

PREPOSITIONS IN ENGLISH: A CHALLENGE TO THE
BRAZILIAN LEARNER

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To understand the use of prepositions in Portuguese as compared to their use in English, the role they acquired in the modern version of these languages and then the difficulties the Brazilian student has in learning them, one ought to know the origins of prepositions in Portuguese—a romance language directly derived from Latin—the source of the English prepositions, and how they have changed in meaning. This evolution of the use and meaning of prepositions is partly responsible for the difficulties the Brazilian learner has in English.

The main prepositions analyzed in this paper, the most commonly used in both languages, are in many cases substitutions for inflections that originally appeared in Latin. Because Latin is a synthetic language, the relations between nouns or between a noun and a verb was largely shown by inflection. This was true also of the Germanic languages, the language group to which English belongs. The evolution of both the Latin and the Germanic group into new languages, in this case Portuguese and English, caused the appearance of most of the prepositions known today. As Pyles says,

Instead of retaining a complicated system of inflections (variations in the form words, usually by means of endings) such

as we find in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit, many modern languages make use of other devices to indicate grammatical relationships – word order, for instance, and what Charles Carpenter Fries, in The Structure of English (New York, 1925) and elsewhere has called 'function words' include words traditionally called prepositions, auxiliaries, conjunctions, articles, and words which may be substituted for them (such as possessive and demonstrative pronouns), and adverbs of negation and degree.¹

This shows that the role of prepositions is intimately related to the role of cases. Portuguese and English kept many inflectional endings in their early stage, and when both lost most of these endings, prepositions acquired an importance greater than they had ever had.

Pyles points out:

There was, in fact, need for more of them in the early Modern period of English to indicate grammatical relationships that had been indicated by the inflectional endings of earlier times.²

In Portuguese, where the loss of the cases of Latin was total, (the only exception is for the personal pronouns) prepositions formed in various ways – combination of old prepositions, phrases acting as prepositions, and words which

acquired a new use – supplied the needs for more prepositions rather than the ones coming from Latin.

Pyles reinforces this explication saying about the evolution of the genitive in Latin:

*The Latin genitive has been completely lost in the languages derived from Latin, its function being performed by a preposition meaning of.*³

In English the loss of cases for the nouns was also total, except for the possessive, e.g. *dog's tail, man's life*. In other cases English, like the romance languages, uses prepositional phrases: *the leg of the table*.

Pyles describes this fact saying that:

*Latin pater Caroli 'Charles's father', for instance, came to be expressed in French, Spanish and Italian respectively by le père de Charles, el padre de Carlos and il padre di Carlo, 'the father of Charles'.*⁴

To extend this, in Portuguese it also became '*o pai de Carlos*', the preposition *de* (of) being kept in modern Portuguese. The preposition in question, *de* (of), is fully studied in this paper, for it constitutes one of the most common in Portuguese, standing for several interpretations in English. While in English *de* (of) can be paralleled by *from, belonging to, possessing,*

*specified as, with, characterized by, having to do with, set aside for, during, and before,*⁵ in Portuguese "it took the meanings of *separation, movement from top to bottom, provenience, and movement from inside to outside, which had each a specific word in Latin and early Portuguese.*"⁶

Matoso Câmara explains the use of the preposition *de* (of) in the possessive form of Modern Brazilian Portuguese: "The idea of *possession* evolved from the idea of *provenience* as shown by the example 'de tauro corium' (leather coming from a bull) in Latin."⁷ This is the main cause of the misunderstanding of the genitive or possessive 's in English. The general tendency of the Brazilian-Portuguese learner is to use the prepositional form.

As this was the only 'case' left, this explication was necessary to clarify the reasons for errors from Portuguese to English.

All the other prepositions assuming important roles in the modern version of both languages also became the cause of many errors, especially because English and Portuguese, being creative, needed more and more prepositions to fulfill the needs to have new ways of expressing ideas. Creativeness was responsible, then, for the appearance of prepositional phrases and compound prepositions which have been changing meaning through the years. The prepositional phrase was formed in such a way that the noun lost its own particular meaning. It is now used "for all practical purposes, so that the phrase amounts to a new preposition."⁸

But these new combinations have developed a long way. Prepositions acquired new roles. Nowadays, modern authors have

been classifying prepositions in more sophisticated ways.

