



## The Use of English Double Prepositions in English as a Second Language (ESL) Nursing Students

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### Abstract

This study examines the use of English prepositions among students of Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery (SSCNM), Damaturu, with a focus on double prepositions. The goal of this study is to identify common errors, classify error types, determine the most problematic prepositions, analyze underlying causes, and propose instructional solutions. Data were collected from 92 students through questionnaires and essay tasks requiring the insertion of appropriate prepositions in given contexts. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that spatial and directional prepositions posed significant challenges, with "Above" having the highest error rate (39.7%), followed by "Onto" (25.9%) and "Toward" (22.4%). The occurrence of errors involving "Within" and "Into" were lower (5.2% each), while "Without" had the least occurrence (1.7%). This study attributes these difficulties to inadequate exposure to authentic language use, first language interference, and insufficient explicit instruction. To mitigate these challenges, it recommends contrastive analysis in teaching, where English prepositions are compared with their equivalents in students' native languages. Task-based learning should be integrated into nursing scenarios to reinforce contextual understanding. In addition, error analysis workshops should be held to help students identify and correct common prepositional errors. Exposure to authentic English materials, such as medical texts and recorded professional conversations, is also encouraged to enhance practical use. Implementing these strategies can improve students' prepositional competence and overall English proficiency.

**Keywords:** *English Prepositions, Double Prepositions, Error Analysis, Spatial Prepositions, ESL Learners*

### INTRODUCTION

English functions as a global lingua franca and is crucial in communication, education, and commerce across diverse linguistic contexts (Crystal, 2003). As a dominant language in academia, business, and international relations, English proficiency is essential for non-native speakers. However, mastering English grammar presents notable challenges because of its intricate rules and exceptions (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). One persistent difficulty for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners is using complex prepositional structures, particularly multi-word prepositions.

Multi-word prepositions, such as "out of," "into," and "from within," consist of two or more elements that together convey specific spatial, temporal, or abstract relationships (Quirk et al., 1985). Despite their prevalence in English discourse, ESL learners frequently misuse or omit components of these structures, leading to errors that affect both comprehension and fluency. Existing research on prepositional challenges highlights the role of first-language interference, where learners transfer prepositional patterns from their native language to English, often resulting in errors (Odlin, 1989). Interlanguage theory (Selinker, 1972) also explains how ESL learners develop transitional linguistic systems that contribute to the simplification and substitution of prepositional forms (Tarone, 1979).

Empirical studies have confirmed that prepositions are among the most error-prone grammatical elements for ESL learners. Bitchener et al. (2005) found that prepositional errors



represented a significant proportion of mistakes in second-language writing, while [Liao and Fukuya \(2004\)](#) noted that learners often struggle with prepositions that lack direct equivalents in their first language. More recently, [Zyzik \(2018\)](#) emphasized the importance of explicit instruction and corpus-based learning for improving prepositional proficiency. However, many previous studies have focused on general prepositional errors rather than systematically analyzing the unique challenges posed by multi-word prepositions. Furthermore, while researchers have documented common error patterns, fewer studies have tested targeted instructional strategies to enhance ESL learners' accuracy in using these structures.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the specific difficulties that ESL learners encounter in acquiring and using multi-word prepositions. This study identifies error patterns, assesses the role of first-language transfer, and evaluates the effectiveness of instructional strategies in improving learners' accuracy.

Thus, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze common error patterns in ESL learners' multi-word preposition use.
2. To examine the influence of first-language transfer on the acquisition of these structures.
3. To test the effectiveness of explicit instruction, corpus-based learning, and task-based approaches in improving learners' mastery of multi-word prepositions.
4. To develop targeted pedagogical strategies that enhance ESL learners' ability to use multiword prepositions accurately and fluently.

By addressing these objectives, this research contributes to second language acquisition studies and provides practical insights for ESL educators seeking to improve learners' grammatical competence.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study integrates theories from second language acquisition, cognitive linguistics, and pedagogical interventions to address the challenges ESL learners face in mastering English prepositions, particularly double prepositions. This framework synthesizes insights from linguistic transfer, syntactic development, cognitive processing, and instructional methodologies to provide a structured approach to understanding and addressing prepositional errors among ESL learners.

### **Linguistic Transfer and Interlanguage Influence**

Linguistic transfer theory posits that learners often rely on their first language (L1) when acquiring a second language (L2), leading to interlingual interference that contributes to prepositional errors ([Odlin, 1989](#)). This phenomenon is influenced by structural differences between L1 and L2, which affect learners' use of prepositions. Additionally, interlanguage theory highlights how learners develop a transitional linguistic system influenced by both L1 and L2, which can result in unique prepositional usage patterns ([Selinker, 1972](#)).

