
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Representation of Prepositions in ESL Textbooks of Lower Primary Classes: A Study of NCERT Textbooks in India

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ABSTRACT

Prepositions are among the most difficult parts of speech for ESL learners owing to their polysemous nature and how they behave in different languages. The present study aims to determine how English prepositions are represented in English Language textbooks designed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for Classes I and II in India. For a comparison of the frequency of prepositions in English, we have selected the British National Corpus. The study revealed that though the choice of prepositions in the textbooks is as par with their occurrences in the standard English corpus, their senses are not always primary, i.e., spatial. We found instances of temporal and metaphorical senses as well. One significant finding of this study is the relatively very low frequency of temporal use of prepositions as compared to the proto-typical spatial sense in these textbooks. The metaphorical uses of some common prepositions, which are more abstract and complex, are higher in frequency, especially in the exercises for giving instructions.

KEYWORDS

NCERT English textbooks, primary classes, representation and senses of prepositions, spatial, temporal, and metaphorical uses of prepositions.

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1. Introduction

The textbooks are the main texts through which a learner is exposed to the second language. There are several scholars who argued for the necessity of a textbook in a language teaching program for the benefit of both the teachers and the learners, which they can take as a reference point for their teaching and learning. Cunningsworth (1995, p 7) explains that course books have multiple roles in ELT and can serve as:

- (1) a resource for presentation materials,
- (2) a resource for activities of learners practice and communicative interaction,
- (3) a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation,
- (4) a resource of stimulation and ideas for classroom language activities,
- (5) a syllabus where they reflect learning objectives which have already been determined,
- (6) a source for self-directed learning or self-access work, and
- (7) a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence.'

Richards (2001) states that any learning program may have no impact if it does not have course books as they provide a structure and a syllabus. He also states that in some situations, textbooks are the only source of contact with the language for the learners apart from the instructions of the teachers. This is indeed true in many of the 'English medium' schools in India, including Kendriya

Vidyalayas, which follow the NCERT textbooks, and the English class also uses the local language for instruction for primary school children. Many of the students do not have any other exposure to English outside the school.

Tomlinson (2003, p 39) reinforces the same idea that a textbook helps to make a route map for both teachers and learners. Karamouzian (2010, p 25) states that textbooks are seen as central to teaching and learning, as their quality is a determining factor in enhancing or diminishing the quality of a language program.

Hutchinson and Torris (1994) even argue that textbooks play an important role in the time of change in the structure, methodology, and syllabus of ELT. However, critics of the use of textbooks (Littlejohn 1992) argued that textbooks produce a dependency culture for both the teachers and the learners, which impedes their growth. Indeed, the best teachers and students go beyond the textbooks. However, that does not diminish the importance of a textbook in the overall structure of education and learning, especially for mediocre students and teachers.

Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the textbooks for early learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). Tomlinson (2003, p 15) defines material evaluation as "a procedure that involves measuring the value (or the potential value) of a set of learning materials." The evaluation of the materials is significant as it helps to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook for a particular purpose and helps to modify it accordingly. The evaluation can be done at any time when the textbook is used, before it is introduced, or after it is used.

Cummingsworth (1995, p 15) provides guidelines for evaluating a textbook. He pointed out that the textbooks should meet the learners' needs, and they should reflect the language that learners would need in the time of actual language use. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the textbook in terms of their representation of various grammatical constructions and their uses as they are used. In addition to these points, textbooks should also be designed keeping in mind the cognitive developmental stage of the learners and their social settings where the language is learned. This is especially true when evaluating a textbook designed for early-age learners. With this theoretical background in mind, we have selected a particular category of words, i.e., prepositions, for checking their representation and use in the textbooks named *Marigold* of class I and II developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a Governmental organization responsible for preparing textbooks in the central government-funded schools in India.