In a more traditional way, some authors classify the Modern Brazilian-Portuguese prepositions as *simple* and *compound*. The simple ones are understood to be formed by only one word, like *de*, *por*, *em*, *a*, while the compound prepositions are made up of two or more words and are also called "prepositional phrases" in Portuguese. Examples are: *por causa de*, *atē a*, and *depois de*. Many of the Portuguese "prepositional phrases" do not have a correlate in English, that is, an English prepositional phrase formed in the same way. The Portuguese ones formed by two or more prepositions can serve to illustrate this case: *atē a* cannot be *until at*, *para com* is not *to with*.

In English, prepositions are also divided into *simple* and *compound*, according to Francis.⁹ The simple prepositions are formed by one word, e.g. *to*, *for*, *of*, *in*, *at* while the compound ones are made up of two, generally an adverb and a preposition as in *because of* and *up to*, and the phrasal preposition (that stands for the Portuguese prepositional phrase) is made by three words, including a preposition plus a lexical word. Examples are: *in order to* and *in front of*.

Besides these categories, the English prepositions are found following certain verbs. Together they form expressions which do not have a correlate in Portuguese lexically formed in the same way. While English uses *call on* and *get up*, Portuguese only has *visitar* and *levantar*. The English two-word verb is always paralleled by a one-word verb in Portuguese. When this is the case, errors are common.

It is Politzer who says:

*Verbs such as bring, call, come, get, give, hold, keep, make, put, run, take, turn, can combine with a large number of adverbials to express an astounding array of meaning.*¹⁰

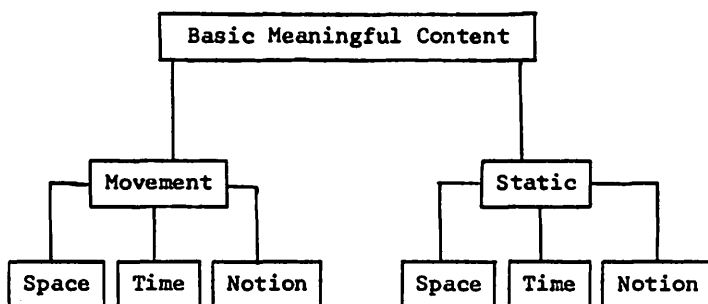
This variety of sources, the fast development and the large burden of various meanings carried out by the Portuguese and the English prepositions are responsible for the difficulties the Brazilian learner has in using them correctly.

Celso Cunha describes the role of prepositions in Portuguese saying:

*The preposition establishes the relation between two words, giving an idea of movement or static. In other words, they express movement or situation.*¹¹

The table below showing the general interpretation of the Portuguese prepositions is also from Celso Cunha.¹² The same table will be adapted to the English prepositions, and will serve for comparing the uses of prepositions in the two languages.

TABLE 1
GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE
PORTUGUESE PREPOSITIONS



Under the headings presented in the chart, all the Portuguese prepositions and the English ones can be shown. However, only the most familiar are placed in the charts, for a complete study of prepositions would demand a lot more time and research.

BASIC MEANINGFUL CONTENT OF PREPOSITIONS IN PORTUGUESE AND IN ENGLISH

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TABLE 2A

1. Movement

a. Space		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
motion to a fixed point	PARA - Vou <i>para</i> Barbacena. A - <i>a</i> ATÉ - <i>até</i>	TO - I'm going <i>to</i> Barbacena. TOWARD - I'm going <i>to</i> Barbacena.
motion past a fixed point	POR - Passei <i>pela</i> sua casa. - Ele jogou a bola <i>pela</i> janela.	BY - I passed <i>by</i> your house. THROUGH - He threw the ball <i>through</i> the window.
motion in opposite to an ending point	CONTRA - Ele jogou a bola <i>contra</i> a parede.	AGAINST - He threw the ball <i>against</i> the wall.
motion to the interior of a fixed place	EM - Ponha o lápis <i>na</i> gaveta.	INTO - Put the pencil <i>into</i> the IN drawer.
away from a fixed starting point	DE - <i>de</i> New York até o Rio. DESDE - <i>desde</i>	FROM - <i>from</i> New York to Rio.
away from an interior starting point	DE - Tire isso <i>da</i> gaveta.	OUT OF - Take this <i>out of</i> the drawer.

