from a given multiple of choices the correct preposition to bring out the correct semantic function. The semantic function was categorised in terms of the correct relational meaning required as well as the correct choice for a governed pair of prepositions. The first 5 questions in test 1 were specifically structured for the governed pairs and the remaining 15 for the relational meanings.

Governed pairs of prepositions are those that can only take a certain noun, adjective or verb in order to pass the correct information. The researcher used *fond of, angry at, ban on, account for, and abide by*. Having been a teacher of English in secondary schools in Kenya for ten years, the researcher chose the above governed prepositions because of their meanings which related to the learners day to day activities. For instance, *fond of*, is an expression that means liking someone and bearing in mind that teachers interact with their students on a daily basis they are bound to either grow fond of each other or not. As for *ban on, abide by, and account for*, they are expressions that touch on rules and regulations that student are expected to follow in school. The last one *angry at* closely follows the reaction of the teacher when a student falls short of expectations.
When the students from both schools filled in the five questions touching on the governed pairs, 38 out of the 40 learners used in our study which translates to 95% of the learners from both schools were able to correctly complete the governed pairs for *fond of*, and *account for*.

These responses constituted 39.6% of the total correct responses given. Two things came up from this data, that the students may have built competence in using the expression ‘*fond of*’ from their day to day interactions with their teachers and also amongst themselves considering their age and also the fact that it is an endearing term.

The other, *account for*, is mostly used as a reprimanding term by teachers and instructors which could have led to the students being familiar with it. Surprisingly though, when the same prepositions *of*, and *for* were presented as a confusing pair in test 1, question 14, (see Appendix 2) in the subsequent questions for the relational pairs, only 18% of the students could get it right. The other three pairs of governed prepositions *ban on*, *abide by*, and *angry at*, proved challenging to the learners as only 8 (20.0%) out of the learners 40 learners, 9,(22.5 %)and 3, (7.5%, ) could complete the pairs correctly, (see table 4.2.1 A). Out of the responses from the learners only 96 responses were correct as seen in table 4.2.1 (A). A tabulation of the percentages of correct choices made by learners for the governed pairs of prepositions is presented in table 4.2.1(A). The researcher has used both the percentages expressed out of the total number of respondents in the discussion above as it is the one that gave a reflection of the number of respondents that got the pairs correctly, and the percentage expressed out of the total number of correct responses.
Table 4.2.1 (A), Tabulation of percentages of correct choices made by learners for the governed pairs of prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Frequency of learners who got correct choice</th>
<th>% out of the 40 respondents who got the governed pair correctly</th>
<th>Percentage of correct response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fond of</td>
<td>38 out of 40</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry at</td>
<td>3 out of 40</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ban on</td>
<td>8 out of 40</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abide by</td>
<td>9 out of 40</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>account for</td>
<td>38 out of 40</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total correct responses</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the researchers’ observation notes during data collection period, it was noted that 5 students from the boys school and 3 from the girls school did not fill in the blank space for question 2 (angry ...........) see appendix 2). This was a bit puzzling to the researcher as to the reason why a student could not fill in a blank space even with multiple choices. It was therefore concluded that the learners could not clearly make a choice on which choice to pick and for fear of picking the wrong one they ended up leaving it blank. But even for those learners who attempted the same questions and got the choices wrong, they had given completely irrelevant choices as shown by some of their responses in example 1. This implied that prepositional choice is quite a task for the population under study.
Example 1;

Student A4, gave the following choices for question 2 and 4 (see Appendix 2)

* The teacher was angry about his students for their misbehaviour. (Instead of at)

* All students are required to abide with the school rules and regulations. (Instead of by)

The prepositions about and with are very popular in the learners first language and in Kiswahili too. For instance, 'About' translates to 'kuhusu', in Kiswahili meaning 'relating to something', in English. The students could therefore have interpreted the sentence to mean 'relating to the students misbehaviour', the teacher was angry, leading to their wrong choice. This one on one translation by the learners leads to a grammatical challenge since prepositions do not follow any predictable pattern even across nearly identical contexts, Pulman,(2008: 169). Therefore, one may not really rely on their knowledge of another language to make a prepositional choice.

This trend of giving the wrong choice is repeated in school B, as shown in appendix 2, by student B3 for questions 1, 2, and 3,

Example 2

Maria is very fond with her baby sister (instead of 'of')

The teacher was angry about his students for their misbehaviour ('at')

I would support a for smoking in restaurants (instead of 'on')
Because of the above findings which implied a lot of deficiency in the learners' competence in the use of prepositions, the researcher took a look at the presentation of prepositions in the learners' text books especially Excelling in English. This is one of the approved course books used in secondary schools for teaching English in Kenya by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. This investigation revealed that, in the presentation of such prepositions as *by, with, on, at* and *for*, only their prototype meanings are given which leaves the learner to explore other meanings extensions and uses alone. This implies that such governed pairs of words which must only take these prepositions and not any other must be learned as they are. Their meaning extensions too which are away from the prototype must be presented too to help ease the levels of difficulty experienced by the learners. This is a challenge to curriculum developers to improve on the presentation of prepositions so that learners can have sufficient information concerning all the senses of a certain preposition, away from the prototype.

The learners understanding of the semantic function of prepositions was further investigated in test 1, using the remaining 15 sentences (See Appendix 2). In these sentences, learners were presented with confusing pairs of prepositions which they were expected to choose from and fill in the blank spaces.

From their responses as shown in table 4.2.1 (B), it was clear that prepositions such as *among* vs. *between*, and *in* vs. *on* were quite easy to differentiate 100% of all the respondents got the correct choice, (see 4.2.1 B).
Table 4.2.1(B) A representation of students’ correct vs. Incorrect responses for the pairs given in test 1 (appendix 2 question 6-20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Learners’ Frequency of correctness</th>
<th>% representation of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responded correctly</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among vs between</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beside vs besides</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over vs above</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across vs along</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in vs during</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to vs till</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in, into, towards</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in vs on</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at, for, of</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against vs at</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in, with, by</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since, for, within, in</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of vs about</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underneath vs beneath</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under vs below</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N= 40</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close look at the primary and secondary English text books by the researcher revealed that some of these prepositions are first taught to the learners’ right from class three. These include the use of *between, among, over, above, in, on,* and *under.* However, as revealed by our research, when such prepositions are presented in pairs, learners lack the competence to choose the correct one as revealed by the data for *under,* and *below,* whereby only 10% of the respondents were able to complete question 20 of appendix 2 correctly.
The remaining 90% of the learners gave below instead of under as revealed by our sample respondents A4, A5, A11, B3, and B6, all of whom gave the following choice.

20. *Look for the word ...below... Linguistics. (Under, below) instead of under

Other prepositions that proved difficult to differentiate when used in a sentence by the learners were, in, with and by. Out of the 40 learners who responded to question 16 (see appendix 2) in test 2, only 7 got the right preposition. This translates to a minimal percentage of correctness of 18%. The researcher had presented these three prepositions as multiple choices for the question- Who's the woman ..........the red dress. (in, with, by, )- because of their similarity in meaning. From the learners' knowledge of Kiswahili, In means 'ndani ya', and with means 'pamoja na' while by simply means 'na'.

Looking at the learners responses in the sentence that these prepositions were used (see appendix 2 no. 16), there is a pattern of occurrence in terms of incorrectness of choice. 50% of the learners who got it wrong chose 'with', while the remaining 32% gave 'by' instead of the required 'in'. This is illustrated by the following examples;

(B6) Who’s the woman ... with......... the red dress. (in, with, by, )

(B3) Who’s the woman ... with......... the red dress. (in, with, by, )

(A5) Who’s the woman ... with......... the red dress. (in, with, by, )

(A4) Who’s the woman ... by......... the red dress. (in, with, by, )
The above consistency by learners in giving the wrong choice of a preposition whose meaning is inclined to a one on one interpretation from their knowledge of Kiswahili, points out to a deficiency in the learners’ knowledge of prepositional meaning in English. This calls for thorough instructional techniques by teachers of English in order to improve on the learners’ knowledge of the various meanings of prepositions. This is important because it is this knowledge that should guide learners as they make their choice.

Literature on relational meanings of prepositions points out that, since a preposition may have more than one meaning, all other non-prototypical meanings need to be learned and classified under the metaphorical extension meaning of prepositions Lindstromberg, (1996, 228). This therefore means that the students need to be taken through all the meanings of a particular preposition and the contexts of usage which may call for the use of one preposition and not another. This shows that learners can only make a correct choice of such prepositions with the aid of an image schema or a diagrammatic representation as advocated by Lakoff, (1980) and Langacker, (1987).

For instance, in the meaning of the preposition ‘out’, its core meaning involves an image schema with an entity (Trajector) located outside a container (landmark). The ‘out’ relationship can therefore be either static, (the cat is out of the house) or sometimes abstract (the secret is out). The latter will involve someone’s cognitive field rather than their perceptual field. It is this cognitive knowledge that was clearly missing in the learners’ responses of the
question involving in, with, and by, as discussed above. The same realization that only 10% of the students (see table 4.2.1B) used in this study could use the prepositions under vs. below correctly in the given sentence spelt out a deficiency in the learners levels of cognitive competence in terms of choice of the right preposition to bring out the correct relational meaning in a given sentence.