Prepositions of English pose a major challenge for ESL learners in terms of their polysemy and uses. Since prepositions are one of the most difficult grammatical items to learn, early and systematic exposure can help reduce the problem. In India, since English is not the first language that the students are exposed to, they face problems in learning it. Learners who are not native speakers of English tend to have three types of problems with learning prepositions. The first is with the selection of wrong prepositions. The second is not using a preposition at the required place. Thirdly, they sometimes tend to use an extra preposition when it is not needed at all. Therefore, it becomes important to systematically expose the students to these prepositions with proper context. According to Abdulkarim (2008), prepositions are significant for communication; however, very few studies have been done in linguistics and in the methodology of teaching prepositions.

The major research questions addressed in this work are the following.

1. What are the prepositions that appear in the NCERT English Class I and 2 textbooks, and in which order?
2. What is the relative frequency of these prepositions in comparison with the frequency of prepositions in the British National Corpus?
3. What is the distribution pattern of the spatial prepositions, temporal prepositions, and metaphorical uses of prepositions found in the textbooks?

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. The second section provides an introduction to the study of English prepositions, including some studies on preposition representation in textbooks. The third section introduces the field of Corpus Linguistics and how it can be incorporated into the field of Language Teaching. It then discusses the BNC corpus as a reference of comparison to our textbook corpus. The fourth section discusses the theoretical background of cognitive linguistics and the methodology used in the work. The fifth section discusses the findings in quantitative terms, along with a comparison with the BNC corpus. It also provides a qualitative analysis of the types of uses of prepositions found in the corpus. The final section concludes the paper by mentioning its relevance and our specific observations and recommendations for improving some of the aspects related to the representation of prepositions.

2. Study on Prepositions

Byrd and Benson (2001) define prepositions often used to create adverbial modifiers to give information about place and time. According to Quirk & Greenbaum (1989), prepositions can be classified as simple (consisting of one word) or complex (consisting of more than one word). In *Analyzing English Grammar*, Klemmar et al. (2004) listed 60 simple and 39 complex prepositions.

Prepositions are one of the most difficult parts of speech to acquire for learners because they behave differently in different languages. Prepositions usually occur before nouns, but in some languages, they occur after the noun, making them postpositions. In languages like Hindi, the role of prepositions is often completed using inflections. This divergence pattern points out that grammatically, prepositions behave differently across languages.

Prepositions tend to have both literal and figurative meanings. This makes them difficult for young learners. While learning the various meanings and meaning extensions of prepositions is perhaps the greatest challenge, a pedagogical strategy that enables students to pay attention to their co-occurrence, collocational, and discourse behavior, in addition, will no doubt facilitate learners' acquisition of these difficult lexico-grammatical forms (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

One of the earliest studies made by Takahaski (1969) stated that one of the most difficult problems a student of English as a Second Language faces is the difficulty of understanding the function and uses of English prepositions. Most learning is dependent on memorization and getting used to the usage. Takahaski further expressed his dissatisfaction with the idea of the correct understanding and usage of certain prepositions involving intuitions.

According to Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), there are three dimensions to prepositions, namely, form, meaning, and use. As far as form is concerned, prepositions can be simple (one word) and complex (more than one word). Simple prepositions form a closed class, whereas complex prepositions form an open class.

Meaning poses a challenging problem in pedagogical implications because of the abstract definitions that have to be given in order to explain it. Prepositions with the same meaning can be used in a given context; for example,

It happened in/during 1990.

When it comes to their position of occurrence, prepositions generally occur before a noun, but in some languages, like Hindi and other Indo-Aryan languages, which are mostly spoken in India, they occur after a noun, making them postposition. This makes this work more relevant. NCERT textbooks cater to such a population. This difference makes students use it wrongly, as in the initial years, they are bound to have the influence of their mother tongue on the target language, i.e., English.

Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) have suggested that "corpus-based research sheds new light on some of our most basic assumptions about English grammar, and as a result, it offers the possibility of more effective and appropriate pedagogical applications."