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2A

Some of the prepositions in the table need a description of their use and form, and the possible correlation between them in the two languages.

The preposition *a* involves many difficulties. It has its origin in Latin, indicating direction and being derived from *ad*. With this meaning, *a* parallels *para* (to). One would say: "Vou *a* Barbacena," "Vou *para* Barbacena" or "Vou *atê* Barbacena" - "I'm going to Barbacena." No grammatical error is made in using either of these prepositions, but the native speaker of Portuguese "feels" that *a* should be used in some circumstances. *A* could mean "staying there for a visit," *atê* can in certain cases express the idea of "as far as," *para* may stand for the idea of "remaining in the place." However, sentences with *a*, *para* and *atê* may or may not show some difference in meaning depending on intonation or context. A phrase like: "de Barbacena *ao* Rio" (from Barbacena to Rio), can also use *para* or *atê*, and no difference is made in its meaning.

A noticeable fact among learners is their tendency to say the same *a* in English. The only reason found for this is the similarity with the indefinite article *a* in English. As a contraction between the preposition *a* and the definite article *a* in Portuguese becomes *a* there is an interference with the English article in the use of *a* meaning to the as in: "He went to school," "He went a school" - "Ele foi *ã* escola."

As *a* is also used with accusative because of its Latin origin, forming a contraction *na* (em + *a*), it is sometimes translated as *in*. In Portuguese, both forms '*in* *ã* escola' or '*in*

na escola' are easily encountered. This note explains the translation '*go in school*' instead of '*go to school*' so commonly made by Brazilian learners of English.

Another confusion is made between the prepositions *for* and *by*, shown in the previous table as being *por*. *Por* comes from *per* (route) and *pro* (front position) in Latin. Both *per* and *pro* were changed into *por* in Portuguese. Also the idea of *through* is expressed by *por*, and a prepositional phrase like "*by the window*" or "*through the window*" would be both "*pela janela*" in the following examples:

Jogou a bola *pela janela*.

He threw the ball *through the window*.

Passou *pela janela*.

He passed *by the window*.

As the reader can easily see, there is no way in Portuguese to differentiate the concepts of *by* and *through*.

There is also no special preposition in Portuguese to show "motion to the interior." Thus, the same preposition that indicates position within a limited physical space, in this case *in* in English, stands for *into* in Portuguese. Thus, *em* can be either *in*, indicating within a limited space, or *in* and *into*, indicating motion to the interior. In both cases, a prepositional phrase is also used: *dentro de*.

The preposition *de* is one of the most complex Portuguese prepositions. It was previously analyzed with the possessive case, but it must be described in some of its several uses. The idea of movement gives it another correlate in English: *from*. The Brazilian student sometimes tends to say: "The bus came *of*

Denver" instead of "The bus came *from* Denver." This is because the immediate correlation he makes is with the idea of possession. In this case, *de* parallels the genitive form 's as well as the prepositional form used with inanimate objects in English. The idea of starting point is also shown in the example "out of the drawer" which is easily seen as "*from* the drawer" and consequently "*da* gaveta."

TABLE 2B

1. Movement

b. Time		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
motion to a fixed time	PARA - Vou trabalhar de hoje <i>para</i> A - domingo. <i>a</i> ATÉ - <i>até</i>	UNTIL - I'll be working from today TO <i>until</i> next Sunday. <i>to</i>
centered in a fixed time or: marking a limited period of time	POR - Ele trabalhou <i>por</i> duas DURANTE - horas. <i>durante</i> Ele trabalhou <i>durante</i> o dia.	FOR - He worked <i>for</i> two hours. - He worked <i>during</i> the day.
marking a starting point in time	EM - Ele estará aqui <i>em</i> duas ho- DENTRO DE - ras. <i>dentro de</i>	IN - He'll be here <i>in</i> two WITHIN - hours. <i>within</i>
away from a fixed starting point.	DE- Ele estudou <i>de</i> 2 às 4 da tarde. DESDE - Ele está estudando <i>desde</i> as 2 horas.	FROM - He studied <i>from</i> 2 to 4 p.m. SINCE- He has studied <i>since</i> 2 o'clock.