In our choice of learners for our study, we used both boys and girls since as sociolinguistic research findings reveal, women are more likely to use linguistic forms thought to be ‘better’ or more correct than those used by men. This as Trudgil, (1983) points out, gives them a sense of class which the researcher felt explained why the girls in our study had better competence in the use of some prepositions like on and at in ban on with a 25% and 10% for angry at respectively as compared to their male counter parts who registered a 15% and 5% correctness in these governed prepositions. Though these differences were not major, the researcher felt that if the same population was used for quite a number of other lexical items and the same trend is repeated, then Trudgil, (1983) research would be applicable even to our student population here in Kenya. This sexual variation in terms of levels of competence in the use of prepositions especially the governed pairs is summarised in Fig. 1 below.
Fig 1. Proportion of students who matched governed Prepositions correctly (boys vs. girls)

The same trend was exhibited as seen in Fig 2. in the learners' responses for the other 15 questions in test 1, with the girls again posting a better percentage for the correct choices for against vs. At, and across vs. Along, with girls having 100% for the latter compared to the boys 70% and 95% for girls in the former compared to 70% for boys respectively as shown in Fig 2 below. This backs up Trudgil (1983), claim that girls could be better than boys in terms of correct usage of lexical forms, but since this was not a key concern in our study, the researcher felt that it could be a basis for further research in Kenya using a different population for more comprehensive results, since being in the same level of schools; the girls would want to maintain a higher bar in terms of class.
In conclusion on the students’ ability to use prepositions to bring out the correct semantic function, this study concluded that the learners’ competence in performing this task was lacking. This is because of the way that they seemed to be making their choices, some of which were clearly a demonstration of lack of the required cognitive knowledge in prepositional meanings. This conclusion was arrived at because of the minimal percentages of correctness registered by the respondents as seen in table 4.2.1 (B) and in fig 2.
4.2.2 Syntactic Function

The syntactic function of prepositions demands that in the use of prepositions, the complement that comes after it in a sentence must chiefly be a noun phrase or a pronoun. Leech (1969:375) states in his definition of a preposition that a preposition should typically go before a noun phrase or a pronoun to express a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, most often showing how the two parts are related in space or time.

The researcher sought to find out if the target population was able to use prepositions for the correct syntactic function by using test 2 (see appendix 3). This test required learners to construct two grammatical sentences to bring out two distinct meanings of the same preposition. This exercise was also geared towards finding out if students can clearly distinguish in terms of syntactic positioning a preposition from other word classes.

**Fig. 3** representation of learners' confusion of prepositions with other word classes which impacted negatively on the syntactic function

![Confusion of Prepositions](image)
As seen in Fig 3, various observations came up concerning other word classes that learners mixed up with prepositions in their constructions. In our literature review we had discussed only subordinators and adverb particles as the possible word classes that learners were likely to confuse with prepositions. However, from the learners’ responses other issues cropped up as can be seen in Appendix 3. These included the mix up that learners had for the ‘to infinitive’ where 23.5% of the respondents did not use ‘to’ as a preposition rather they used it as an infinitive. The preposition ‘off’ posted the highest percentage of inappropriate syntactic function when 43.1% of the learners used it as an adverb particle instead of using it as a preposition. This is illustrated by some of the learners responses (see appendix 3)

For Example:

*(B6) the students switched off the lights (adverb particle)

*(B8) Since you’ve come I’ll not go (used since as conjunction)

*(A10) She was to visit her (to infinitive)

Shockingly, though at as small percentage of 3.9%, learners could even confuse ‘till’ the action verb and ‘till’ the preposition. As seen in the example below;

(*B8) The farmer went to till his land (verb)
11.8% of the learners used ‘About’ as an expression of quantity rather than a preposition. For instance learner (B6) gave the following constructions as appended in appendix 3.

*They are about to finish (to mean almost)
*She is about to leave (to mean almost)

The mix up witnessed in the learners constructions pointed out a syntactic deficiency on the learners’ part because when the above overlap occurs in usage then the overall meaning of the sentence will also be altered.

It was therefore concluded that, at the production level, learners could not clearly distinguish the complement that should follow a preposition. This presented a major challenge in bringing out the correct syntactic function of prepositions as was being investigated for objective one. This realisation called for a thorough scrutiny into the strategies that learners use in differentiating one lexical item from another. This therefore took us to our second objective in our study which was to find out the factors that learners use as they determine which preposition to use.

### 4.3 Factors that determine learners’ choice

Our second objective in our study was to find out the strategies that learners employ in choosing one preposition over another. In order to determine the factors that came into play as learners used prepositions, the researcher keenly went through the responses given by the learners in Test 1 (see Appendix 2) as well as the teachers’ responses. From the learners’ choices, it was clear that many learners only applied the central (prototype) meaning of a preposition regardless of the other meaning extensions that may have been required by the
question. Other learners appeared to have used guesswork when differentiation proved difficult, as some of learners' choices demonstrated a clear lack of competence in the use of this lexical item.

For instance, (see appendix 2, student A4, A5, and B3) when they gave the following choices;

*I bought a book ..........of........ fifty pence. (At, for, of) - *Mother tongue reliance

*The distance from here ........till..........the river is 3 kilometers (to, till) - *Kiswahili translation for till is 'mpaka'

*I haven't seen Alex ..........since........ Six months. (Since, for, within, in) - *Guesswork

As learners worked their way around making a choice on which prepositions to use in the various tests given by their teachers, the instructors revealed through the questionnaires (see Appendix 1) that learners' choices were determined by the following factors;

i. 50% of the teachers revealed that most of their students used guesswork since there was no logical way of deciding what preposition goes with a particular noun/adjective and that prepositional meaning is confusing to their learners too.

ii. 16.7% of the teachers reported that majority of their learners use their understanding of either their mother tongue or Swahili. Hence the explanation for saying;
I bought a book ......of ...... fifty pence. (At, for, of) - *Mother tongue reliance*

When this sentence is translated to Kiswahili, the sentence would read; ‘Nilinunua kitambu cha shilling tano’

It is the ‘cha’ in Kiswahili that learners were directly transferring into English. This is what Pulman, (2008: 169) disputed when he points out that prepositions can be challenging to learners since, ‘they can appear to have an idiosyncratic behaviour which does not follow any predictable pattern even across nearly identical contexts’. Some of this idiosyncratic behavior could be the context of usage which we advocated for in the factors that should come into play when making a choice of preposition so that other variants come into play apart from the prototype meaning. The knowledge from one language too may not be of much help when making a choice as the syntactic constructions in sentences may not be similar across languages.

iii. On a positive note, 33.3% of the teachers, said that at times learners rely on their understanding of the context of usage to determine the preposition to use and at times they also consider factors such as location or the intended meaning of the preposition.

This reliance by the learners on the understanding of context of usage of a preposition was evident by the learners good score of 83% (see table 4.2.1 (B) for the preposition ‘across vs. along’ as seen in the example below;

(A4) It took several minutes to walk...across... ......the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (Across, along)
The percentage of learners who got the above question correct (question 9, appendix 2), they must have considered the fact that the movement is 'up to the other side of the road hence the answer is 'across' and not 'along'. The rest of the teachers views are summarised in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Factors that determine learners’ choice of a preposition as given by teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consider understanding of concept</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guesswork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rely on their understanding of mother tongue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers therefore strongly revealed as shown by the percentage representations on table 4.3 on factors used by learners as they use prepositions that; learners did not have a logical way of determining which prepositions to use at any particular time, as there were no properly laid down rules guiding their usage a claim given by Lawal, (2004).

The most important factors that learners should consider while making a choice on which preposition to use include, frames of reference and variance in ground determinants,. These two falls under the understanding of the context of usage which recorded very minimal percentages as revealed by the 33.0%. Otherwise majority of the learners used guesswork as shown by the
50% revelation given by teachers while choosing the preposition to use in a particular context. These are expected to enable curriculum designers to factor in useful tips in the instructional materials for learners which will make the use of prepositions less difficult for learners. With these finding at hand, the researcher then proceeded to the third objective which was to find out the grammatical challenges that learners face while using prepositions.

4.4 Grammatical challenges faced by learners as they use prepositions

The third objective of the study was to find out the grammatical challenges that learners face as they make a choice on which preposition to use in a given context. As discussed in our literature review, prepositional meanings include those of space, time, instrument, and cause. However, as observed by Quirk, (1972: 315), sometimes prepositions exhibit several senses and meaning extensions which may be a challenge to the learners. It is the prototype theory of linguistics that came in handy in our research to enable us to find out if indeed learners had a challenge in using other meaning extensions of a preposition away from the prototype. Some of these challenges may have been pointed out in the above discussion on the prior objectives. In this subsection, we will have an in-depth discussion of each challenge as found out in the learners tests 1 and 2, (see appendices 2 and 3). The researcher grouped the challenges into a typology of issues related to the usage of prepositions.
4.4.1 Correlating issues for governed prepositions

Governed prepositions have been discussed at length in subsection 4.2.1 of our findings for objective one, especially for the semantic function of prepositions. The fact that governed prepositions can only take a particular word to complete its meaning and not another was the reason why learners recorded a very small percentage of correctness for the pairs angry at, ban on, and abide by. The three had 7.5%, 20.0% and 22.5% respectively for all students. A recap of this representation is given below in Fig 3.

