The Conceptual Mapping of the English Preposition *in* into Arabic

**Imran Ho-Abdullah**  
*School of Language Studies & Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia  
E-mail: imranho@ukm.my  
Tel: +603-8921-6589; Fax: +603-9825-4577

**Amna A. Hasan**  
*School of Language Studies & Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

43600 BANGI, Selangor, Malaysia  
E-mail: amna@ukm.my  
Tel: +6012-6816708; Fax: +603-9825-4577

**Abstract**  
In this paper the semantic extensions of the English preposition *in* and its translation into Arabic and vice-versa is discussed. It is argued that each domain of the English preposition *in* can be translated into different usage domain in the Arabic language. The translation can be explained using the conceptual mapping domains of the the underlying concept in the source language and finding its usage domain in the target language. The forward translation test is suggested in order to identify the concept of extension of different groups of four different domains (spatial, temporal, area and state), in three semantic mapping categories (SDM, ZDM and DDM).

**Keywords:** English language, Arabic language, preposition *in*, categories, domains and lexical studies.

1. **Introduction**  
In the field of cognitive semantics much focus has been given to semantic extension in polysemous words. Polysemous words also pose a major challenge in translation. This paper proposes a framework for translation of English – Arabic prepositions utilising conceptual mapping. The conceptual mappings fall into three categories:

a. **Category 1:** same domain mapping (SDM). In this category, the source preposition is mapped into the same domain in the target language. In other words, the translation and original are in the same conceptual domain.

b. **Category 2:** zero prepositions (ZDM). In this category, the source preposition (in whatever domain) is deleted or does not appear in the target language. In other words, there is no usage of prepositions in the translated text. In some instance an adverb is used in place of the relevant preposition in the target text.

c. **Category 3:** different domain mapping (DDM). In this category, the source preposition is mapped into a different domain in the target language. In other words, the translation and original are in different domains.

This categorization of domains usages into three categories will allow the identification of the semantic mapping of the English preposition *in* and its correspondent Arabic prepositions. Several
domains may be invoked to characterise the meaning of the English preposition *in*. Four important conceptual domains are distinguished in the present study:

1.1. Spatial – *in*

The usage of *in* in the spatial domain is demonstrated as space in an enclosure or volume, e.g. *in your bag, in the bedroom, in the area*, etc. Cuyckens (2002); Vandeloise (1999) and Ignasi (1998) indicate that enclosure may consist of two types. The first type involves total and partial enclosure within bodies or areas, for example, *in the cupboard and in a corner*. Within this context, *in* is used with complements denoting buildings, parts of buildings, doors, doorways, windows, conveyances (cars, buses, trains and ships), books, publications, clothes, parts of a person’s outfit, human and animal bodies. The second type is enclosure within a surface, expanse or area. In this case, the objects are enclosed by the outer bounds of the surface, expanse or area and the pure surface is presented in two dimensions only.

1.2. Temporal – *in*

The temporal domain shows an enclosing time-span within which an event is situated. It is associated with the time-span seen from the present time-point (Dirven 1993; Imran 1999). The temporal space is said to ‘enclose’ or ‘contain’ the event. It is noted that there are at least two sub-types of time-enclosure. The first indicates a period of time such as *in the afternoon, in the early 19s, in the 21st century, in summer, in the morning, and in July* (Kemmer 2004). Whereas the second sub-type indicates duration such as a length of time such as *promised to come back in a few hours*.

1.3. Area- *in*

In the case of the area-*in* preposition, the complement is a configuration of abstract space. In this usage, the entity is ‘contained’ or ‘enclosed’ (Rice 1996) in an abstract activity area. The prepositional NP in such uses indicates an activity within which one is involved or engaged as if the abstract entity is a contained area. The use in this situation is to indicate that the person is seen as being in an enclosed space or is a repository of various qualities and emotions. In such expressions, the human being is the metaphorical container into which abstract qualities are placed. Other parts of the human body, e.g. *the mind, the heart* may also be conceptualized as ‘partial’ containers (Radden 1989; Carmen 2004).

1.4. State- *in*

The use of *in* within this domain involves the notion of an enclosed space in some psychological, emotional or physical state, in which a person or an object is contained or ‘enveloped’ (Radden 1989). Expressions such as *in love, in danger, in doubt, in charge, in a hurry*, are some typical examples of the state-*in*. Some examples of such uses include containment as status, health, living and economic conditions.