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2B

Para, *a* and *atē* are now shown in relation to time paralleling *until* and *to*. *Atē* remains giving the idea of 'no longer than' and *para* loses the idea of remaining in a definite time.

Por appears with the meaning of 'lasting for', now paralleling *during*, *for* and *by* perfectly. *Por* and *durante* are both used with the meaning of 'centered in a fixed time' in this case being translated by *for*. Both again parallel *during* with the idea of 'within a limited period of time'. However, some exceptions are found. Compare the examples:

- ' *during* the day' '*durante* o dia'
- ' **for* the day' '**pelo* dia'
- ' *for* 2 hours' '*por* duas horas'
- '**during* 2 hours' '*durante* duas horas'

While *for* establishes limits in time, *during* has indefinite limits, but Portuguese does not use different words to show these different ideas as one can see in '*durante* o dia' and '*durante* duas horas'. However, it is not grammatical to say '**pelo* dia' unless one makes use of the expression '*pelo* dia afora' or '*pela* noite adentro'.

The slight difference shown by 'in two hours' (at the end of two hours) and 'within two hours' (before two hours are over) is not shown in Portuguese even when the speaker uses the preposition *em*, which can perfectly parallel both English words. One would say:

'Estarei lá *em* duas horas' meaning either 'I'll be there *in*

or *within* two hours'. There is, however, another prepositional phrase in Portuguese which can be used for *within* :

'Estarei lá *dentro de* duas horas'.

De parallels *from* when the ending point is also shown in the sentence: '*de* duas *às* quatro' (*from* two to four). If the action is still going on and there is no indication of end, *desde* and *since* are used. But, in the first example, *desde* is also grammatical in Portuguese although *às* is replaced by *até* : '*desde* duas *até* as quatro'. In English, however, *from* indicated that the action is completed, while *since* shows the incomplete action, and *for* cannot be used in these cases.

TABLE 2C

1. Movement

c. Notion		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
away from a fixed starting point	DE - Ele ia <i>de</i> uma idéia a outra.	FROM - He was going <i>from</i> one idea to another...
indicating the first starting point	DESDE - <i>Desde</i> o primeiro trabalho	SINCE - <i>Since</i> his very first work.
manner	A - Passo a passo, ele criou uma nova obra-prima.	BY - Step <i>by</i> step, he created a masterpiece.

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2C

Only *de*, *desde* and *a* paralleling *from*, *since* and *by* respectively were found indicating the idea of movement in notion. These prepositions reflect the idea of movement out of the context of physical space, generally used in literary figures or idiomatic expressions.

These prepositions do not show the idea of time, either. The reader will understand that most of the uses of *de*, *desde*, and *a* in this case express language idioms but not purely an idea of space or time. Other examples are: 'from one song to another', 'since her first look' and 'by using several ways' in Portuguese, 'de uma canção a outra', 'desde o primeiro olhar' and 'usando vários meios'. Notice that in some cases none of the two languages make use of a preposition. (See Table 2C - 'usando vários meios', 2E - 'Sunday morning', 2F 'wood house').

TABLE 2D

2. Static

a. Space		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
relation between two points	DE - Sul de Chicago.	OF - South of Chicago.
position within a limited physical space	EM - em casa. - na gaveta. (also: dentro de)	AT - at home. INSIDE - in the drawer. IN - inside
definite position in relation to a point	EM - na mesa. SOBRE EM CIMA DE ACIMA DE - acima da mesa. DEBAIXO DE - debaixo da mesa. SOB - sob a mesa. AO LADO DE - ao lado dela. NA FRENTE DE - em frente da EM FRENTE A classe. DIANTE ANTE ATRÁS DE - atrás da porta. PERTO DE - Rio não é perto de Chicago LONGE DE - Rio é longe de Chicago.	ON - on the table. OVER - over the table. ABOVE - above the table. UNDER - under the table. BELOW - below the table. BESIDE - beside her. IN FRONT OF - in front of the class. BEHIND - behind the door. NEAR - Rio is not near Chicago. FAR FROM - Rio is far from Chicago