**Fig 3. Percentage of students who matched governed pairs of Prepositions correctly**

From Test 1, (see appendix 2) the multiple choice questions 1-5 given to learners' to choose from and make a proper construction of a governed pair, the learners' competence was again questionable in using governed pairs of prepositions except for only two; account for and fond of as discussed in subsection 4.2.1 above. 80% of the learners gave *angry with and *angry about (see appendix 2 question 3) as compared to only 7.5% who gave angry at. Surprisingly for the researcher, 78.5% of the learners could not complete
**abide by** correctly. Over 60% of them ended up giving **abide with**, as seen in the examples below, yet it was a common phrase in the schools’ rules and regulations list. (see appendix 2, question 4, sample responses A4, A5, B3, and B6),

*(A4) All students are required to abide - with--- the school rules and regulations (with, by)
*(A5) All students are required to abide --with-- the school rules and regulations (with, by)
*(B 6) All students are required to abide --with-- the school rules and regulations (with, by)

As for **ban on**, the 20.0% score by the learners could have been an indication of a deficiency in their understanding of the word **ban** hence ended up giving the wrong correlation. (See appendix 2, question no. 3, response B6 and B11).

(B 6) I would support a ban...... **for** ... smoking in restaurants (on, for)

(B11) I would support a ban...... **for** ... smoking in restaurants (on, for)

Again when one looks at the learners understanding of the preposition **for** in Kiswahili, it means ‘ya’, which directly translates to the learners’ choice of ‘for’ As mentioned earlier, this knowledge from another language did not help the learners.

These findings pointed out another interesting area in research of looking at learners levels of competence in using other lexical items which require other word classes for them to make sense. For instance a study of verbs where
words like ‘ban’ falls under. If the findings of such a research were merged with the ones of the current study, then more comprehensive recommendations can be made pertaining language pedagogy relating to grammatical aspects in the learning and use of lexical items.

And, as Lawal (2004) points out, the only potent weapon against the problems encountered in prepositional usage is to learn them by rote. This calls for their proper representation in the instructional materials to be used by the teachers of English in the field. This is the only way the minimal percentages of correctness registered in Fig 3 can be improved.

4.4.2 Overlap with other word classes

In our literature review, we pointed out that there are several points of similarity between prepositions and other word classes and constructions in English grammar, in particular, conjunctions and adverbs, Quirk, (1985). This similarity includes the phonological form which came out as a great challenge to the learners especially in bringing out the correct syntactic function as discussed in section 4.2.2. In the learners sentences in appendix 3, learners confused the use of prepositions to, since, about, till, off, and used them as ‘to’ infinitive, conjunction, expression of quantity, verb and as adverb particle respectively, as shown in the examples;

*(B6) He was sent to buy one kilogramme of sugar. (to infinitive)

(B2) They had to cross since they were in a hurry (conjunction)

This confusion was noted in very close range degrees for both the boys and the girls. For instance as seen in fig. 4 below, the confusion for ‘to’ as a
preposition, 22% of girls used it as an infinitive compared to 25% of the boys. This range is repeated for the fore-mentioned prepositions at percentages of 13% vs. 21%, 13% vs. 11%, 9% vs. 0% and a uniform percentage for the confusion between 'off' as a preposition and 'off' as an adverb particle. This revealed to the researcher that the challenge of differentiating prepositions with other phonologically similar word classes cuts across the students' population of both boys and girls.

The fact that an equal number of students used 'off' as an adverb particle pointed out a gap in research where linguists can carry out a study to ascertain the competence levels of the second learners of English use of phrasal verbs. This, the researcher felt would help ease the confusion witnessed in this section.

**Fig. 4 percentages of girls vs. Boys confusion of prepositions and other word classes**
4.4.3 Learners' confusion of certain prepositions which have a closely related meaning

In our literature review, we mentioned that prepositional usage is one of the most difficulty aspects of English grammar for non native speakers of English to master, (Celce- Murcia & Larsen- freeman, 1999). This can partly be attributed to the fact that prepositions serve similar relational meanings and therefore can be confusing to the learners. This claim was substantiated by the learners response in test 1, ( see appendix 2) where for instance as seen in table 4.4.3 below, 40% of the students confused the use of with and by in question 4 of appendix 2.

This can be attributed to the fact that both 'by', and 'with' are prepositions that give a relational meaning of instrument, hence unless a learner looks keenly at the context of usage then they may end up confusing one for the other.

The same confusion was witnessed in the learners' responses of test 2, where actually some learners avoided constructing sentences using 'by' as seen from student respondents B6, and B1 (see appendix 3)
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The same confusion was witnessed in the learners' responses of test 2, where actually some learners avoided constructing sentences using ‘by’ as seen from student respondents B6, and B1 (see appendix 3)
Table 4.4.3 percentages of confusion by learners for some of the prepositions giving similar relational meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>prepositions</th>
<th>Frequency of confusion</th>
<th>% of frequency of confusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With and by</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below and under</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By and in</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along and across</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following these findings, the researcher concluded that there is a pressing need for grammarians in Kenya aided by researchers to come up with instructional materials which give an in-depth analysis into the idiosyncracies of the above prepositions in order to aid in easing the confusion witnessed in the learners. By giving all the aspects of each of the above prepositions including the specific contexts in which each of them can be used and not another will be a great milestone not just for the students but for the teachers of English as a second language too. This is because as lexical semantics demands, each of the words in a language have meaning and that there is a strong relation between those words and meaning that is why learners should be competent in how they use prepositions.

Learners should therefore be aided to move away from the central (prototype) meaning of a preposition and look at other meaning extensions that may have been required by the question.
Table 4.4.3 percentages of confusion by learners for some of the prepositions giving similar relational meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>prepositions</th>
<th>Frequency of confusion</th>
<th>% of frequency of confusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below and under</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By and in</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along and across</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following these findings, the researcher concluded that there is a pressing need for grammarians in Kenya aided by researchers to come up with instructional materials which give an in-depth analysis into the idiosyncracies of the above prepositions in order to aid in easing the confusion witnessed in the learners. By giving all the aspects of each of the above prepositions including the specific contexts in which each of them can be used and not another will be a great milestone not just for the students but for the teachers of English as a second language too. This is because as lexical semantics demands, each of the words in a language have meaning and that there is a strong relation between those words and meaning that is why learners should be competent in how they use prepositions.

Learners should therefore be aided to move away from the central (prototype) meaning of a preposition and look at other meaning extensions that may have been required by the question.
This discussion has revealed the grammatical challenges faced by learners while using prepositions which included the correlating issues for governed prepositions, the overlap with other word classes, and the learners’ confusion of certain prepositions which have a closely related meaning. This then takes us to our final objective which was to find out the teachers’ views concerning these grammatical challenges faced by their learners as they used prepositions.

4.5 Teachers of English used in our Study.

Having been a teacher of English in Kenya for close to ten years, the researcher was certain that the teachers of English who interact with the given population under study must have various views concerning the challenges discussed in section 4.4 above. In the choice of teachers, the researcher went for a cross section of teachers in terms of years of experience, their education level and their gender too. The purpose of choosing teachers who had more than 10 years of experience as seen in table 4.5, and others with a masters degree was to get a comprehensive feel of the challenges since if a teacher who has taught for only 3 years gives the same view as the one with over 10 years, then that view must hold water. The gender of the teachers was also important since the student population was of both genders too. Table 4.5 gives the demographic information of the teachers used in our study.
Table 4.5 Demographic information of teachers of English used in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic information</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A) Level of education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Masters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Undergraduate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B) Years of teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 1-3 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 4-6 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 7-10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. More than 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C) Gender of the teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Females</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Males</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The six teachers of English who were currently teaching form three students gave varying views concerning the areas of scrutiny by the researcher as discussed in the subsequent sections below.

4.5.1 Teachers Views on Grammatical Challenges faced by Learners

The six teachers of English gave various views concerning the grammatical challenges as experienced by their students on prepositional choice as follows;

i. 100% of the teachers used in our study concurred that their learners found prepositions difficult to understand hence they often gave the wrong choice of preposition especially in exercises requiring them to fill in blank spaces

ii. 83.30% of the teachers revealed that syntactically, students confuse prepositions with adverbs and adverb particles

iii. 50% of the teachers in our study noted that their learners have a challenge in using prepositions that convey more than one meaning and 33.30% of teachers said learners find filling in governed prepositions a challenge too.

iv. 50% of the teachers also reported that learners find prepositions that are used with different verbs to give unrelated meaning. E.g. it is
difficult to understand why 'cut through' and 'cut across' are different or 'put out' and 'put off' are different, a difficulty concept.

v. 50% again pointed out that learners tend to confuse the common prepositions which have several relational meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>No. of times a challenge was mentioned by teachers</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty to understand</td>
<td>6 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating between prepositions and other word classes</td>
<td>5 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>83.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot use one prepositions for several functions</td>
<td>3 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most find prepositions confusing</td>
<td>3 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing prepositions in their correct syntactic position</td>
<td>3 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge in filling in governed pairs</td>
<td>2 out of 6 teachers</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From table 4.5.1, it can clearly be noted that the dominance of the challenges noted in learners tallied with the kind of responses given by students in their two tests. The greatest challenge that the teachers pointed out at 100% percentage response was the difficulty to understand prepositions as a lexical item which made learners not clearly differentiate the many relational meanings expressed by the same preposition. This the researcher felt was what led to the confusion that was witnessed in the learners responses as they made a choice on which preposition to use in test 1 (see appendix 2). For instance when 82% of learners confused the use of ‘at’, ‘for’, and ‘of’ in question 14 (see appendix 2), it was a clear indication that learners have a deficiency in differentiating not just the core meanings of these three prepositions when used in isolation, but also on what innate qualities would differentiate one from the other in a given context.