### **Syntactic Complexity and Cognitive Processing**

Processability Theory suggests that ESL learners acquire grammatical structures sequentially based on their cognitive processing abilities ([Pienemann, 1998](#)). Complex structures, such as double prepositions, emerge at later stages of language development when learners have developed sufficient syntactic competence. This theory emphasizes that learners can produce only what they can process, and the hierarchy of processability constrains the order in which linguistic structures are acquired ([Pienemann, 1998](#)).

### **Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Prepositional Learning**

Cognitive linguistic theories emphasize the role of image schemas and conceptual metaphors in enhancing prepositional understanding (Evans & Tyler, 2020). These theories contend that traditional grammar-based instruction may be insufficient because it does not account for the conceptual meanings underlying prepositions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2023). By focusing on the embodied and experiential aspects of language, cognitive linguistics offers insights into how learners can develop a deeper comprehension of spatial, temporal, and abstract relationships expressed through prepositions (Evans & Tyler, 2020).

### **Pedagogical Approaches to Preposition Instruction**

The framework incorporates pedagogical strategies to improve prepositional accuracy among ESL learners. Explicit instruction has been identified as an effective method for teaching prepositions, providing clear rules and structured practice (Brown & Lee, 2022). However, implicit exposure through natural language use and gamified learning environments also contribute to long-term retention (Williams & Ortega, 2021). Therefore, a blended approach that combines explicit instruction, contextualized learning, and technology-enhanced interventions is advocated to address the diverse needs of learners (Ahmed & Chen, 2023).

### **Empirical Insights from Corpus-Based Analyses**

Corpus-based research on prepositional errors highlights the prevalence of specific mistakes, reinforcing the importance of data-driven teaching methodologies (Biber et al., 2021). Automated feedback mechanisms, including AI-driven grammar checkers, have been shown to reduce prepositional errors, indicating that technology can be leveraged to enhance instructional effectiveness (Crossley et al., 2022). By analyzing large datasets of learner language, educators can identify common error patterns and tailor instruction to address specific issues.

### **Framework Application**

By integrating linguistic transfer theory, cognitive processing principles, cognitive linguistic insights, pedagogical strategies, and empirical data from corpus linguistics, this conceptual framework provides a holistic approach to addressing ESL learners' challenges with English prepositions. This study will use this framework to analyze prepositional errors, develop targeted instructional interventions, and recommend pedagogical best practices for enhancing ESL learners' mastery of English prepositions.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **Challenges in the Use of Prepositions by ESL Learners**

Several studies have examined the specific challenges that ESL learners face when using prepositions. Omenogor and Akpojisher (2024) investigated the difficulties encountered by students at the University of Delta in Nigeria. Their findings highlighted that the multifunctionality of English prepositions creates confusion among ESL learners, especially when such grammatical structures do not exist in their native languages (L1s). Additionally, the structural differences between English and their L1s significantly contribute to these challenges. Similarly, Damayanti and Sundari (2022) conducted a systematic review analyzing trends in prepositional errors among EFL learners. Their study identified interlingual interference as the primary cause of prepositional errors, emphasizing that many learners rely on their L1 rules when attempting to use English prepositions.

Previous research has also shown that prepositional errors among ESL learners stem from syntactic class deficiencies. Chukwukaelo (2016) found that students at Federal Polytechnic Oko,

Nigeria struggled with English prepositions because of limited syntactic knowledge. Many students omitted necessary prepositions or used incorrect ones, which affected sentence meaning and grammatical correctness. Similarly, [Dordevic \(2013\)](#) examined Serbian learners' prepositional usage and revealed that omission errors, such as failing to use "at" after "look" and "to" after "listen," were common. These errors resulted from structural differences between Serbian and English, highlighting the impact of linguistic transfer.

[Lorincz and Gordon \(2012\)](#) further reinforced the notion that prepositions pose difficulties for English learners because of their large number and polysemous nature. Their analysis identified three main error types: substitution, omission, and addition. These errors account for a significant proportion of grammatical errors in ESL writing and speaking. Likewise, [Eyisi \(2004\)](#) argued that Nigerian learners of English frequently misuse prepositions because many are unaware of their correct syntactic functions.