TABLE 2D - continued

2. Static

a. Space		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
identity with a fixed point	A - <i>ã</i> porta.	AT - <i>at the door.</i> BY - <i>by the door.</i>
relation with two limits or several points	ENTRE - <i>entre eu e você.</i> <i>entre tantos estudantes..</i>	BETWEEN - <i>between you and me.</i> AMONG - <i>among so many students..</i>

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2D

The Portuguese preposition *a* stands now for *at* and *by* . The difference shown by both English prepositions is not made in Portuguese. In this particular case, even the context is not sufficient to make this difference clear in a Portuguese sentence. 'He stood *by* the door', which does not parallel 'He stood *at* the door', is generally said 'Ele parou *ã* porta', also used for the second meaning while 'Ele parou *lã* pela porta' or 'Ele parou *perto da porta*' seems to be a possible translation for 'He stood *by* the door'. There is also a colloquial use of contraction *na* with the same meaning giving us: 'Ele parou *na* porta'.

Also, *under* and *below* are both translated by *embaixo de* , although the prepositional phrase *abaixo de* is used as *below* in some contexts. A Brazilian-Portuguese speaker would say: 'embaixo da mesa' but 'abaixo de zero', respectively 'under the table' and 'below zero'. *Abaixo de* can also mean 'inferior' in age, social status, and also in statistical classification. Thus, my 'younger brother' would be described in relation to me: 'Abaixo de mim, tenho um irmão de 20 anos'. This sentence has no correlate use of any preposition in English. Finally, the meaning of position in relation to a physical object can be shown either by *embaixo de* or *abaixo de* , while for all the other expressions rather than the idea of physical position of two points in relation to one another, *abaixo de* is preferred.

Between and *among*, which are no exact correlated in English, are both translated by *entre* . As the reader could see in the table, *entre* does not establish the number of limits

surrounding the main point. Either 'between two nice girls' or 'among several nice girls' is '*entre duas belas garotas*' and '*entre várias belas garotas*'.

Noticeable, however, is the number of parallels 'in front of' has in Portuguese. In fact, '*na frente dele*' and '*diante dele*' may or may not have difference in meaning depending on the context and situation. '*Na frente dele, eu tremi*' and '*diante dele eu tremi*' may be understood as 'because of his presence' while '*Eu estava na frente dele*' or '*Eu estava diante dele*' indicates the definite position in relation to a point.

TABLE 2E

2. Static

b. Time		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
fixed point in future time	PARA - <i>lá para</i> o fim do ano.	BY - <i>by</i> the end of the year. AT - <i>at</i>
within a definite period of time - season - early enough - months - definite point in time - days of the week	- <i>em</i> dois meses - <i>no</i> outono - <i>em</i> tempo EM- <i>em</i> Abril - <i>no</i> fim do ano - <i>na</i> quarta-feira	- <i>in</i> two months - <i>in</i> the fall - <i>in</i> time - <i>ix</i> April - <i>at</i> the end of the year - <i>on</i> Wednesday
at a definite point of time - time of the day - part of the day - punctual - definite date - day of the week	- <i>às</i> duas horas A - <i>à</i> noite - <i>a</i> tempo - <i>a</i> 12 de abril - <i>aos</i> domingos	AT - <i>at</i> two o'clock - <i>at</i> night. - <i>on</i> time - <i>on</i> April 12 - <i>on</i> Sundays
at a definite point within a period - part of the day	DE - <i>domingo de manhã</i> - <i>de manhã</i>	Sunday morning (or <i>on</i>) IN - <i>in</i> the morning.
past a fixed date	APÓS - <i>após</i> o Natal. DEPOIS DE - <i>depois</i> do Natal	AFTER - <i>after</i> Christmas.
before a date in the future	ANTES DE - <i>antes</i> do Natal.	BEFORE - <i>before</i> Christmas.
not later than	POR - <i>pele</i> Natal.	BY - <i>by</i> Christmas.
within a limited period of time	ENTRE - <i>entre</i> 2 e 4 da tarde.	BETWEEN - <i>between</i> 2 and 4 p.m.