This finding indicates that there is a need for curriculum designers to come up with instructional materials that give all the semantic features of prepositions as well as those of their complements in order to aid in giving the correct relational meanings. When this is done, Lakoff (1980) and Langacker (1987) reference to the terms Trajector and landmark (Trajector, the element that is located with respect to it and Landmark, the entity that is construed as the reference point) to show how the entities in a sentence relate to one another, will come in handy and help in simplifying the understanding of prepositional meanings. E.g., when we say that someone is ‘in trouble’ we are treating trouble as a container and themselves as a contained object.
Differentiating prepositions from other word classes closely follows the above challenge as respondents' level of agreement stood at 83%. This backed up the data collected from learners where as seen in fig 4.4.2, 43% of learners used 'off' as adverb particle instead of a preposition (see appendix 3, respondent B6).

The least experienced challenge by students according to the teachers' responses is the one presented by the governed pairs of prepositions at a percentage of 33.3%. This for the researcher meant that with a little effort at teaching the correlating pairs as they occur, then this challenge can be eliminated.

In line with our objectives for this study, which included the various ways that learners use prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions, 50% of the teachers of English in our study reported that their learners had a challenge in choosing prepositions for the intended semantic function. Secondly, learners' having a preposition followed by the correct complement, to bring out the intended syntactic function, was a challenge too, (See teachers sampled responses in appendix 3). The polysemous nature of prepositions which falls under the semantic function was also reported by 50% of teachers as being a challenge to the learners because they find it difficult to use one preposition to bring out various senses.

The findings in table 4.5.1 above indicate that teachers have pointed out in overwhelming percentages of 100% that their learners find prepositions a difficult concept to grasp and that learners highly confuse prepositions due to their polysemous nature.
This therefore calls for a keen scrutiny into the instructional methods employed in teaching prepositions which may in turn ease the other challenges experienced by learners in their choice and usage of prepositions.

4.5.2 The most challenging prepositions to form three students as given by their teachers

In the process of analysing the teachers’ views, teachers gave prepositions which according to them were the most challenging to their learners, (see appendix 3)

Table 4.5.2. Most challenging prepositions to the learners according to the teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>% of respondents (teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>4 N=6</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of</td>
<td>4 N=6</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td>3 N=6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>3 N=6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since</td>
<td>3 N=6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At</td>
<td>3 N=6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into</td>
<td>2 N=6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>1 N=6</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With</td>
<td>2 N=6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over</td>
<td>2 N=6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
<td>1 N=6</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through</td>
<td>1 N=6</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Across</td>
<td>1 N=6</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beside</td>
<td>1 N=6</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the teachers, 66.6% of them concurred that the preposition ‘in’ and ‘of’ were the most challenging to the learners. These two are closely followed by the prepositions, from, for, since at, with a view to and in view of at a percentage of 50% by the teachers. *Into* was mentioned by 33.3% of the teachers and the rest, *before, off, along, beside, across, through, and to*, were the least mentioned in terms of difficulty as they attracted a minimal percentage of 16.6%. These findings imply that when prepositions exhibit several senses and meaning extensions as observed by (Quirk et al, 1972:p.315) when he gives a stage by stage extension of the metaphorical usage of ‘in’, then learners need to move away from the prototype and look at other meaning extensions as illustrated by Quirk in the following stage by stage extension of the metaphorical usage of ‘in’

- **In** shallow water (purely literal)
- **In deep water** (metaphorical to mean in trouble)
- **In a spot** (metaphorical to mean in a difficult situation)
This argument about some prepositions as being the most challenging to learners is backed up by Hudson (1985) when he gave seven functions of the preposition 'at' (see section 2.2.3.2, literature review). This explains why 50% of the teachers gave 'at' as a challenging preposition to their learners.

The findings of this section have extreme implications on the levels of competence of the learners of English as a second language in Kenya as well as their instructors who must ensure that for each preposition in English, learners must be taken through each of their functions so as to ease their use.

Because of the 83% of the teachers (see table 4.5.3) who strongly agreed that if concepts in prepositions where presented in more detail and adequate illustrations given for easier teaching and understanding this study feels that the above challenge would be eased (see appendix 3 respondent B2). This discussion takes us to the next subsection in which we will discuss the teachers’ views concerning their students’ competence in using prepositions.

4.5.3 Students’ Competence in using prepositions

The teachers of English in our study also gave varying degrees of the overall competence of the students as they used prepositions. A student’s competence in using a lexical item is ideally measured by the ease with which they correctly perform a certain task related to that item. The following is a tabulation of the teachers’ responses concerning the items relating to competence in the use of prepositions on the likert scale of the questionnaire.
Table 4.5.3 Students’ levels of competence in their choice of prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Dis.</th>
<th>Dis.</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>S Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form three students find prepositions a difficulty concept</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form three students avoid answering questions using words that entail a preposition</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form three students’ competence in the use of prepositions especially the governed ones is quite poor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form three students find using prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic context quite a challenge</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form three students grapple with using one preposition to refer to various senses</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form three students use their own rules to come up with the correct preposition to use</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers view prepositions as a difficult concept for their learners too</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers would be happy if concepts in prepositions were presented in more detail and illustrations given for easier teaching and understanding of the lexical item</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=6
The teachers of English in our study pointed out at a percentage of 83% (see table 4.5.3), on the likert scale items of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) that their learners found it difficult to use prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic contexts. This was a strong confirmation of the students performance in test 1 which showed that on the extreme, 90% of the learners could not for instance make the correct choice between under and below and fill in question 20 in appendix 2. This table is therefore a summary of the findings that had been discussed concerning the challenges faced by learners as they used prepositions. For instance, 100% of the teachers used in this study agreed that learners' competence in the use of governed pairs of prepositions is quite poor. This correlates with the learners' actual performance in test 1, where for question 2, which had tested 'angry at', only 7.5% of the students could get the pair correctly.

In our earlier discussion too, we had also pointed out that learners of English as a second language, grapple with using one preposition to refer to various senses. This closely was exhibited by the learners in test 2, (see appendix 3) where they were expected to construct different sentences using the same preposition to bring out different meanings. In this test 40% of the learners, as seen in table 4.2.1(b), confused the use of with and by and ended up giving mixed up meanings. For example student (B6, in appendix 3) gives the following sentences for by, and with;

i. Use of with *We travelled by bus (the student does not even see the difference between what is on the left and what they have used to make a sentence.)
ii. Student B1 constructs 4 sentences using 'with' and completely avoids the use of 'by'.

These examples are clearly a reflection of our earlier discussion on the gravity of the need for learners to have the right factors that should come into play as they make their choice on which preposition to use.

This will help them desist from using guesswork as pointed out by 50% of the teachers and instead look at the context of usage as well as other frames of references as discussed in section 2.2.3.4 of our literature review.

4.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study have clearly highlighted the areas of difficulty experienced by learners as they use prepositions. The study has showed that the English preposition is a lexical item which requires second speakers of English to have adequate knowledge concerning its usage in order to be able to correctly make a choice. This is because as Swan, (1988) points out, most of the prepositions have several different functions and there are not many rules to help in choosing which preposition to use correctly. This could be the reason why even when the target population has achieved a high level of proficiency in English, considering their level of education, they still struggle with knowing how to choose prepositions correctly.

In line with our first objective of our study which sought to find out how learners use prepositions for the correct syntactic and semantic function, this study concludes that learners' competence in this aspect is inadequate. This was especially noted in the learners responses in test 1 and 2 (see appendix 2.
where for instance only 10% of all respondents could use the preposition **under** vs. **below** correctly. This could be because of the learners’ inability to identify some of the meaning extensions of a preposition away from the central. This was the greatest grammatical challenge noted. This study therefore suggests that it’s paramount that the context of usage of a certain preposition be considered before one makes a choice. This would help in dealing with the finding from the teachers’ views concerning the strategies that learners employ while choosing the preposition to use. It was a shocking revelation when 50% of the teachers reported that their students used guesswork.

This study also concludes that the presentation of the preposition in the learners’ instructional materials is inadequate and should therefore be improved to capture the idiosyncrasies of each preposition which should include all the meaning extensions. Although this was beyond the scope of this study, the research found it a point worth noting as it came up in the teachers’ views’ when 83% of the teachers (see table 4.5.3), advocated for this review. This according to the teachers will not only ease the difficult in usage of the preposition but also aid in its teaching and subsequent understanding.