In a more recent study, [Rahman and Singh \(2021\)](#) used corpus analysis to examine errors in preposition usage among Bangladeshi university students. Their findings indicated that learners frequently misused "in," "on," and "at" when describing time and location. This study confirmed that limited exposure to authentic language instruction contributes to errors in prepositional selection.

Several studies have examined the specific challenges that ESL learners face when using prepositions. [Hamzah and Sharifudin \(2017\)](#) analyzed errors related to the prepositions "in," "on," and "at" in essays written by first-year Malay students at the International Islamic College. Their findings indicated that native language interference was a probable source of errors, with students often misusing these prepositions because of differences between their first language and English.

[Fathi \(2024\)](#) investigated the difficulties Libyan EFL university students face when using English prepositions. The study revealed that errors were mainly based on the function and replacement of prepositions, linked to the nature of English prepositions, including polysemy and idiomatic usage. The findings suggested that another strategy for teaching English prepositions must improve students' performance.

### **Difficulties in Learning Double Prepositions**

Focusing specifically on double prepositions, researchers have identified additional challenges related to learners' difficulties in grasping spatial, temporal, and abstract relationships in English. [Jones and Patel \(2019\)](#) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate common errors in double preposition usage. Their study found that students frequently misused prepositions that indicate direction and location, such as "out of" and "into." The researchers emphasized the need for targeted instructional interventions to address these difficulties.

[Garcia and Nguyen \(2020\)](#) conducted a qualitative study analyzing essays and interviews with ESL learners. Their findings revealed that many students struggled to understand the nuanced meanings of double prepositions. Errors often stem from overgeneralization and native language interference. Similarly, [Smith and Wang \(2021\)](#) explored how cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence the acquisition of double prepositions by ESL learners. Their comparative study, conducted with 200 Chinese ESL learners, found that differences in prepositional usage between Chinese and English significantly impacted learners' proficiency. They recommended culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to enhance the comprehension and application of double prepositions.

[Nguyen and Kim \(2019\)](#) performed an error analysis of the written productions of Vietnamese ESL learners. Their corpus-based study identified systematic errors in double preposition usage, indicating that many students struggled with correct placement in sentences.

They emphasized the importance of direct feedback and structured instructional interventions to enhance accuracy.

### **Instructional Approaches and Pedagogical Implications**

Addressing prepositional challenges among ESL learners requires effective instructional strategies. [Brown and Lee \(2022\)](#) conducted a meta-analysis of 15 experimental studies to evaluate the efficacy of various teaching approaches. Their findings indicated that explicit instruction—in which prepositions and their functions are directly taught—yielded better learning outcomes than implicit approaches. Additionally, the study found that contextualized learning, where students encounter prepositions in real-world communicative settings, significantly improved retention and application.

[Delija and Koruti \(2013\)](#) examined how prepositions were taught in Albania, Greece, and Kosovo. Their study found that many teachers relied solely on textbook materials and provided minimal explanations for prepositional usage. This lack of explicit instruction contributed to persistent student errors. The researchers identified three major challenges in teaching prepositions:

1. Polysemy—Prepositions often have multiple meanings depending on the context.
2. Lack of instructional guides—Few teaching materials offer systematic explanations of prepositional use.
3. Native language interference—Students often apply L1 prepositional structures to English, resulting in errors.

[Pienemann's \(1998\)](#) Processability Theory supports the idea that ESL learners acquire grammatical structures in a specific order based on their cognitive processing abilities. This theory suggests that complex structures like double prepositions should be introduced at later stages of language instruction when learners have developed sufficient grammatical competence. Invariance plays a crucial role in learners' prepositional usage that is contextual factors influence learners' ability to correctly apply prepositions.

### **Prepositional Errors in ESL Learners**

Recent empirical studies have explored the difficulties that ESL learners encounter when using prepositions. While previous literature has highlighted interlingual interference and syntactic challenges, new research has expanded on these aspects by incorporating corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and pedagogical interventions.

### **Corpus-Based Analyses of Prepositional Errors**

[Biber et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a corpus-based analysis of prepositional errors among international students in the United Kingdom. Using a dataset of 1,500 student essays, the study identified recurrent errors, including the overuse of "in" instead of "at" for location-based prepositions and confusion between "on" and "over" in spatial descriptions. The study concluded that students' reliance on literal translations from their first languages significantly contributed to these errors. This aligns with [Lorincz and Gordon \(2012\)](#) findings but extends the discussion by offering a large-scale quantitative analysis.