Mindt and Weber (1989) studied prepositions in American and British English using the Brown Corpus and the LOB corpus. In the Brown and LOB corpora, the 14 most frequent prepositions were listed, which accounted for about 90% of prepositional use.

Biber et al. (2000: 91-93) studied prepositions in different varieties of English, mainly conversation, fiction, newspaper language, and academic prose. Although it is commonly believed that function words (in this case, prepositions) are frequent in any text as opposed to individual lexical words, wide differences exist among registers.

Textbook representation of prepositions in English has been studied by Mukundan and Roslim (2009). It was a corpus-based investigation on English prepositions, which were presented in the three English language textbooks of the lower secondary schools in Malaysia. The aim was to find out the distributions of prepositions, their frequency order in comparison with the British National Corpus (BNC), and the differences in terms of their co-occurrence with other parts of speech. The findings showed that there is a difference between the textbook corpus and the BNC in terms of the frequency order of certain prepositions, and there are similarities and differences in terms of their co-occurrence with other parts of speech. Roslim and Jayakaran (2011) looked at the studies on prepositions from a corpus linguistics perspective. The paper focused on the development of a sequence of studies of prepositions in three decades. This paper also looked at the scenario of English language corpus work in Malaysia. Based on these reviews, this paper gave more tangible and practical applications in dealing with prepositions from the perspectives of the teaching and learning of prepositions. Borrreguero (2020), in his M.A dissertation, explored how Spanish students are exposed to different prepositional usage starting from their early childhood. For his study, he analysed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks from Grades 1-6 of Primary Education.

A recent work by Roslim, Aziz, Abdullah & Nimehchisalem (2021) uses corpus linguistics to make informed decisions on what prepositions to learn based on their suitability according to the maturity level of the learner. This research seeks to analyze the distribution patterns of prepositions within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Grammar Profile across its various levels. They also investigated how the frequency order of prepositions listed in the CEFR Grammar Profile aligns with their actual usage in the British National Corpus (BNC). This study examined the representation of prepositions from the CEFR Grammar Profile within the English Language of Malaysian School Students (EMAS) Corpus, particularly focusing on their assigned mastery levels. Finally, utilizing the textbook corpus, they explored the types of tasks associated with prepositions included in the CEFR Grammar Profile. The results have shown many insights into the teaching and acquisition of prepositions. First, the distributions of prepositions in the CEFR Grammar Profile are a great resource for selecting appropriate and relevant material to learn. Second, the frequency order of prepositions indicates that, as CEFR levels rise, a broad range of simple and complex prepositions are used, providing guidelines. The limited use of simple prepositions from A1 is followed by this pattern. Thirdly, by using prepositions again and often, students can become proficient in their use. Lastly, a range of activities that are evenly dispersed for each preposition should be included in the task types for teaching and learning prepositions. They should also have been presented in a more conversational manner.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Corpus Linguistics and Language Education

Corpus linguistics plays a crucial role in English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing valuable insights and resources for language learning and teaching. It is a tool that enhances the authenticity and effectiveness of language teaching by grounding it in real language use. For teachers, it helps them tailor their instructions according to learner's needs, thereby ensuring that the process of language learning is relevant and practical. Textbook development can also benefit from corpus-based studies as incorporating them makes the textbooks more effective and learner-centered, thereby exposing learners to real-world language use.

Corpus linguistics can be used in the field of textbook development in the following ways:

1. Vocabulary selection- Corpus linguistics can be used to identify the most frequent and important words in a language. This information can, in turn help textbook developers in selecting the right vocabulary that they intend the learners to be equipped with.
2. Grammar instruction- Corpus linguistics can be insightful in identifying the most frequently used grammatical patterns in a language.
3. Text selection- Corpus linguistics is a valuable tool for identifying authentic and captivating texts suitable for learners across all proficiency levels. These writings can then be incorporated into English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks to allow learners to engage with authentic language usage in real-life contexts.
4. Task design- Corpus linguistics can be employed to develop activities that are both pragmatic and pertinent to the requirements of learners. The aforementioned data may thereafter be utilised to create exercises for English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, which will facilitate the enhancement of learners' communication abilities.