Some of the factors that are thought to be of prime importance to be considered by learners should include variance in ground as well as the reference point from which a preposition is used. This is a wakeup call to the teachers of English to see how best to equip their learners so that the use of prepositions may stop being a murky experience for them.
Since our aim was to find out how learners make a choice in determining which preposition to use and not another, these findings will go a long way in enabling curriculum designers review the presentation of the preposition in the learners text books as recommended in this study.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has spelt out the ways in which learners use prepositions to bring out the semantic and syntactic functions. The findings have indicated that the learners experience quite a number of grammatical challenges as they use prepositions. The most outstanding challenge noted was the inability to choose the right preposition for the correct relational meaning. Learners were also found to confuse prepositions with other word classes. The teachers of English views revealed that learners considered prepositional usage a difficult task. These findings implied that the learners' reliance on their first language and Kiswahili could be the biggest hurdle which when dealt with through a proper presentation of the preposition in the learners text books then, the learners competence in handling prepositions would improve.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter has a summary of the findings, conclusions and also recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The study which was carried out in Machakos County was geared towards investigating the choice of prepositions by form three students. The study worked with the assumption that there were various challenges that form three students face while choosing the right prepositions to use in order to bring out the correct syntactic and semantic function. A further assumption was that, in order to overcome the above challenges the researcher assumed that the learners must come up with their own ways of overcoming them by employing various strategies. These assumptions were tested and proven using the students' tests and questionnaires for teachers as our main tools of collecting data.

It was found out from the scores of the students' tests that, there were specific challenges which need to be addressed in order to improve the learners' competence in the use of prepositions. These include, the difficulty by learners to use prepositions for the correct syntactic and semantic function because they confuse one prepositional meaning for another, students inability to complete governed pairs of prepositions, students' incompetence in
differentiating a preposition from other word classes hence not bringing out the syntactic function and finally the inability to use one preposition to bring out various senses.

Besides the challenges and the way learners made a choice of a preposition, the researcher also found out that learners do not have knowledge of the factors that should come into play when making a choice of the preposition to use. These factors include; frames of reference and variances in ground determinants as discussed in our literature review. Lack of this knowledge has therefore left learners with one major strategy when faced with a difficulty in choosing which preposition to use, as revealed by 50% of the teachers - 'guesswork'. This may be so because in their attempt not to leave blank spaces, they end up filling in with any available option.

The factors that the learners employ while choosing the preposition to use were revealed by the teachers through the questionnaires. It was however a great shock to the researcher when 50% of the teachers reported that their students used guesswork. Moreover it was established that the use of prepositions to bring out its correct syntactic and semantic functions was a major hurdle to overcome by learners as seen by the high percentages of incorrect use in table 4.2.1 where 72% of the learners could not make the correct choice between in, with, and by. This the researcher felt was a matter of urgency to be addressed by the teachers' and curriculum designers since inappropriate choice of a preposition in turn leads to improper communication.
among learners and also between them and their teachers. This study suggests that those tasked with designing the learners' syllabus could use these findings and compare them with the way in which the preposition is presented in the current learners English textbooks.

The above findings point out an issue of prime concern in terms of the effectiveness in using lexical items by learners, prepositions being one of them. This puts pressure on curriculum developers to ensure that the presentation of prepositions as a lexical item in the textbooks is improved to include the factors that should come into play while using prepositions. Although this was beyond the scope of this research, it was brought to the researchers attention by the fact that 83% of the teachers unanimously agreed that if prepositions are presented in more detail and illustrations given to aid their teaching, then the understanding and subsequent use of this lexical item would cease to be a nightmare, for learners of English as a second language.

5.3 Conclusion

From this study which has explored the ways in which learners use prepositions, the discussion on the findings clearly met the objectives of this research. The objectives included; the ways in which learners use prepositions, the grammatical challenges that they face while doing so as well as the teachers views on those challenges and lastly the factors that come into play as learners make a choice on which preposition to use. Other issues that came up in the course of our study included the learners' levels of competence as they used prepositions as revealed by the teachers' responses in the
questionnaires. It is here that 83% of the teachers strongly pointed out on the likert scale items of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) that their learners found it difficult to use prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic contexts.

The grammatical challenges that learners faced while using prepositions included, the correlating issues for governed prepositions, the overlap with other word classes, and the learners’ confusion of certain prepositions which have a closely related meaning. This study advocates that these challenges can only be addressed when learners are taken through the right strategies to use while making a choice. These factors include, considering the context in which a preposition has been used and also the other meaning extensions which could not in any way be related to the prototype. This has also opened a gap for further study on the pedagogic methods that can be used to teach prepositions as a lexical item for better understanding which would be reflected through usage.

5.4 Recommendations

In reference to our study’s findings, the following recommendations can be made regarding the choice and usage of prepositions by form three students in Machakos County.

Concerning language pedagogy, there is need for learners to be properly guided through the learning of prepositions as a lexical item. This emanated from the revelation by teachers that learners find using prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic context quite a challenge.
We therefore recommend that teachers of English take note of the difficulties that learners face and suggest them to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, so that this can be put into consideration when writing English course books to be used by second language learners of English in Kenya. Curriculum designers therefore need to conduct a survey not only on the challenges experienced by learners while using prepositions in English, as revealed by the findings of this research, but also on other lexical items which will then enable them present adequate information in the learners' course books. This will in turn build their competence in using them. Such a survey would be a great milestone in helping students improve their effectiveness of communication using the English lexical items. This survey can be backed up by the findings of this research which strongly indicated that learners' levels of competence in the use of English prepositions need to be improved because of the low percentages of correctness recorded in their tests. Teachers of English too must ensure that, for each preposition in English, learners must be taken through each of their functions so as to ease their use. This will go a long way in easing the confusion witnessed in the learners.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused only on choice of prepositions by form three students in selected schools in Machakos County. It was mainly concerned with describing the ways in which learners used prepositions to bring out their syntactic and semantic functions as well as unravelling the challenges that learners face while doing so.

The study also looked at the factors that should come into play to ease the task of making a choice on which preposition to use.
There are therefore several areas that go beyond the scope of this study which can form interesting areas for further research.

Our study concentrated on two extra county public schools, a larger cross section of schools which include sub county and national schools may be used for a more expansive study covering students of different abilities. This could probably provide a more inclusive sample hence may yield more reliable results.

This study also suggests that studies can be carried out on the presentation of the preposition in various text books. This is in line with the teachers’ proposal in this study that prepositions should be presented in a more diagrammatic way so that learners can visualise them and that, it will be easier for them too to prepare appropriate teaching aids which concur with the diagrams in the course books. This will go a long way in providing useful information concerning the idiosyncrancies of this particular lexical item.

This study investigated the choice of the preposition only. Other lexical items can be investigated too, for instance the adverbs, and conjunctions too which have various meanings. When the findings of such research will be merged with those of the current study, they will go a long way in helping those tasked with designing the syllabus to come up with comprehensive materials for teaching second learners of English in Kenya. Our study focused on choice of prepositions by high school students. We suggest that a similar study can be carried out on higher institutions of learning where teachers of English are trained to find out if they too experience similar challenges as those faced by high school learners of English.
5.5 Chapter summary

This final chapter of our study has summarised the findings, made conclusions and gave recommendations on what the researcher feels should be done to help learners deal with the challenges that they face while using prepositions. The chapter has also suggested areas for further research which included carrying out a study on how the prepositions are presented to the learners in the instructional materials available for them. Other studies that can be carried out in line with the current study to help bring out more expansive results include an investigation of how learners use other lexical items so that the overall competence by learners in using grammatical structures can be arrived at.
References


101


APPENDIX 1: TEACHERS’ QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study for which this questionnaire is designed is to examine the teachers’ views on the grammatical challenges that their form three students face as they make various choices regarding prepositions. All the responses and information you give will be treated with confidentiality and only used for analytical purposes of this study. Kindly give your views by filling in the blank spaces or putting a tick in the appropriate corresponding space.

SECTION A

Tick as appropriate

A) Your sex
   i. Male
   ii. Female

B) Level of education
   i. Diploma
   ii. Bachelor’s degree
   iii. Masters degree

C) Years of experience
   i. 1-3
   ii. 3-5
iii. 6-10

iv. 11-15

v. 15 and above

SECTION B

Answer the following appropriately

i. Do you teach form 3 students?

ii. For how long have you been a teacher of English?

iii. Do your students have a problem in choosing the right preposition to communicate the intended relational meaning?

iv. Which prepositions have you particularly noted to be challenging to your students?

v. Are your students able to use prepositions for the correct syntactic and semantic functions?
vi. What grammatical challenges do they face as they use prepositions to bring out their correct syntactic and semantic functions?

vii. As the students use prepositions what factors do you think come into play as they determine their choice of one preposition over another?

viii. From your assessment can your students clearly distinguish between a preposition and other phonologically similar lexical items like particles and conjunctions?

ix. What is their greatest grammatical challenge as they do so?
x. Are your students able to use one preposition to correctly refer to various relational meanings? For instance 'at'------------------------------------------
                                                                                           
xi. In your assessment tests do you test your students on the use of governed prepositions?-----------------------------------------------
                                                                                           
xii. Can the students then complete the governed pair with the correct preposition? -----------------------------------------------
                                                                                           
xiii. What grammatical challenges do they face in performing the above task?-----------------------------------------------
                                                                                           
xiv. How do you think the students can be helped to overcome the above challenges?-----------------------------------------------
                                                                                           
SECTION C

In the following section indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below which will form the basis of our research objectives.