2. Data

The data for the study are derived from 75 Iraqi students attending an Iraqi secondary school in Kuala Lumpur aged between 15 – 17 years old. This school adopts the Iraqi Schools Curriculum and is similar to Iraqi schools in Iraq and other Iraqi schools established in other countries. As they follow the same education system in Iraq, Arabic is the language of instruction and English is taught in the last three levels of the higher secondary schools, namely the 10th grade (equivalent of Form 3 in Malaysia), 11th grade (equivalent of Form 4 in Malaysia), and 12th grade (equivalent of Form 5 in Malaysia). In total the students attend four periods of English a week with each period lasting 45 minutes making a total of 180 minutes of English learning per week. At these grade levels, English is taught as a foreign
language. Students in both the Arts stream and the Science stream must take Arabic and English as both subjects are required for entry into universities in Iraq.

In the present study, the students are asked to translate the stimulus English sentences into the Arabic language within each given domain. Their translation are then analyzed using the semantic domains for prepositional meanings and subsequently the mapping categories are identified. The analysis allows for observation of the relationship and the mappings in the translation from English to Arabic.

3. Results
The results of the translation for each of the four domains – spatial, temporal, area and state will be discussed in below.

3.1. Spatial – in
In the stimulus sentence (1), the spatial domain of the English preposition *in* conceptualises the link between the trajector (*my friend*) and the landmark (*small village*):

1. My friend lives in a small village.

[Figure 1: Spatial-In]

From the respondents’ translation below, it would seem that the configuration of the forward translation from the English to the Arabic language of the spatial domain *in* indicates two possible but different forms in the same domain mapping category (SDM):

a. يعيش صديقي في قرية صغيرة
   Lives my friend in village small.
   Yaaish sadiqi fii qariah sakerah.

b. يعيش صديقي بقرية صغيرة
   Lives my friend in village small.
   Yaaish sadiqi ba qariah sakerah.

As shown in (1a) above, the Arabic preposition *fii* is used as the translation equivalence of the English spatial domain *in*. According to Ignasi (1998), ‘spatial *in* uses an object that is conceptualized...
as an area or volume. It is used to indicate the relationship of two objects, the trajector and the landmark’. The Arabic preposition *fī* shares the same concept as *in*. In (1a) the trajector is the object (*my friend - sādiqī*) that is located and totally surrounded by the landmark which is the object (*small village = qariah sakerah*). This usage is normally used with reference to geographical areas or a physical enclosure. However, in sentence (1b) the Arabic preposition *ba* is used to indicate the same spatial domain of the English preposition *in*. In the Arabic language however, this preposition is used with places or locations. The trajector (*my friend = sādiqī*) is placed in a half or partial enclosed place (*small village = qariah sakerah*), see Figure (1). As for this domain, the translation of the source is realized by the Arabic prepositions *fī* and *ba*. Each of these choice construes different relationships between the trajector and the landmark in the spatial sense albeit that the different translations are equally derived from a similar physical - spatial representation.

### 3.2. Temporal- *In*

For the *in*- temporal domain as shown in (2) below, the subject (*she*) is termed as the trajector. In addition, the past tense verb (*left*) indicates an event or action which involves both the temporal and spatial sense. The preposition *in* denotes the link to the landmark, the temporal object time or year (2008). As a result, *in* is a temporal usage. As shown in Figure (2), the temporal domain of the English preposition *in* indicates the abstract period of time surrounded by the landmark. The (TR) is completely surrounded within this period of time. This semantic representation in this sentence indicates that the (LM) is the external to the (TR), and completely encloses the landmark (event).

2. She left the University **in** 2008.

![Figure 2: Temporal-In](image)

In the translation below, it would seem that there are two possible mapping categories, (SDM and ZDM) for the translation from English to Arabic language of the temporal domain *in*. As in the case with the spatial domain of the English preposition *in*, the temporal domain is also translated into two different forms under the SDM same domain mapping category, the Arabic prepositions *fī* and *ba*.

2. a 2000
   `تَرَكَتِ الجَامِعَة فِي عَامَ ۲٠٠٠`
   Left she the university **in** 2000
   Tarakat al-jameaa **fī** aam alfeen.

b. 2000
   `تَرَكَتِ الجَامِعَة بِعَامَ ۲٠٠٠`
   Left she the university **in** 2000
   Tarakat al-jameea **ba** aam alfeen.

As shown in (2a), the Arabic preposition *fī* is used to translate the temporal domain of the English preposition *in*. It is observed that the temporal domain is used to indicate the relationship in events enclosing time spans (Dirven, 1993). For instance, the trajector (*she left the university-Tarakat al-jameaa*) is an event that can be related to an enveloped period of time, the landmark (*in 2000 - fī aam alfeen*). In (2b), the Arabic preposition *ba* is used to indicate the temporal domain of the English
preposition *in*. In the Arabic language, the temporal domain of *ba* is used to indicate the concept of time or event as a point rather than period of an enclosed time (Omar 2005). As illustrated in Figure (3), the trajector (*she left the university-Tarakat al-jameea*) is an event which can be related to a specific point of time in the landmark (*a specific time in year 2000 - ba amm alfeen*).

