



Error Analysis on the Use of Prepositions in Students' Writing (A Case Study of the Eleventh Grade Students of SMA Negeri 9 Semarang in the Academic Year of 2014/2015)

Pindho Anjayani✉ Drs. Suprpto, M. Hum.

English Department. Faculty of Languages and Arts. State University of Semarang.

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Abstract

The focus of this study is error analysis on the use of prepositions in students' writing made by the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Semarang. This study was conducted to find out the students' dominant errors on the use of prepositions in their writings and to explain how students use prepositions in their writings. This study was categorized into descriptive qualitative research.

The population of this study was the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Semarang in the academic year of 2014/2015. The population was 252 students and the writer chose 72 students from two classes consist of class XI IPA 3 and XI IPA 5 as the subjects. The writer used purposive random sampling because the population was homogenous.

The data was analyzed using error analysis method. The result of data analysis showed that from 1002 prepositions found in 72 students' writing. There were 117 incorrect preposition usage or 11.68%. The dominant error was the use of preposition of place which was 66.67% or 78 errors. However, the students were able to use prepositions correctly because in general they could use the appropriate prepositions in their writing.

The writer saw that some of students were still confused in choosing the appropriate prepositions. Some of them knew the function of prepositions but they overgeneralized the information from target language in every structure of language they found. They also tried to combine information from their native language (Indonesian) and second language they are learning (English). In general, those errors were mostly caused by interlingual transfer. The writer hopes that the teacher could be aware of the importance of media to transfer information about preposition effectively and efficiently. The writer also hopes the government and syllabus developer could understand the importance of preposition as the part of grammar in English. In addition, they could allocate more time and portion to include preposition as the important material for the students.

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✉ Correspondent Address:

B3 Building FBS Unnes

Sekaran, Gunungpati, Semarang, 50229

E-mail: poojavanica@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Humans need to learn language to convey their intension or opinion to others in a community. Their ability to communicate clearly and fluently to other refers to language performance. In order to use language well, we have to master the language competence. Language competence covers some skills and components.

In language learning, there are four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As stated by Morrow in Demirbaş (2013:108), receptive and productive skills are the combination of four skills – listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. Therefore, we can divide the language skills into two types. First is receptive skill. It is a term used for reading and listening skills where meaning is extracted from the discourse. According to Harmer (2007:265), productive skill is the term for speaking and writing skills where students actually have to produce language themselves.

As stated by Tarigan in the article entitled *The Definition of Writing According to Some Experts*, writing as productive skills for writing an indirect communication and the nature of the character is very different from that expressed by speaking directly, therefore writing is included an ability.

Meanwhile according to Wilga (1980) cited in Ningsih (2004:35), writing or composition is the expression of ideas in a consecutive way, according to graphic convention of the language, the ultimate aims of a written at this stage to be able to express himself in a polished literary form which requires the utilization of a special vocabulary and a certain refinement of a structure.

It can be concluded that writing is the activity of making a recording language in a piece of paper or any other areas to express the idea and message from the writer including the usage of vocabulary and structure of language. Writing is also created by particular set of symbol, and letter for representing the wordings of particular language.

The components in language include several things, such as: lexical, phonological, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and grammar. All of those components should be mastered so that we can use language well and can be understood by others.

Grammar covers several important aspects in language such as, prepositions, articles, singular or plural form, irregular verbs, tenses, etc. Some of them seem like a small aspect which do not have important role in language, for examples, prepositions and articles. They are as important as other aspects in language. These aspects also become a problem for the foreign language learners. They often make mistake in using preposition and article so that it influences their production of language.

Seaton and Y.H. Mew (2007:132) define preposition as a word that connects one thing with another, showing how they are related. It is usually followed by a noun or pronoun. Meanwhile, Brown (2004:958) defines preposition as a word used to express some relation of different things or thoughts to each other, and is generally placed before a noun or a pronoun.

We could find several kinds of English prepositions with different functions which are usually used. There are preposition of place, preposition of time, preposition of movement, preposition to show a method, reason, accompaniment, etc. The foreign language learners will get confused if they do not understand the rules and the meaning of prepositions. If it happens, there will be misleading in conveying a message. One simple example is when a student uses preposition of place. The student says “The book is above the table” instead of “The book is on the table” to show that the book is located on surface of the table. The listener will think that the book is flying if the student says “The book is above the table”. Another example is when the student says “The black box is below the white box” instead of “The white box is under the white box” to show that the white box is resting on the surface of black box. If the student says “The white box is below the black box”, it means that there is a space

between the white box and the black box. If those kinds of mistake are neglected and happen constantly, it might be an error and fossilized.

Lam (2009) as cited by Lorincz and Gordon (2012:1), states that the learners cannot depend on prepositional knowledge from their first language. If learners do make assumptions of semantic equivalence between the first and second languages, it often results in prepositional error.