KEY

SA- Strongly agree (5mks)
A- Agree (4mks)
U- Undecided (3mks)
D- Disagree (2mks)
SD- Strongly disagree (1mk)

Tick as appropriate
i. According to you, do form three students find prepositions a difficulty concept?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

ii. Form three students avoid answering questions using words that entail a preposition?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

iii. Form three students' competence in the use of prepositions especially the governed ones is quite poor?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

iv. Form three students find using prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic context quite a challenge?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

v. Form three students grapple with using one preposition to refer to various senses?
SA A U D SD
107
vi. Form three students use their own rules to come up with the correct preposition to use?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

vii. Teachers view prepositions as a difficult concept for their learners too?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

viii. Teachers would be happy if concepts in prepositions were presented in more detail and illustrations given for easier teaching and understanding of the lexical item?
SA A U D SD
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
APPENDIX  | Teachers’ questionnaire

Introduction

The purpose of this study for which this questionnaire is designed is to examine the teachers' views on the grammatical challenges that their form three students face in the choice and usage of prepositions. All the responses and information you give will be treated with confidentiality and only used for analytical purposes of this study. Kindly give your views by filling in the blank spaces or putting a tick in the appropriate corresponding space.

SECTION A

Tick as appropriate

A) Your sex

  i. Male
  ii. Female

B) Level of education

  i. Diploma
  ii. Graduate
  iii. Masters

C) Years of experience

  i. 1-3
  ii. 3-6
  iii. 6-10
  iv. 10-15
  v. 15 and above
SECTION B

Answer the following appropriately

i. Do you teach form 3 students?  
   Yes

ii. For how long have you been a teacher of English?  
    Four years

iii. Do your students have a problem in choosing the right preposition to convey the intended relational meaning?  
    Yes

iv. Which prepositions have you particularly noted to be challenging to your students?  
    At, from, in, to, into, for, of

v. Are your students able to use prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic contexts?  
   Some students are able while others are not.

vi. What grammatical challenges do they face as they use prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic contexts?  
   They are not sure where to place prepositions in their sentence
vii. As the students use prepositions what factors do you think come into play as they determine their choice of one preposition over another? They consider factors like location, meaning intended.

viii. From your assessment can your students clearly distinguish between a preposition and other phonologically similar lexical items like particles and conjunctions? No.

ix. What is their greatest grammatical challenge as they do so? It's difficult to identify the usage of prepositions and particles or conjunctions.

x. Are your students able to use one preposition to correctly refer to various relational meanings? For instance 'at' No.

xi. In your assessment tests do you test your students on the use of governed prepositions? Yes.
xii. Can the students then complete the governed pair with the correct preposition?

A few students can. Others find it difficult.

xiii. What grammatical challenges do they face in performing the above task?

They are unable to use the correct preposition.

Some students do not know that some nouns or verbs must be followed by a certain preposition.

xiv. How do you think the students can be helped to overcome the above challenges?

They should be encouraged to use the prepositions in debates/speech.

If they make mistakes, they should be corrected.

xv. What method of instruction do you propose for other teachers of English that can help equip their learners with the best skill to help them in making the correct choice of a preposition?

Demonstration using reality and other teaching aids.

-----------------------------------
SECTION C

In the following section indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below which will form the basis of our research objectives.

KEY

SA- Strongly agree (5mks)
A- Agree (4mks)
U- Undecided (3mks)
D- Disagree (2mks)
SD- Strongly disagree (1mk)

Tick as appropriate

i. According to you, form three students find prepositions a difficulty concept?
   SA A U D SD
   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

ii. Form three students avoid answering questions using words that entail a preposition?
   SA A U D SD
   ( ) (✓) ( ) ( ) ( )

iii. Form three students' competence in the use of prepositions especially the governed ones is quite poor?
   SA A U D SD
   ( ) (✓) ( ) ( ) ( )

iv. Form three students find using prepositions in their correct syntactic and semantic context quite a challenge?
   SA A U D SD
   ( ) (✓) ( ) ( ) ( )
v. Form three students grapple with using one preposition to refer to various senses?

vi. Form three students use their own rules to come up with the correct preposition to use?

vii. Teachers view prepositions as a difficult concept for their learners too?

viii. Teachers would be happy if concepts in prepositions were presented in more detail and illustrations given for easier teaching and understanding of the lexical item?
APPENDIX 2:

Students' Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond………her baby sister ( with, of )
2. The teacher was angry ………..his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about)
3. I would support a ban………smoking in restaurants(on, for)
4. All students are required to abide ———the school rules and regulations (with, by)
5. The accounts clerk could not account ……….the missing cash (of, for)
6. Who is the older girl ……… the two? ( among, between)
7. I do all the cooking and ……….that I help Tom. (beside, besides)
8. The temperature is three degrees ………zero. (over, above)
9. It took several minutes to walk…….the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along)
10. The girl made many friends ………her stay in England. (in, during)
11. The distance from here ………the river is 3 kilometers (to, till)
12. He came ………the room laughing, but he went out crying.(in, into, towards)
13. I'll see you ……… March. (in, on)
14. I bought a book ……… fifty pence. (at, for, of)
15. The mother pressed the sick child …… her bosom for warmth.(against, at)
16. Who’s the woman ……… the red dress. (in, with, by)
17. I haven’t seen Alex ……… Six months. (since, for, within, in)
18. Maria was ashamed………her daughters’ behavior (of, about)
19. A teacher is ……… a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath)
20. Look for the word ……… linguistics. (under, below)
APPENDIX 2:
Sample Students' Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond of her baby sister (with, of) 
2. The teacher was angry with his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about) 
3. I would support a ban on smoking in restaurants (on, for) 
4. All students are required to abide by the school rules and regulations (with, by) 
5. The accounts clerk could not account for the missing cash (of, for) 
6. Who is the older girl between the two? (among, between) 
7. I do all the cooking and besides that I help Tom. (beside, besides) 
8. The temperature is three degrees above zero. (over, above) 
9. It took several minutes to walk across the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along) 
10. The girl made many friends during her stay in England. (in, during) 
11. The distance from here to the river is 3 kilometers (to, till) 
12. He came into the room laughing, but he went out crying. (in, into, towards) 
13. I'll see you in March. (in, on) 
14. I bought a book for fifty pence. (at, for, of) 
15. The mother pressed the sick child against her bosom for warmth. (against, at) 
16. Who's the woman with the red dress. (in, with, by) 
17. I haven't seen Alex since...Six months. (since, for, within, in) 
18. Maria was ashamed about her daughters' behavior (of, about) 
19. A teacher is a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath) 
20. Look for the word linguistics. (under, below)
APPENDIX 2:
Sample Students' Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond..............her baby sister (with, of) □
2. The teacher was angry ..........his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about) □
3. I would support a ban.............smoking in restaurants(on, for) □
4. All students are required to abide ..........the school rules and regulations (with, by) □
5. The accounts clerk could not account .................the missing cash (of, for) □
6. Who is the older girl ..............the two? (among, between) □
7. I do all the cooking and ..............that I help Tom. (beside, besides) □
8. The temperature is three degrees ..............zero. (over, above) □
9. It took several minutes to walk ..............the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along) □
10. The girl made many friends ..............her stay in England. (in, during) □
11. The distance from here ..............the river is 3 kilometers (to, till) □
12. He came ..............the room laughing, but he went out crying.(in, into, towards) □
13. I'll see you ..............March. (in, on) □
14. I bought a book ..............fifty pence. (at, for, of) □
15. The mother pressed the sick child ..............her bosom for warmth.(against, at,) □
16. Who's the woman ..............the red dress. (in, with, by, ) □
17. I haven't seen Alex ..............Six months. (since, for, within, in) □
18. Maria was ashamed ..............her daughters' behavior (of, about) □
19. A teacher is ..............a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath) □
20. Look for the word ..............linguistics. (under, below) □
APPENDIX 2:
Sample Students’ Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond of her baby sister (with, of) ✓
2. The teacher was angry about his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about) ✓
3. I would support a ban on smoking in restaurants (on, for) ✓
4. All students are required to abide by the school rules and regulations (with, by) ✓
5. The accounts clerk could not account for the missing cash (of, for) ✓
6. Who is the older girl between the two? (among, between) ✓
7. I do all the cooking and besides that I help Tom. (beside, besides) ✓
8. The temperature is three degrees above zero. (over, above) ✓
9. It took several minutes to walk along the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along) ✓
10. The girl made many friends during her stay in England. (in, during) ✓
11. The distance from here to the river is 3 kilometers (to, till) ✓
12. He came into the room laughing, but he went out crying. (in, into, towards) ✓
13. I’ll see you in March. (in, on) ✓
14. I bought a book for fifty pence. (at, for, of) ✓
15. The mother pressed the sick child against her bosom for warmth. (against, at) ✓
16. Who’s the woman in the red dress. (in, with, by) ✓
17. I haven’t seen Alex since Six months. (since, for, within, in) ✓
18. Maria was ashamed of her daughters’ behavior (of, about) ✓
19. A teacher is beneath a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath) ✓
20. Look for the word linguistics. (under, below) ✓
APPENDIX 2:
Sample Students' Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond of her baby sister (with, of) ✓
2. The teacher was angry at his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about) ❌
3. I would support a ban on smoking in restaurants (on, for) ✓
4. All students are required to abide by the school rules and regulations (with, by) ✓
5. The accounts clerk could not account for the missing cash (of, for) ✓
6. Who is the older girl between the two? (among, between) ✓
7. I do all the cooking and besides that I help Tom. (beside, besides) ✓
8. The temperature is three degrees above zero. (over, above) ✓
9. It took several minutes to walk across the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along) ✓
10. The girl made many friends during her stay in England. (in, during) ✓
11. The distance from here to the river is 3 kilometers (to, till) ✓
12. He came into the room laughing, but he went out crying. (in, into, towards) ✓
13. I'll see you in March. (in, on) ✓
14. I bought a book for fifty pence. (at, for, of) ❌
15. The mother pressed the sick child against her bosom for warmth. (against, at,✓
16. Who's the woman in the red dress. (in, with, by) ✓
17. I haven't seen Alex for six months. (since, for, within, in) ✓
18. Maria was ashamed of her daughters' behavior (of, about) ❌
19. A teacher is underneath a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath) ✓
20. Look for the word below linguistics. (under, below) ❌
APPENDIX 2:
Sample Students' Assessment Test; 1