**Figure 3:** Temporal-In-Ba

The second possible mapping as in sentence (2c) is the ZDM or non usage of the preposition. In the sentence below, the translation does not contain a preposition. In other words, no preposition is used to relate the trajector (*she left the university = Tarakat al- jameea*) and the landmark (*2000=amm 2000*). The subjects’ concept of mapping to the ZDM category is due to the use of the adverb of time (*amm*) to indicate the concept of the temporal domain.

c. 2000

Left she the university 2000.

Tarakat al-jameea aam alfeen.

In spite of these differences, the uses of the Arabic prepositions exemplify the same semantic relationship of the English preposition temporal *in*. These prepositions indicate different positions of the trajector and the landmark. For instance, *fii* is used to indicate the relationship of events in an enveloped time spans. While *ba* is used as an event which can be related to a specific point of time span. Another type of mapping is the ZDM zero mapping of prepositions to indicate the notion of temporal domain in an adverbial sense.

### 3.3. Area- in

In this domain, the English preposition *in* is used to present the link between the trajector (oru being deceived) with a landmark thematic area (*our expectations*). The object in (3) is an abstract activity extended from the verb (the enclosed sense). Radden (1989) revealed the use of area *in* to indicate various qualities and emotions. In this sense the human being is the metaphorical container into which abstract qualities are placed. As illustrated in Figure (4), the broken-lines inside the circle present the concept of an abstract sense in the past time (TR) within a contained abstract area (LM).

3. We were deceived in our expectations.
Just like the temporal-\textit{in} domain, the area–\textit{in} domain also indicates two levels of mappings, namely the SDM within two different forms and the ZDM mapping. The translation from the English to Arabic indicates that the Arabic prepositions can be mapped directly into the English area domain. As shown in the examples below.

3. a. ﺧﺪﻋﻨﺎ ﻓﻰ ﺗﻮﻗﻌﺎﺗﻨﺎ
Deceived we \textit{in} expectations our.
Khodenaa \textit{fii} tawkiaatina.

b. ﺧﺪﻋﻨﺎ ﺑـ \ﺗﻮﻗﻌﺎﺗﻨﺎ
Deceived we \textit{in} expectations our.
Khodenaa \textit{ba} tawkiaatina.

Based on the translation in (3a), the Arabic preposition \textit{fii} is used for a same domain mapping (SDM) translation for the English preposition \textit{in}. In the sentence above, the expression ‘we were deceived’ is translated as \textit{Khodenaa} - an expression within which one is involved or engaged with the human situation as an enclosed area (the landmark) (\textit{in our expectations} = \textit{fii tawkiaatina}). Similarly in (3b), the SDM mapping to the English preposition \textit{in} is the Arabic preposition \textit{ba} which is used to indicate the concept of a situation, the trajectory (were deceived = Khodenaa) as a point at which the subject of this situation is aiming the landmark or the object (\textit{in our expectations} = \textit{ba tawkiaatina}) as represented in Figure (5) below.

The second domain mapping of subjects’ translation is the ZDM, as shown in (3c) where the respondents delete the English preposition in the Arabic translation. In Arabic, it is possible to change the subject to the verb and one can start the sentence with the verb (past event – \textit{kanat}) followed by the subject (expectations) to indicate the area domain of the respondents’ activity or action (tawkiaatina hasimah).

c. ﻦﺎآوأ ﺗﻮﻗﻌﺎﺗﻨﺎ ﻋﺎﻮـ
Were expectations our crucial
Kanat tawkiaatina hasimah.

Our expectations were crucial

Thus in this domain, the translation of the preposition *in* from English to Arabic is attributable to the change of the sentence structure in addition to deleting the preposition to indicate an adverbial sense instead of the prepositional usage for the area *in* in a different situation. These findings are in line with a cognitive linguistics expectation, given that there could be different contruals of a particular event which is reflected in the translation into different types of mappings of area-*in* domain to the Arabic language. In the present case, the differences in translation can be attributed to the abstract mental representation of the non- concrete domains, and that all abstract senses are able to be construed in different ways.