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2E

Em, standing for *in*, *on* and *at* makes no distinction in any idea: *em casa* (at home), *em tudo* (in everything) and *em cima da mesa* (on the table), *em Março* (in March), *aos domingos* (on Sundays), illustrate exactly the problem. It is Politzer who says:

*To the native speaker of English it seems rather obvious that, in time designation, on is used with dates, days of the week, and names of holidays; in with months and years; at with hours. This distinction may prove confusing to many students, and practice may be required to avoid mistakes as *at June, *at Saturday.*¹²

While this distinction seems quite easy to learn, the previous study showed that this group of prepositions is one of the most difficult to deal with, especially in the case of the transposition from Portuguese to English. The following statement shows what seems to be the real cause of the difficulties:

*In some instances, the use of prepositions with time expressions is not governed by any obvious rule and must be learned case by case: for example, at night vs. in the morning.*¹³

As the reader can easily see, the 'obvious' difference cited above is not seen at all by the Brazilian-Portuguese speaker who is used to say 'em Março' (in March), 'no Natal' (on Christmas), 'no domingo' (on Sunday), or 'na Primavera' (in Spring). It is necessary, however, to say that other prepositions are used with time in certain cases. 'De manhã' stands for *in the morning*, 'de tarde' for *in the afternoon*, and 'de noite' for *in the evening* or *at night*. 'At night' can also be translated by 'à noite'. This note shows that the use of prepositions with certain expressions of time which is optional in Portuguese, does not occur in English. The difference between 'on time' and 'in time' is made by 'na hora' and 'em (a) tempo' in Portuguese.

TABLE 2F

2. Static

c. Notion		
Meaning	Portuguese	English
- in relation to - part of a whole - specified as	SOBRE - que é que você pensa do assunto? DE - de tudo um pouco - casa de madeira..	ABOUT - what do you think of the OF subject? OF - a bit of everything - wood house
- reason - purpose	POR - pelo prazer de... PARA - ela não está preparada para isso.	FOR - for the pleasure of ... FOR - she is not prepared for that TO - she is not prepared to do that
- condition	SOB - sob todos os aspectos	UNDER - under all circumstances.
- agent	POR - um livro escrito por Greene DE - um livro de Greene	BY - a book (written) by Greene

DESCRIPTION - TABLE 2F

Again, *de* stands for several uses and meanings. The interesting fact is the change that occurs in the use of the agent marker when the verb is deleted in Portuguese. *Por* is used in the complete sentence but not if the verb does not appear. In this case, one would say: 'Esta música foi escrita *por* Roberto Carlos' but 'uma música *de* Roberto Carlos' either 'This song was written *by* Roberto Carlos' or 'A song *by* Roberto Carlos' in English.

Por also shows complexity. Compare the examples: 'O livro foi escrito *por* Rui Barbosa' (The book was written *by* Rui Barbosa) where *por* is the agent marker, 'Sinto muito *por* ele' (I feel sorry for him) - meaning on the behalf of, and 'Eu o vi *pela* janela' (I saw him through the window).

It is clear that the general tendency is for the use of one single preposition in English in any case.

The case of *para* and *por* constitutes another difficulty. In a sentence such as 'let me do it *for* you' both 'Deixa que eu faço isso *por* você' or 'Deixa que eu faço isso *para* você' can be used. But the difference between 'He sent a letter *to* her' and 'He sent a letter *for* her' may not be clearly indicated in Portuguese, both using *para*. Anyway, the difference can be shown as Portuguese allows a translation using *para* replacing *to* and *por* replacing *for*. In any case, the ambiguous translation is the most common.

A final note is to say that *para* preceding a verb parallels *in order to*.

Besides the use of the simple prepositions described above, there is the case of complement-types used with or without

prepositions in both languages, which can account for some of the errors the learners may have.

In English, the cases of: 'I'll write him a letter' and 'He gave me a ride' find their counterparts in the Portuguese sentences 'Eu lhe escreverei uma carta' and 'Ele me deu uma carona'. In this case none of them used the prepositional form, although this use is optional. Similarly 'I don't work on Saturdays' can either be 'Eu não trabalho aos Sábados' or 'Eu não trabalho Sábado', but 'She went home has to be 'Ela foi para casa'.