In 2016, Boontom and Phoocharoensil attempted to test the effectiveness of English Preposition Learning through Data-Driven Learning (DDL). They found statistically significant improvement in post-test scores ($p < 0.001$), indicating successful preposition learning through DDL. Students demonstrated better grammatical awareness and produced more complex and accurate sentences with the target prepositions. Student exhibited positive attitudes towards DDL: found it fun, interesting, and challenging, and appreciated its effectiveness in learning new grammar. DDL fostered active learning, encouraging students to think critically, express ideas, and participate in class.

Elen Le Foll (2022) also worked on Textbook English, which was a corpus-based analysis of the language used in the EFL Textbooks that were taught in Secondary Schools in France, Germany, and Spain. The major research questions that were addressed are as follows.

1. How do textbook languages differ in vocabulary, grammar, and register across countries and learner levels?
2. How do these textbook features align with external reference materials like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?
3. How do textbooks represent spoken and written language, and how does this compare to authentic corpora?

For this, Le Foll created the "Textbook English Corpus" (TEC), which contains textbook materials from eight publishers and nine series across the three countries. She analyzed TEC for vocabulary frequencies, grammatical features, and text register characteristics. Comparisons were made with the British National Corpus (BNC) for spoken and written language and the CEFR for language levels. The key findings of the research are as follows: Textbooks across all countries emphasize written language features

over spoken ones. Vocabulary choices align with learner levels to some extent, but there are discrepancies between countries and textbooks. Grammatical complexity increases with learner levels, but variations exist in specific structures emphasized. Textbook language often deviates from the CEFR descriptions in terms of both vocabulary and grammar. Le Foll's research highlighted the need for closer alignment between textbook language and authentic language use, both spoken and written. She emphasized the importance of considering both learner levels and national contexts when designing EFL materials. The TEC serves as a valuable resource for further research on language learning and textbook development.

In yet another study by Oktavianti, Eriani, Rolyana, and Prayogi (2023), it was found that most students see corpus-informed grammar books as favourable for learning since such textbooks help them understand the proper context in which to employ a certain register (spoken or written). The description of register-specific and frequency information, enhancement of language learning awareness, learning motivation, critical thinking, and many other benefits are only a few of the numerous advantages of corpus-informed materials.

In general, the field of corpus linguistics contributes to enhancing the efficacy and appeal of English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks for learners. Corpus linguistics plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of ELT textbooks by furnishing textbook authors with empirical data on language usage. This, in turn, contributes to the integration of the most up-to-date research findings and the adoption of optimal instructional approaches in the development of these educational materials.

3.2. The British National Corpus

The corpus used in the present study is the British National Corpus. It is a 100 million text corpus that contains samples from both written (90%) and spoken (10%) forms of language. Three publishing houses (Oxford University Press, Longman, and W&R Chambers), two Universities (University of Oxford and Lancaster University), and the British Library were involved in the creation of this project. Compiled between 1991 and 1994, it is a representative sample of the language as it was used at that time and provides a valuable resource for researchers and students of English.

One of the main objectives of the BNC was to provide a comprehensive picture of the way English was used in the UK in the late 20th century. The corpus contains samples of a wide range of text types, including fiction and non-fiction, academic writing, newspapers, magazines, and spoken language from both formal and informal settings.

The BNC is an important tool for linguists, lexicographers, and language teachers. It can be used to study vocabulary and grammar, as well as to explore the way words and phrases are used in different contexts. For example, the corpus can reveal which words are most frequently used together and how the meaning of a word can change depending on the words around it.