Similarly, [Crossley et al. \(2022\)](#) applied natural language processing (NLP) techniques to analyze prepositional errors in second-language writing. Their study found that automatic feedback mechanisms, such as AI-driven grammar checkers, reduced the error frequency by 35% over six months. This suggests that integrating technology into ESL instruction can help mitigate common

prepositional mistakes.

### **Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Prepositional Learning**

[Evans and Tyler \(2020\)](#) explored how cognitive linguistic frameworks can enhance prepositional instruction. They argued that traditional grammar-based approaches often fail because they do not account for the conceptual meanings of prepositions. Their experimental study with 300 ESL learners demonstrated that teaching prepositions using image schemas and conceptual metaphors significantly improved retention and accuracy.

In a related study, [Lakoff and Johnson \(2023\)](#) revisited their conceptual metaphor theory in the context of ESL learning. Their research demonstrated that learners who were taught prepositions through metaphorical reasoning (e.g., "in" as containment, "on" as support) showed a 20% increase in comprehension compared to those who received traditional rule-based instruction.

### **Intervention Studies on Prepositional Accuracy**

Recent experimental studies have also tested various pedagogical interventions intended to improve ESL learners' use of prepositions. [Ahmed and Chen \(2023\)](#) examined the effectiveness of gamified learning environments in teaching prepositions to Chinese ESL learners. Their results indicated that students who engaged in digital game-based learning showed significantly higher accuracy in preposition use than those who learned through traditional exercises.

Additionally, [Williams and Ortega \(2021\)](#) conducted a longitudinal study on explicit vs. implicit instruction in English prepositions. Their findings supported [Brown and Lee \(2022\)](#) research, confirming that explicit instruction leads to better retention. However, they also found that implicit exposure to prepositions in natural conversation contributed to long-term accuracy, emphasizing the need for blended teaching approaches.

The literature suggests that ESL learners' difficulties with English prepositions, particularly double prepositions, stem from linguistic transfer, syntactic differences, and inadequate instruction. Researchers agree that

- Interlingual interference significantly affects prepositional errors ([Damayanti & Sundari](#), 2022; [Dordevic, 2013](#)).
- Omission, substitution, and addition are the most common prepositional errors ([Lorincz & Gordon, 2012](#)).
- Explicit instruction and contextualized learning improve ESL learners' understanding of prepositions ([Brown & Lee, 2022](#); [Delija & Koruti, 2013](#)).
- Processability Theory suggests that prepositional acquisition follows a developmental sequence ([Pienemann, 1998](#)).

By synthesizing these studies, it becomes evident that a comprehensive pedagogical approach—one that combines explicit instruction, contextualized practice, and awareness of interlanguage variation—is necessary for improving ESL learners' prepositional accuracy and fluency.

Additionally, the recent empirical studies reviewed above contribute to a deeper understanding of ESL learners' struggles with prepositions as follows:

- Expanding corpus-based insights into frequent prepositional errors ([Biber et al., 2021](#); [Crossley et al., 2022](#)).
- Highlighting the role of cognitive linguistic approaches in prepositional learning ([Evans & Tyler, 2020](#); [Lakoff & Johnson, 2023](#)).



- Investigating the effectiveness of innovative instructional techniques such as gamification and implicit exposure ([Ahmed & Chen, 2023](#); [Williams & Ortega, 2021](#)).

By synthesizing these findings, it is evident that a comprehensive instructional approach combining explicit instruction, cognitive-linguistic insights, and technological interventions can significantly improve ESL learners' mastery of English prepositions.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted at Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery in Damaturu and employed a quantitative research approach to systematically investigate the challenges associated with English prepositions among nursing students.

### **Sampling and Respondent Profile**

A total of 92 nursing students participated in the study. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling, allowing for easy access to participants while ensuring a representative sample of students facing challenges with English prepositions.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, with blank spaces provided for respondents to provide appropriate prepositions. This method enabled an objective assessment of students' understanding and usage of prepositions. The questionnaire was carefully designed to target common errors such as substitution, omission, and unnecessary addition of prepositions, as identified in previous studies ([Lorincz & Gordon, 2012](#); [Omenogor & Akpojisher, 2024](#)).

### **Validity and Reliability Testing**

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent pre-testing with a small sample of students before full implementation. The validity of the instrument was established by aligning questionnaire items with commonly observed prepositional errors in ESL research. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, ensuring internal consistency among the questionnaire items.

### **Data Analysis**

Completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentages, to identify trends in students' prepositional errors. This approach provided a clear quantitative representation of the challenges nursing students face when using prepositions.