Instructions: Choose the correct word to fill in the brackets: (40 marks)

1. Maria is very fond of her baby sister (with, of)

2. The teacher was angry with his students for their misbehavior (with, at, about)

3. I would support a ban on smoking in restaurants (on, for)

4. All students are required to abide by the school rules and regulations (with, by)

5. The accounts clerk could not account for the missing cash (of, for)

6. Who is the older girl among the two? (among, between)

7. I do all the cooking and besides I help Tom. (beside, besides)

8. The temperature is three degrees over zero. (over, above)

9. It took several minutes to walk across the corridor to the exit on the other side of the building. (across, along)

10. The girl made many friends during her stay in England. (in, during)

11. The distance from here to the river is 3 kilometers (to, till)

12. He came into the room laughing, but he went out crying. (in, into, towards)

13. I'll see you in March. (in, on)

14. I bought a book for fifty pence. (at, for, of)

15. The mother pressed the sick child against her bosom for warmth. (against, at)

16. Who's the woman in the red dress. (in, with, by)

17. I haven't seen Alex for six months. (since, for, within, in)

18. Maria was ashamed about her daughters' behavior (of, about)

19. A teacher is beneath a principal in terms of seniority. (underneath, beneath)

20. Look for the word linguistics. (under, below)
APPENDIX 3:

Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along, Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since, From, Within, Towards, Against
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along,
Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since,
From, Within, Towards, Against

1) Under: a) My book is under the table.
   b) The dog is sleeping under the chair.

2) Below: a) She is sitting below the window.
   b) She put her book below her legs.

3) Beneath: a) Salad is beneath the glass.
   b) Beneath the table the tongue.

4) Underneath: a) A man dug underneath the floor.
   b) They danced underneath the roof.

5) Among: a) She was cheered among them.
   b) He was among men who did miracles.

6) Between: a) They played between classroom and.
   b) They will punish our homework.

7) During: a) The famine brought during the drought.
   b) She was punished during last lunch hour exam.

8) In: a) My pen is in the box.
   b) Our books are in the class.

9) Across: a) They passed across the gate.
   b) She crossed across the river.

10) Along: a) He crossed the bridge along it.
    b) She travelled along the river.

11) Beside: Beside....
10. Above: a) She is above me pass mark.
   b) He is above your age.
11. Use: a) They passed over the wall.
     b) They jumped over the fence.
12. At: a) I reached school at 9 o'clock.
      b) They travelled at masinga yesterday.
13. To: a) She is going to the market.
      b) He was sent to bring one kilogram of sugar.
14. Till: a) We will work hard till we achieve our goals.
     b) The students are keeping their promises till the end of the term.
15. On: a) Pen is on the table.
      b) School will close on Thursday.
16. Into: a) She placed pen into the box.
      b) He took it into her pocket.
17. For: a) They grabbed for delay.
      b) Students are working hard for their exams.
18. By: a) By the time I reach there, I have to finish my work.
      b) To finish their assignment by today.
      b) She is writing by hand.
20. About: a) They are about to finish their exams.
      b) She is about to come.
21. Off: a) They switched off the light.
      b) She fainted when you cut off hope.
22. Since: a) Since I entered this school, I have changed my life.
      b) I am managing my business since I started.
23. From: a) I am coming from Masinga Town.
      b) She got advice from his class teacher.
Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along,
Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since,
From, Within, Towards, Against

1 a) The ball is under the table.  
b) The cat is under the chair.

2 a) The student is below the pass mark.  
b) Her temperature is below normal.

3 a) Lucy is beneath the water.  
b) He is underneath the water.

4 a) Mutua is underneath the chair.  
b) The child is among us.

5 a) That ball is not among the others.  
b) The girl is between the river.

6 a) She is between her friends.  
b) She is between her friends.

7 a) He did the work during the lesson.  
b) Mary played during the break.

8 a) The fruit is in the bag.  
b) The water is in the bucket.

9 a) She sat across the river.  
b) He placed the ruler across the table.

10 a) The children played along the river.  
b) Jackline washed along the river.

11 a) Brenda stood beside their friends.  
b) We knelt beside the table.

12 a) Brenda stood beside the chair.  
b) He sang beside the altar.

13 a) The fence is above the students.  
b) The tree is above the house.
14. She has jumped over the fence.
15. a) The book is at the table.
b) The food is at the chair.
16. a) She has gone to the kitchen.
b) He has cried to an extent.
17. a) The bottle has been filled till half-way.
b) She has emptied the till nothing.
18. a) The book is on the bag.
b) The pen is on the chair.
19. a) The stone is into the water.
b) The pencil has fallen into the bucket.
20. a) She has decided to go for the right thing.
b) He has used her pen for drawing.
21. a) We have travelled by a vehicle.
b) I have washed rubbed by a rubber.
22. a) They have written with pens.
b) They have washed with water.
23. a) They have revealed the story about drug abuse.
b) She has cried about the situation.
24. a) We are running short of water.
     We are sleeping of hunger.
     *Directly Translated Sentence*
25. a) It has fallen off her hands.
b) The book has been grabbed off her hands.
26. a) She did not arrive since yesterday.
b) They did what is expected since they are award.
27. a) We travelled from Nairobi to Mombasa.
b) We learn from the class.
28. a) She is within the compound.
b) She has dirtied the environment within the school.
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along,
Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since,
From, Within, Towards, Against

1. The toy... is under the table.
2. The teacher placed the books under the chair yesterday.
3. The pens were placed in the shelf below the books.
4. The student had performance poetry for she was below the average.
5. Roots are ever beneath the earth surface.
6. The sea diver dipped beneath the sea.
7. The policeman called one boy among them.
8. I was among the champions of my year.
9. They were asked here is the elder between them.
10. The ball passed in between her two legs.
11. Settler farms were introduced during colonial period.
12. The school visited the farm during December holiday.
13. The fruits are in the bucket.
14. The teacher said all these should be put in the dustbin.
15. They passed across the river.
16. The tree fell across the road.
17. The money was collected along the road.
1) They passed the old man along the road early in the morning.

2) Beside

3) The bird flew high above the sky.

4) She was above the average.

5) The ball passed over the goal post.

6) The stayed over the river damn the whole day.

7) They waited for her at the gate.

8) She went to write her at home school.

9) The length of the table was three to four meters.

10) The visitor will come tonight?

11) The pen is on the table.

12) The funnel is on the roof dark.

13) The gang break into their house.

14) Their group was broken into two active groups.

15) We passed her by the river on her long home.

16) The baby was collected by the road angry.

17) Some guest spoke with authority.

18) She went with her books home.

19) They saw about five men coming.

20) They saw about ten men coming.

21) The bag was full of zipo points.

22) The kids carried their lunch.
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along, Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since, From, Within, Towards, Against

1. Under: (a) The child's ball is under the seat.
   (b) The puppy is under the tree.

2. Below: (a) She was below her normal degree.
   (b) Her math scores were below average.

3. Beneath: (a) She placed the papers beneath the textbooks.
   (b) Beneath the soil there is moisture.

4. Underneath: (a) Some insects live underneath the ground.
   (b) 

5. Among: (a) She was among the suspects.
   (b) I was among the winning team.

6. Between: (a) He placed the papers between the lamps.
   (b) The winner is between her parents.

7. During: (a) He collapsed during the match.
   (b) We should avoid dating during class times.

8. In: (a) She's in her room.
   (b) They are in the hall.

9. Across: (a) The zebras crossing is across the main road.
   (b) We all passed across the field.

110
10. Along
a) You have to pass along the field.
b) Along the road, there are many barriers.