The BNC is also a valuable resource for those who want to study the changes that have taken place in the English language over time. It can be compared with other corpora, such as the American National Corpus, to show how the language used in different countries has evolved. The BNC is accessible online, and several software tools have been developed to make it easier to search and analyze the corpus. This has made it a widely used resource for a range of applications, from language teaching and lexicography to information retrieval and text mining. In conclusion, the British National Corpus is a significant resource for anyone interested in the English language. Its large size and wide range of text types make it an invaluable tool for researchers, students, and language professionals.

4. Methodology

The basic tenet of Cognitive Linguistics is that our cognition is grounded in our spatio-physical experience. Our understanding of prepositions is also based on these basic principles. The spatial senses of the prepositions are learnt by young children much before their temporal and metaphorical or other extended senses. This can help us in designing textbooks for ESL/EFL. We hypothesize that early primary level textbooks should start with their basic spatial sense, and then gradually, the temporal sense should be introduced. Boers and Demecheleer (1998) argued that if students are taught prepositions or even phrasal verbs from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective, they tend to outperform the other group of students who were not given such explanations. Thus, we assume that the spatial prepositions that we are categorizing as 'preposition of place' should ideally have a higher frequency as compared to 'preposition of time' or the temporal preposition in the NCERT textbooks of the first two classes.

As a methodology, we collected all the textbook sentences and identified different prepositions. For identification of the prepositions, we took the frequency reference of the BNC corpus in the beginning and then counted the frequency of all the prepositions found in our corpus. Each of these occurrences is checked manually, as many prepositions identified are also found to be part of the phrasal verbs.

We classified the prepositions according to their senses after doing the frequency distribution. We then classified prepositions according to place (with subcategorization of direction) and prepositions of time. To categorize the prepositions, we asked ourselves “where?” and “when?” questions.

For example, In the sentence,

I love to sit under a plant. answers the question, “Where do I love to sit?”

Again, when we say,

I go to school on Mondays, it answers the question, “When do I go to school? ”

If we look at this sentence below, we can identify the directional sense of the prepositions *to* and *from*.

He had carried many sacks of corn and sugarcane from the farm to the factory,

These prepositions not only answer the “where?” but also adds additional information about the source (from the farm) and the goal (to the factory).

5. Result and Discussions

The 5 most frequent prepositions found in Classes 1 and 2 of NCERT textbooks are *in, of, on, to,* and *with*. These prepositions also exhibit multiple senses. 18 types of prepositions are used in the Class 1 textbook to denote place. Out of these, 5 types of prepositions are used to denote directionality, namely *to, from, along, into,* and *over*. 6 prepositions are used to denote time, namely, *after, till, during, until, at,* and *in*. In Class 2, we have 17 types of prepositions denoting place, with 6 of them denoting directionality, namely *to, from, into, through, towards,* and *over*. The prepositions denoting time are 5 in number, namely *after, till, on, before,* and *in*. This gives us a picture of the polysemous uses of prepositions in these textbooks. Prepositions like *in, on, at, till,* and *after* are used to denote both place and time, thereby exhibiting multiple senses, and such prepositions need to be taught in the appropriate context.

5.1 Frequency distribution and senses of the prepositions in NCERT corpus

A total of 30 types of prepositions are introduced in the first two classes of NCERT textbooks. Class 1 has 26 types of prepositions, and 4 new prepositions were introduced in Class 2. In total, there are 1037 prepositions in Class I and II textbooks. Prepositions, along with their frequencies, are enlisted in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of prepositions in NCERT Textbooks

PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY	PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY
IN	234	ON	112
TO	109	OF	131
WITH	107	FROM	55
FOR	67	AT	58
AROUND	5	INSIDE	1
TILL	4	BEFORE	7
UPON	4	THROUGH	3
ALONG	4	INTO	25
ACROSS	1	AGAINST	3
DURING	1	BEHIND	4
BETWEEN	3	UNTILL	1
OUTSIDE	1	AFTER	9
BY	8	OVER	13
LIKE	22	NEAR	11
UNDER	16	ABOUT	18