By employing a structured questionnaire with predefined response options, this study ensured consistency and replicability in data collection. Future research could expand upon this methodology by incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or think-aloud protocols, to gain deeper insights into students' cognitive processes when using prepositions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study examined the challenges associated with the use of English double prepositions among 92 nursing students at Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu. The findings provide insights into common prepositional errors, their frequencies, and their implications for English language learning.

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Frequency (N = 92)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	38	41.3%
Female	54	58.7%
Level of Study		
Level One	48	52.2%
Level Two	44	47.8%

As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised 41.3% male and 58.7% female students. The distribution of respondents by level of study was nearly even, with 52.2% in Level 1 and 47.8% in Level 2.

### Validity and Reliability Test Results

To ensure the accuracy of the research instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted before its full implementation.

**Table 2.** Validity and Reliability Test Results

Test	Method Used	Result
Validity Test	Expert Review and Content Validation	Adequate
Reliability Test	Cronbach's Alpha	0.83

The validity test was conducted through expert review and content validation, confirming that the questionnaire effectively measured prepositional errors. The reliability test, measured using Cronbach's Alpha (0.83), indicated a high level of internal consistency, ensuring that the instrument provided stable and reliable results.

### Prepositional Errors Identified

The findings highlight common errors in preposition use among Level 1 and Level 2 students. The incorrect and corrected forms are presented below, along with the statistical analysis of the error frequency.

### Errors in Level 1 Students

The most common errors made by Level 1 students are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Common Prepositional Errors in Level 1 Students

Incorrect Form	Correct Form
He jumped from the pool.	He jumped <b>into</b> the pool.
The pet cat jumped into her lap.	The pet cat jumped <b>into</b> her lap.
I will return for an hour.	I will return <b>within</b> an hour.
You can do nothing with money.	Without money, you can do nothing.
The truck is traveling from York to Hull.	The truck is moving away <b>from York and toward</b> Hull.
There's a picture across the hall.	There's a picture <b>above</b> the door.



**Table 4.** Analysis of Level 1 Errors

Error Type	Frequency (N=48)	Percentage (%)
Above	19	39.7%
Onto	12	25.9%
Toward	10	22.4%
Within	3	5.2%
Into	3	5.2%
Without	1	1.7%

The most frequent error involved "Above" (39.7%), indicating significant difficulty with spatial prepositions. Errors with "Onto" (25.9%) and "Toward" (22.4%) also suggest confusion between movement-based prepositions, which is consistent with previous findings ([Garcia & Nguyen, 2020](#)).

#### *Errors in Level Two Students*

A similar analysis was conducted for Level 2 students (Table 4)

**Table 5.** Common Prepositional Errors in Level Two Students

Incorrect Form	Correct Form
He jumped from the pool.	He jumped <b>into</b> the pool.
The pet cat jumped into her lap.	The pet cat jumped <b>into</b> her lap.
I will return for an hour.	I will return <b>within</b> an hour.
You can do nothing with money.	Without money, you can do nothing.
The truck is traveling from York to Hull.	The truck is moving away <b>from York and toward</b> Hull.
There's a picture across the hall.	There's a picture <b>above</b> the door.

**Table 6.** Analysis of Level Two Errors

Error Type	Frequency (N=44)	Percentage (%)
Above	18	40.9%
Onto	11	25.0%
Toward	9	20.5%
Within	3	6.8%
Into	2	4.5%
Without	1	2.3%

The results for Level Two students followed a similar trend. "Above" (40.9%) was again the most frequent error, confirming persistent challenges with spatial prepositions. Errors involving "Onto" (25.0%) and "Toward" (20.5%) remained high, supporting research by [Brown and Lee \(2022\)](#) on movement-related prepositions.

#### *Comparison with Previous Studies*

These findings align with previous research, confirming that prepositional usage errors are influenced by structural differences between English and students' native languages. Studies by [Omenogor and Akpojisheri \(2024\)](#) and [Chukwukaelo \(2016\)](#) highlight similar difficulties among ESL learners, particularly in differentiating movement-based and spatial prepositions.

The high error rate for "Above" and "Onto" aligns with [Delija and Koruti \(2013\)](#), who argued that polysemy (multiple meanings) contributes to learners' confusion. This suggests that explicit instruction on contextual usage is necessary for effective learning.

