L.P. Smith (1948) notes that the idiosyncrasy of English like that of other language is perhaps most strikingly exemplified in the use of prepositions and then discusses instances of what he calls 'arbitrary' use of prepositions.

What Smith calls 'arbitrary' is actually the intricacy of language structure where a particular element fulfils different functions in different contexts, i.e. one and the same preposition put with different words of different classes shows difference in function.

The different classes of words preposition are used with are nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs etc. Categorically speaking, one of the largest classes of English idioms consists of terse adverbial phrases formed by the collocation of a preposition with a noun, or adjective, phrases like 'at hand', 'at length', 'at leisure', etc. Even more numerous are the idiomatic collocations used as adverbs. These phrasal, verbs like 'keep down', 'set up', 'put through' and thousand others are not only one of the most striking idiosyncrasies of
English, but they enter as well into a vast number of idiomatic anomalies — phrases with meanings not implied by the meanings of the words which compose them. These phrasal verbs correspond to the compound verbs in synthetic language.

As a matter of fact we have in English both compound and phrasal verbs, often composed of the same elements — 'upgather' and 'gather up', 'uproot' and 'root up', 'underlie' and 'lie under', where the meaning is the same in each but in other cases the meaning is changed by the grouping of the different elements — 'undergo' and 'go under', 'overtake' and 'take over', etc. have not the same signification, and phrases like 'upset' and 'set up' are almost exactly opposite in meaning.

Further more, it is difficult to learn to use prepositions correctly. "Most of them have several different function; for instance, the dictionary lists eighteen main uses of 'at'. At the same time, different prepositions can have very
similar uses (in the morning, on monday morning, at night), so that it is easy to make mistakes. Many nouns, verbs, and adjectives are used with particular preposition. We say 'congratulations on', 'arrive at', 'angry with somebody', 'on a bus'. There are not many rules to help you choose correctly in these cases, so you have to learn each expression separately. There are also problems connected with the position of the preposition in sentences, the differences between prepositions and adverb particles and the use of prepositions with conjunctions".
(Swan, 1988 : 484-485)

The problem mentioned above (and the like to be discussed in future) therefore, calls on the question whether prepositions are merely relators or they are both semantic and syntactic components. Fillmore (1968) puts forth a theory in which preposition (along with their complements) are but realisations of deep rooted case functions. Some generative semanticists treat the deep structure to have purely semantic values regardless of the structure of the language, but, practically speaking, the deep level of structure is
semantico-syntactic in nature and hence the topic entitles "A Semantico-Syntactic Study of English Prepositions".

The proposed study does not, however, ignore the syntactic and semantic functions fulfilled respectively in the surface and the deeper levels of structure. Thus, the semantico-syntactic function at the deep level acts as one that maps the aforesaid two levels in language.