The five most frequent prepositions in the NCERT textbook corpus are *in, of, on, to,* and *with*. Among these and *on* are primarily spatial prepositions with some temporal and metaphorical uses found in the textbooks. Directional is a type of spatial sense with a motion involved from one point to another, and it is associated with the 4th most frequent preposition *to*. Accompaniment sense is associated with the associative preposition *with*. The preposition *of* is associated with the senses of part-whole (x is part of y) and compositional (x is composed of y). (refer to Table 2)

Table 2: List of 5 most frequent prepositions in NCERT Textbooks along with their usage

PREPOSITIONS	SENSES
IN	SPATIAL, TEMPORAL, METAPHORICAL
ON	SPATIAL, TEMPORAL, METAPHORICAL
OF	COMPOSITIONAL, PARTITIVE
TO	DIRECTIONAL
WITH	ACCOMPANIMENT, POSSESSION

Prepositions tend to have multiple senses depending on the context in which they are used. Table 2 shows the 5 most frequent prepositions along with their senses. The frequent senses in which prepositions are used in these classes are *spatial*, *accompaniment*, *constitutive*, *temporal*, and *directional*.

Among the spatial prepositions, *in* occupies the first rank, followed by the preposition *on* in the textbooks. The Directional prepositions, which have a spatial + directional sense, are also identified, and two of these *to* and *from* occupy the third and fourth place in the frequency list of the prepositions. Total number of Directional prepositions is 6 in Class I and 5 in Class II textbook. (refer to the tables 3 and 4)

Table 3: PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE CLASS 1		Table 4: PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE CLASS 2	
PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY	PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY
IN	50	IN	100
ON	39	ON	56
OVER (DIRECTION)	8	TO (DIRECTION)	46
NEAR	7	FROM (DIRECTION)	27
UNDER	6	UNDER	9
BEHIND	3	INTO (DIRECTION)	9
AROUND	2	INSIDE	1
OUTSIDE	1	BY	5
INSIDE	1	THROUGH (DIRECTION)	3
TO (DIRECTION)	33	AT	15
FROM (DIRECTION)	15	NEAR	4
ALONG (DIRECTION)	3	TOWARDS (DIRECTION)	1
AFTER	1	BETWEEN	2
AT	2	AGAINST	3
TILL	1	OVER	5
INTO (DIRECTION)	6	BEHIND	1
ACROSS (DIRECTION)	1	AROUND	1
UPON	1	TOTAL	288
TOTAL	180		

Among the temporal prepositions, *after*, *on*, and *before* are the main candidates. Though the preposition *in* occurs in the regular use of language with time expressions quite often, there is a low frequency of its use in textbooks. The overall occurrences of the temporal uses of the prepositions are also low in the textbooks (total 26 uses in the textbooks). They have only 2.8% and 2.3% representation in Classes 1 and 2, respectively. Surprisingly, we did not find a single temporal use of the preposition *in* and *on* in the class I textbook. (refer to the tables 5 and 6)

Table 5: PREPOSITIONS OF TIME CLASS 1		Table 6: PREPOSITIONS OF TIME CLASS 2	
PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY	PREPOSITION	FREQUENCY
AFTER	4	IN	3
TILL	1	ON	6
UNTIL	1	AFTER	1
AT	3	TILL	1
DURING	1	BEFORE	5
TOTAL	10	TOTAL	16

Table 7: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL PREPOSITIONS

PREPOSITIONS	SPATIAL	TEMPORAL
CLASS 1	50.8%	2.8%
CLASS 2	42.3%	2.3%

However, there are some cases of extended or metaphorical uses of spatial *in*, even in the Class I textbook. Metaphorical language is used to provide instructions in the textbook. Wherever *in your language* or, *in your words*, or *in English* is used in the instruction, it is used in a metaphorical sense. Language/Word is the base for a linguistic structure, and just like in a spatial construction, a base holds a structure or entity; words or constructions hold or support a linguistic structure. This type of use is the metaphorical extension of the spatial support sense. Another metaphorical use of *in* is '*in pain*,' where the pain is compared with a space where one may live. Illustrative examples of the uses of the five most frequent prepositions are given below from the Class I and 2 textbooks with the five most frequent prepositions.