11. At
a) It will be held at the hall.
b) She is at Dubai now.

12. Over
a) Place the books on the desk.
b) Exam papers are on my table.

13. For
a) They struggled for the release of their brethren.
b) 

14. From
a) She's suffering from malaria.
b) She was from a long journey.

15. Against
a) Don't be against them.
b) They stood against each other.

16. Off
a) The lights were switched off.
b) “Go on” Get off here.

17. Of
a) bd

18. About
a) The news were about the lost fellow.
b) She was about to go when you left.

19. Towards
a) They moved towards the spot.
b) The boat went towards your side.

20. Since
a) Since then, she never came back.
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along,
Beside Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since,
From, Within, Towards, Against

1. Under
   a. The ball was kept under the table.
   b. After crying, the baby slept under the bed.

2. Below
   a. The shoes were kept below the table.
   b. She got below the target of the class.

3. Beneath
   a. Her grandmother was buried beneath the earth's surface.
   b. Mineral salts are found beneath the earth.

4. Underneath
   a. He kept his money underneath the mattress.
   b. He buried it underneath the sewer.

5. Among
   a. They shared the sweets among themselves.
   b. Musa is the tallest among them.

6. Between
   a. The ball was between the rocks.
   b. She was confused to choose between English and Mathematics.

7. During
   a. I slept during the English hour.
   b. Our school teams clashed during the match.
She kept her books in the bag.
She forgot her keys in the car.

We went across the road to reach on time.
Cat crossed the road running before me.

10. Along.
He went along the road when she was visiting her brother-in-law.
She moved along with the situation.

Beside her was a rat eating bread.
She made another choice beside the first one.

I am sitted besides Esther.

13. Above.
God is above all.
The bird flew above the roof.

Brian jumped over the fence.
The ball passed over the sleeping baby.

15. At.
We woke up at dawn.
The teacher stood at the window to admire our fish pond.

16. Till.
Her mother cained her till she fainted.
We laughed till tears rolled down our cheeks.

17. On.
The bag is on the locker.
Her box was on her bed.
18. Into
a. The boy jumped into the swimming pool.
b. The cat jumped into the cup with milk.
19. For.
a. The baby cried for milk.
b. I did all the work for her.
20. By.
a. Our teacher comes to school by car.
b. The announcement was made by the headgirl.
21. With.
a. She went with her mother.
b. He came with a cup of water.
22. About.
a. We learnt about reproduction.
b. What are you talking about?

23. Off
a. The lights went off at night.
b. The car went off.
24. Since
a. I knew her since class eight.
b. I sat here since 12 o'clock.
25. From.
a. I came from Nakuru County.
b. I bought the book from the bookshop.
26. Within.
a. She kept it within the bag.
27. Towards
a. She walked towards the sunset.
b. He ran towards the flagpost.
28. Against
a. The fight was against immorality.
b. The talk was against child labour.

a. She was the cause of the problem.
b. The table is made of wood.

30. To

a. She went to Nairobi.
b. She was to visit her.
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along,
Beside, Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since,
From, Within, Towards, Against

1. (i) The child was left under the bed.
   (ii) All we were all hiding under the tree.
2. (i) The water was below the sea level.
   (ii) The student was below the pass mark.
3. (i) The water was beneath my knees in the morning.
   (ii) The money was found beneath the soil.
4. (i) Mud fish stays underneath the water surface.
   (ii) The gold medal was found underneath the soil.
5. (i) They were among the thieves.
   (ii) She was found among those who were innocent.
6. (i) It usually goes very hot during the day.
   (ii) The truck said we will meet during the day.
7. (i) She arrived in time today. — used as an adjective
   (ii) Their is water in the basin.
8. (i) They passed across the road.
   (ii) They

9. (i) They passed along the busy road.
   (ii) We all passed along the other way.
10. (i) She jumped over the rope.
    (ii) The reason why and we all know what he will get.
11. (i) They decided we will meet at 9:00 a.m.
    (ii) She

12. (i) We will go to Mumbai tomorrow.
    (ii) It is eight minutes to time.
13. (i) We will wait there. — until tomorrow
We will not leave here till they arrive.

We will go on with our studies.

The car is in the box.

They were all put into the car.

They stand in the main lift.

We worked hard for success.

We worked hard for money.

We went with a matatu.

We went with their vehicles.

It was about 9 o'clock when they left.

Where the baby was about to cry when the mother left her.

Were were to be punished since we had not finished assignment.

It was a long journey since from one up to from far.

She was bought a letter from her mother.

She was from the near whom I met her.

They found a matatu within the two hours later ready to depart.

The boat was found within the shelves.

You have to work hard towards your goals.

They were inspiring to work towards more goals.

She was against her sister.

She was against what was being said by the prefects.
APPENDIX 3:
Student Assessment; Question 2:

Use each of the following prepositions in two meaningful sentences:

Under, Below, Beneath, Underneath, Among, Between, During, In, Across, Along, Beside, Besides, Above, Over, At, To, Till, On, Into, For, By, With, About, Of, Off, Since, From, Within, Towards, Against

1a. The book is under the table.
   b. The cow is under the tree.
2a. The chart below is easier than the other one.
   b. The summary below is for Geography.
3a. The cup is beneath the table.
   b. The pen is beneath the book.
4a. The set books are underneath the chair.
   b. The mirror is underneath the table.
5a. Form three and among others shared the paper.
   b. Among you, there is someone who lost her pen.
6a. Between us there is a doctor.
   b. The toilet is between the sitting room and bedroom.
7a. During the last lesson the students were busy.
   b. We will wash clothes during general cleaning.
8a. We are all present in our class.
   b. The teacher is in the office.
9a. The police men passed across the road.
   b. Morning I came across with her. Meaningless.
10a. I passed along the river.
   b. The thieves passed along the way.
11a. The book was beside the teacher.
   b. The pen fell beside me.
12a. The teacher is standing beside us.
   b. Beside us there is someone who lost her pen.
13. The pie chart above is easier.
14. The English book we are above the other form three's.
15. The boy jumped over the fence.
16. I jumped off the window.
17. We ate supper at night.
18. The lunch hour starts at 12:30 PM.
19. The head girl went to the gate.
20. The prefect went to the office morning.
21. We will stay here till tomorrow.
22. The prefect meeting stayed till supper time.
23. The toothbrush is on the table.
24. The book is on the chair.
25. The boy dive into the water.
26. The spoon is into the glasses.
27. We will stay here for an hour.
28. We will read for how long?
29. The fire was put off at this time.
30. Don't put off the fire.
31. Since Monday I never see her.
32. I was reading novel since last week.
33. You are coming from where?
34. The teacher is far from the class.
35. Within a short time, she will disappear.
36. I will finish within two minutes.
37. The child is towards you.
38. The principal is towards me.
39. The teacher is against me.
40. My parents are against you.
41. I will travel by foot.
42. She will travel by bus.
43. I will go with you.
44. She will stay with you.
### Appendix 4: WORK PLAN

**Month/ Year**

**July /November 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct literature review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop research design and test field instruments</td>
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<td>Sampling and identification of subjects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection field work</td>
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<td>Data analysis and interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of bound report</td>
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*Weeks*
### Appendix 5: BUDGET

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<th>Item</th>
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<td>1. Literature search and downloading</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Transport</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Stationery</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Development of research instruments</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Field work</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Food and personal maintenance</td>
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<td>7. Data processing and analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Computing and binding</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>120,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is to certify that
Ms. Eunice Kamanthe Muyoka
of Kenyatta University, 205-6100
embu, has been permitted to conduct
research in Machakos County
on the topic: Choice of Prepositions
by form three students in
selected schools in Machakos County
for the period ending 31st October, 2015

[Signature]

Applicant's Signature

Permit No: NACOSTI/P/15/6193/7183
Date of Issue: 17th August, 2015
Fee Received: Ksh. 1000

Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471, 2241349, 310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

When replying please quote

Ref: No.

NACOSTI/P/15/6193/7183

Eunice Kamanthe Musyoka
Kenyatta University
P.O Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "Choice of prepositions by form three students in selected schools in Machakos County," I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Machakos County for a period ending 31st October, 2015.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Machakos County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Machakos County.

The County Director of Education
Machakos County.
Eunice Kamanthe Musyoka
Kenyatta University
P.O.Box 43844 - 00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

In reference to a letter Ref: No. NACOSTI/P/15/6193/7183 dated 17th/8/2015 from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation regarding the above subject. You are hereby authorized to carry out research on, “Choice of prepositions by form three students in selected schools in Machakos County”, for a period ending 31st October, 2015.

Hellen Muriuki
For: County Director of Education
MACHAKOS
All Deputy County Commissioners

MACHAKOS COUNTY

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is to inform you that Eunice Kamanthe Musyoka of Kenyatta University has been authorized to carry out a research on "Choice of prepositions by form three students in selected schools in Machakos County" for a period ending 31st October, 2015.

Kindly accord her the necessary support.

A.G. KIMANI
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MACHAKOS