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# **Metaphorical Prepositions in L2 English Sentence Comprehension: Evidence from a Priming Experiment**

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## **Abstract**

Previous corpus studies using MIPVU suggest that prepositions are frequently identified as metaphorical in L2 English. Critics argue this may reflect collocational knowledge rather than genuine metaphorical interpretation. This study tests MIPVU's psycholinguistic validity by examining whether L2 learners process such prepositions as mappings from concrete to abstract domains. Eighty-four Mandarin-speaking English learners completed a laboratory priming experiment: Pictures either primed or did not prime the concrete spatial meanings of prepositions (e.g., in a box), while the same prepositions appeared in a metaphorical sense (e.g., in the future) in target sentences. Participants selected the best interpretation from four options for the abstract meaning of each target preposition. Accuracy and reaction times for abstract meanings were compared across conditions. Results showed slower responses in the primed condition, without accuracy differences, indicating semantic relatedness between the concrete and abstract meanings and suggesting that L2 prepositions are processed metaphorically, supporting MIPVU's validity.