3.4. State -*in*

In the state domain as in (4), *in* denotes the link of two entities: the predication (*She is living*) and a condition, namely ‘*poverty*’. According to Radden (1989), ‘state domain involves the concept of enclosure in some psychological, emotional, or conditional state in which a person is encloses by expressions’. The presentation for sentence (4) is shown in Figure (6) where the trajector line is completely circled by the abstract condition.

4. She is living **in** poverty.

**Figure 6: State-In**

![Diagram](image)

In this domain, three possible translation in the various mapping categories SDM, DDM and the ZDM can be used.

4. a. تعيش في فقر.
   Living she **in** poverty.
   Taaisho **fii** faqer.

b. تعيش بفقر.
   Living she **in** poverty.
   Taaisho **ba** faqer.
The analysis of the translation of (4a) shows that *fii* is translated to the same domain of state *in*. In Arabic, the state domain as denoted by the Arabic preposition *fii* involves the condition of some entities (*poverty = faqer*) where the landmark with the subject or the trajector inhabits (*she is living = taaiisho*). According to Imran (1999) ‘an entity may also be enclosed or enveloped in some social and economic state’. In other words, the trajector is part of the land mark (*Taaiisho fii faqer*), that is, the subject state is part of her living. In (4b), a SDM mapping is utilised using the Arabic preposition *ba*. The *ba* state domain indicates an activity or an action as a metaphorical point of orientation. When taken as a point in the state domain, it is closely related to the temporal usage which has an activity or condition as a metaphorical point (Habash, 1982). In other words, the sentence above indicates that the trajector (*she is living = taaiisho*) is located in a condition construed as a point (*poverty = faqer*). As shown in Figure (7), the Arabic preposition *ba* usage indicates the trajector state of living in poverty at a point in the subject’s life rather than totally surrounded within it.

The second possible mapping is a translation utilizing ZDM or the zero mapping of state domain as shown in sentence (4c). In this translation, the preposition is deleted. Instead, an adverbial denoting an enclosed state is used to indicate that the period of time of living in poverty is long. Thus, the trajector (*she is living = taaiisho*) is part of the landmark, the adverb of state (*faqerah*).

\[
\text{c. تعيش فقيرة.} \\
\text{Living she poverty} \\
\text{Taaisho faqerah.}
\]

The third possible mapping is the different domain mapping or the DDM. As shown in (4d), the *min* preposition in the Arabic language is used to indicate a causal relationship (Al-aide 1999) and thus, it translates to the English preposition *from*. To translate this meaning in Arabic, one should change the verb meaning and the preposition. In this case, the trajector (*living in = taaiisho fii*) is construed as *suffering from (tuaani min)* whereby the English state domain is mapped onto a cause domain to indicate the reason for her suffering.

\[
\text{d. هي تعاني من الفقر.} \\
\text{Suffering she from poverty} \\
\text{Tuaani min al- faqer.}
\]

This type of mapping shows how different translations can conceptualise the mental representation of the abstract state domain into different categories. As a result of the translation above, both the Arabic prepositions *fii* and *ba* are used to indicate the same semantic mapping category of different positions in the relationship of the trajector and the landmark. The Arabic preposition *fii* is used to indicate the notion of enclosure and *ba* is used to indicate the trajector state as a point. As in all domains, the zero domains mapping of a preposition is used to indicate the adverbial sense of the trajector as part and enclosed by the landmark. The third type of mapping DDM as exemplified by (4d), shifts the state domain to a cause domain to indicate the notion of the cause and effect relationships of the trajector and the landmark.
4. Concluding Remarks

The different semantic representations of the English preposition *in* and their Arabic translation have been discussed in this paper. The analysis reveals that the English – Arabic translation of *in*, can involve different notions of the trajector and the landmark. In one instance, the concept of inclusion with a relation of control of the trajector by the landmark, as well as the landmark is totally encloses the trajector. In another instance, the interior landmark or the interior space is relevant. However, the second implies a partial enclosure which entail semantically a loss of some space that defines the container, such that the control of the landmark over the trajector is reduced. In the partial enclosure analysis, the space is relevant to a certain extent.

Cross-linguistically, prepositions are a part of English and Arabic language constituents that exert influence on both languages. Therefore, using translation as a method might draw attention to the manipulation of language and to the fact that translation to Arabic may be map differently. What is important to bear in mind is that not every English preposition has a definite Arabic equivalent and vice-versa. Based on the different senses of prepositions, as well as the links that exist among the various senses, an important implication from this study is that it is natural to present the uses of spatial, temporal and abstract prepositions using line the domain construct of cognitive grammar. The analysis have been able to create a variety of simple yet informative domains which could have a strong visual impact on the way the source can be construed in the target.
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