CLASS 1

1. *There are many creatures in the poem.* (Place)
2. *One day, Lulu saw something on a plant.* (Place)
3. *Appu came to his shop every day.* (Directional)
4. *Describe in your language which season you like the best.* (Metaphorical extension of support sense)
5. *Appu ran away in pain.* (metaphorical extension of spatial sense)
6. *The shoe fell into the water with a loud splash.* (accompaniment)
7. *Sonu lived in a house of straw.* (Constitutive)

CLASS 2

1. *He flew to the moon.* (Directional)
2. *On her farm, there are many animals.* (Spatial)
3. *I go to school on Mondays.* (Temporal)
4. *Have you heard the sound of rainfall?* (Association)
5. *In June we went to a village.* (Temporal)
6. *With my kite, I like to play* (Association)

5.2 Comparing with BNC Corpus

This corpus-related study compared the BNC corpus and the NCERT textbook corpus. The ten most frequent prepositions in the BNC corpus are presented in decreasing order, together with the ten most frequent prepositions in the textbook corpus. There are very few differences between the two corpora as far as the frequency and distribution of prepositions are concerned. Table 2 shows a comparative analysis between the NCERT textbooks and the BNC corpus.

If we compare the frequency of occurrences of prepositions in the British National Corpus (BNC) with this NCERT textbook corpus, we find that the most frequent prepositions of the BNC are introduced in the textbooks with nearly the same frequency. The exceptions are *by* and *as*, which appear in the BNC in the 7th and 10th position but are found at the 17th (as is not found at all) in the textbooks. Prepositions like *about* and *into*, which are at the 9th and 10th position in the textbooks, occur at the 11th and 12th position in the BNC. (see table 7).

Table 8: Comparison of NCERT Textbooks with the BNC

RANK	TEXTBOOK	BNC
1	IN	OF
2	OF	IN
3	ON	TO
4	TO	FOR
5	WITH	WITH
6	FOR	ON
7	AT	BY
8	FROM	AT
9	ABOUT	FROM
10	INTO	AS

6. Conclusion

Prepositions are one of the most difficult parts-of-speech to acquire for students of primary classes owing to their polysemous nature. Therefore, it becomes important to expose them to prepositions at an early age. Different prepositions should be taught along with different senses, starting with their basic spatial senses and then gradually extending to other extended senses. It is important to expose early learners to one of the important uses of frequent spatial prepositions in the temporal sense. We recommend including such examples with appropriate text in the class I itself.

The present study will be beneficial for curriculum planners, textbook writers, and teachers. The curriculum planners may decide on selecting items for linguistic features to be included in the syllabus based on word frequency. They can decide which prepositions and how many prepositions need to be introduced and retained in every class. Furthermore, they can check whether the present curriculum caters to the needs of the students, specifically with respect to prepositions. Studies on English language textbooks would also be beneficial for textbook writers. It provides information to textbook writers on decisions of the types of materials and activities that they can look into while preparing for the next cycle of English language textbooks. With the help of suitable materials and activities developed by textbook writers for the textbook content, the presentation of prepositions would be sufficient, and teachers would be able to draw students' attention and help them learn prepositions. As far as teachers are concerned, they can recognize which prepositions should be given more attention based on their occurrence throughout the textbook. In addition to this, teachers can even devise their own strategies and provide additional activities for prepositions, which are comparatively less frequent. Therefore, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of a textbook regarding the presentation of prepositions provides some kind of indicator for teachers to come up with activities that will be useful for learners during their English periods to suffice for the less frequent prepositions. The present study can guide the teachers in making decisions in choosing activities that will expose learners to target grammatical items that are not represented sufficiently in the textbook.

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