Matoso Câmara explains the situation:

In Portuguese there are only two complement-types that may appear without a connecting preposition: 1) the direct-object, a constituent that completes the meaning of the so-called transitive verbs, and 2) certain other complements of an adverbial nature. In the second category specific conditions must obtain and the use of a preposition always remains a latent possibility (ir domingo - ir no domingo, trabalhar três horas, por três horas). Even in the first category, for objects that are 'people' rather than 'things', there is a special pattern with the preposition a ('to') in free variation with the general pattern (ex.: amar os pais, aos pais).¹⁴

Another concern is the formation of contractions in Portuguese which never occur in English. Brazilian students can either have the tendency to include or avoid the article in

English in many situations. This, of course, is not an error in the use of the preposition itself but it proves the fact that prepositions cannot be analyzed in isolation but they involve or are involved with other grammar facts to them.

The prepositions *de*, *por*, *a* and *em* are the basis for the contractions in Portuguese:

<i>de</i> + <i>o</i> = <i>do</i>	<i>por</i> + <i>o</i> = <i>pelo</i>
<i>de</i> + <i>a</i> = <i>da</i>	<i>por</i> + <i>a</i> = <i>pela</i>
<i>de</i> + <i>os</i> = <i>dos</i>	<i>por</i> + <i>os</i> = <i>pelos</i>
<i>de</i> + <i>as</i> = <i>das</i>	<i>por</i> + <i>as</i> = <i>pelas</i>
<i>a</i> + <i>o</i> = <i>ao</i>	<i>em</i> + <i>o</i> = <i>no</i>
<i>a</i> + <i>a</i> = <i>aa</i>	<i>em</i> + <i>a</i> = <i>na</i>
<i>a</i> + <i>os</i> = <i>aos</i>	<i>em</i> + <i>os</i> = <i>nos</i>
<i>a</i> + <i>as</i> = <i>às</i>	<i>em</i> + <i>as</i> = <i>nas</i>

Maria Isabel Abreu explains the occurrence of the preposition *a*: "When the preposition *a* occurs before the definite article, it combines with the article."¹⁵

The reader probably noticed that the preposition *em* rarely occurs in its primitive form, but the contractions are commonly used instead.

Contractions are also made with the indefinite article, and with demonstratives.

Notice that no contractions are made with the prepositions *a* and *por* and the indefinite article.

It is obvious that the great variety of formation of these prepositions influences greatly the selection of English prepositions to be used. These contractions influence the use of

the English prepositions because many times the learner is led to put articles after them or to avoid the article where it should be used.

Finally, one should be aware of the fact that the Portuguese use of prepositions may be extremely varied in relation to a repeated English structure as the examples below show. It seems easy to conclude that a final solution to the learner's problem has not been reached, but that observation and training are recommended to minimize his difficulty. Observe the Portuguese translation for the particle *to*:

'like <i>to</i> dance'	=	'gostar <i>de</i> dançar'
'want <i>to</i> go'	=	'querer ir'
'ready <i>to</i> go'	=	'pronto <i>para</i> ir'
'begin <i>to</i> study'	=	'começar <i>a</i> estudar'.

NOTES

- ¹ Thomas Pyles, *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 2nd. edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 15.
- ² Pyles, p. 222.
- ³ Pyles, p. 15.
- ⁴ Pyles, p. 15.
- ⁵ Webster's New World Dictionary, (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1971), p. 518.
- ⁶ Joaquim Matoso Câmara Jr., *The Portuguese Language*, p. 153.
- ⁷ Câmara, p. 153.
- ⁸ Earl W. Thomas, *The Syntax of Spoken Brazilian Portuguese*, p. 252.
- ⁹ Nelson W. Francis, *The Structure of American English*, (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), pp. 306-07.
- ¹⁰ Robert and Frieda Politzer, *Teaching English as a Second Language*, (Lexington: Xerox College Publishing, 1972), p. 230.

¹¹ Celso Cunha, *Gramática do Português Contemporâneo*, p. 378.

¹² This table is a translation of the one used by Celso Cunha. The division and titles were kept as close to his idea as possible.

¹³ Politzer, p. 235.

¹⁴ Robert Lado, *Linguistics Across Cultures Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers*, (Ann. Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 9.

¹⁵ Câmara, p. 153.

¹⁶ Maria Isabel Abreu and Cléa Rameh, *Português Contemporâneo*, (São Paulo: Editora Vozes, 1969), p. 105.