#### *Implications for Teaching*

Based on the findings, the following instructional strategies should be adopted:

- Targeting high-frequency errors (e.g., "Above," "Onto," "Toward").
- Visual aids and contextualized examples to clarify preposition meanings.
- Provide explicit contrastive analysis between English and native language prepositions.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This study aimed to analyze the common errors in double prepositions among students at Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu, with a focus on identifying the most challenging prepositions and their patterns of misuse. The findings reveal that "Above" (39.7%) and "Onto" (25.9%) account for most errors, indicating that these prepositions present significant challenges for students. Their high error rates suggest that learners struggle with spatial and directional prepositions, possibly due to the influence of their native language or insufficient exposure to their correct usage of English.

Conversely, "Without" exhibited the lowest error rate (1.7%), suggesting that students either find this preposition easier to use correctly or that it appears less frequently in contexts where mistakes occur. Similarly, "Within" and "Into" showed relatively low error rates (5.2% each), indicating that students encounter fewer challenges with these prepositions, potentially due to their more straightforward meanings or contextual predictability.

A comparison between Level One and Level Two students revealed a striking similarity in error distribution, with both groups demonstrating the most difficulty with "Above" and "Onto," followed by "Toward." This consistency across levels suggests that these prepositions pose persistent conceptual and grammatical challenges, reinforcing the need for targeted instructional strategies to improve students' proficiency.

### **Implications for Teaching and Research**

The findings of this study advance the current understanding of prepositional errors in English language learning by highlighting specific areas where students struggle the most. These insights can inform pedagogical approaches by emphasizing the need for focused instruction on spatial and directional prepositions. Teaching strategies such as contrastive analysis, visual aids, and interactive exercises could help students grasp these prepositions more effectively.

Moreover, this study contributes to the broader field of second language acquisition by reinforcing previous research on prepositional challenges among ESL learners. Future studies could explore the cognitive and linguistic factors contributing to these errors, as well as the role of first-language interference in prepositional usage. Additionally, further research could assess the effectiveness of specific teaching interventions in reducing these errors over time.

Finally, this study underscores the consistent difficulties students encounter when using specific prepositions and provides a foundation for improving English language instruction in similar educational contexts. Addressing these challenges through evidence-based teaching methods will enhance students' grammatical accuracy and overall language proficiency.

### **LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study provides valuable insights into common prepositional errors among students at the Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu. However, certain limitations should

be acknowledged. These constraints highlight areas for further research to build upon the current findings.

One key limitation of this study is its limited sample size, as data were collected from students at a single institution. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future research should expand the study to include multiple institutions and diverse student demographics to enhance the applicability of the results.

Additionally, the scope of the analysis in this study was limited to errors involving double prepositions, without considering other forms of prepositional misuse, such as incorrect prepositional collocations or omissions. A more comprehensive investigation of various prepositional errors would provide a deeper understanding of students' overall grammatical challenges.

Another limitation is the absence of qualitative insights into the cognitive processes behind prepositional errors. While the study employed a quantitative approach, integrating qualitative methods such as student interviews, think-aloud protocols, and classroom observations could help uncover the reasons behind these errors and provide richer data on students' learning difficulties. Furthermore, the study did not account for the influence of first language (L1) interference on shaping students' prepositional errors. Given that prepositional structures differ across languages, future research could conduct a contrastive analysis between English and students' native languages (e.g., Hausa or Fulfulde) to determine the extent of L1 transfer effects.

Finally, classroom instructional variability was not considered in the study. Differences in teaching methods, exposure to English, and instructional materials may have influenced the types and frequencies of the errors observed. Examining how pedagogical approaches impact prepositional usage could lead to more effective teaching strategies. To address these limitations, future studies should explore the following areas:

1. Expanding the Sample Population: Investigating prepositional errors across multiple institutions and academic disciplines can help determine whether similar error patterns persist across different educational settings.
2. Comparative First Language (L1) Analysis: A contrastive study of English and students' native languages could help identify specific L1 interference patterns and inform targeted instructional interventions.
3. Integrating Qualitative Data: Future research should incorporate qualitative methods such as student interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations to gain deeper insights into students' learning processes and error perceptions.
4. Intervention-Based Studies: Conducting experimental research to test different teaching strategies (e.g., explicit instruction, visual aids, gamified learning) can help determine the most effective methods for reducing prepositional errors among ESL learners.
5. Longitudinal Studies on Learning Progress: Tracking students' grammatical development over time can provide insights into whether instructional interventions lead to sustained improvements in prepositional accuracy.

By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to more effective language instruction and help ESL learners improve their grammatical competence and overall English proficiency.

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