The second language learners often find difficulties in using English prepositions because there are differences in their first language and English prepositions. They have to learn the new form and master all the prepositions. It makes learners get confused between their first language rule and English.

Research Problems

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What is the dominant error on the use of prepositions found in the students' writing?
2. How do students use prepositions in their writing?

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. to find out the students' dominant errors on the use of prepositions in students' writing; and
2. to explain how students use prepositions in their writing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The writer gathered the supporting data from the observation at the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Semarang as the population. As stated by Sugiyono (2009:80) that the population is a generalization region consisting of: objects / subjects which have certain qualities and characteristics. They will be defined by the researchers to be studied and then drawn conclusions.

In addition, Sugiyono (2009:81) also defines sample as a part of the number and characteristics possessed by the population.

Samples that were taken from the population should be truly representative so that conclusions which drawn may be applied to all populations.

In conducting this research, the writer used purposive random sampling because the population was homogenous. Sugiyono (2009:82) explains that it is defined as simple random sampling because the members which are samples of the population is randomly without regarding to level that exists in the population. In this sampling, each subject has the same right and chance to be chosen as the sample.

From the consideration above, the writer took two classes of the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Semarang as sample. Those are class XI IPA 3 and XI IPA 5. She took those two classes because they were taught by the same teachers, have the same level of class, and they were not differentiated between upper class and lower class.

As stated by Sugiyono (2009:137) based on how or techniques of data collection, the data collection can be done with interviews, questionnaires, observation, and combination of them.

The writer collected the data by conducting a writing test using a free writing test. By conducting the writing test, the writer got the product from each student. The writing products were analyzed according to focus of the research which is the English preposition.

The writer used four steps of error analysis as stated by Corder in Ellis (1994:48) to explain how the prepositions were used in students' writing. There are the following steps:

1. Collecting the sample of language learners

In this step, the writer collected the data from the students by conducting a writing test.

2. Identifying the errors

After collecting the data, the writer identified the errors. Since the focus of the research was about the using of preposition, the writer identified the occurrence of errors in using prepositions.

3. Describing the errors

After identifying and classifying the errors made by the students, the writer described

the errors. The writer analyzed each error based on the four categories of errors such as omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering.

4. Explaining the errors

In this step, the writer explained how and why the errors made by the students could occur. It concerned with the source of errors.

5. Evaluating the errors

After knowing the source of errors, the writer evaluated the errors. She gave some explanation how prepositions used by the students in their writing product. Their writing product and errors which occurred can show their comprehension

in using prepositions.

Errors can be done by some sources and causes. In finding the sources of the errors made by the students, the writer used theory from Brown (2000:223), who

has explained the sources which influence second language learner in making error.

1. Interlingual transfer

In this stage, the system of the second language is familiar and the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw. In the other word, the error is the result of transfer from the native language. The second language learners try to combine their information from their native language and second language they are learning.

2. Intralingual transfer

In this stage, the second language learners have learned target language. They overgeneralized the information from target language in every structure of language the find.

3. Context of learning

It refers to the situation in the case of untutored second language learning. The learners find different information from what they learn in class and the situation outside the class. It also

can happen because of the incorrect information from the teacher.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After collecting the data, the writer read and identified errors from the students' worksheet. From 1002 prepositions found in 72 students' writing, there were 869 correct usages of prepositions. In addition, the writer found 117 errors or 11.68% of preposition usage. From the 117 errors, they were classified into the following:

Table 4.1
Classifications of Error

No .	Types of Error	Quantity	Percentages
1.	Preposition of place	78	66.67%
2.	Preposition of time	25	21.37%
3.	Preposition to show a partition	3	2.56%
4.	Preposition to show the origin of something	2	1.71%
5.	Preposition to show a possession	1	0.85%
6.	Preposition to show a method	3	2.56%
7.	Preposition to show an accompaniment	2	1.71%
8.	Preposition to show the source of something	2	1.71%
9.	Preposition to show the material of something	1	0.85%
Total		117	

From the table above, we can see the frequency of each error and the percentages. The writer can also conclude that the dominant error is the using of preposition of place. There were 78 errors or 66.67%.

From the findings, it can be said that the students find problems in using prepositions. The students are still confused in using every type of prepositions. They know some prepositions and the general function, but they are still confused to choose the appropriate preposition for the context. For examples, the students made sentences: (1) At Solo we visited historic sites on Solo. (2) On the second day, we spend the night at Solo city. (3) The next day we went to Salatiga city to my house at Salatiga city,

The examples above show that the student knew preposition at and on are used to show a place. However he did not know that the appropriate preposition to show a city is in. It

made him use the prepositions of place randomly without knowing the correct rule for each preposition.

In other case, the students also knew the function of preposition but they overgeneralized the information from target language in every structure of language they find, for example: I choose into Ghost's House by on foot. The example shows that the student knows that preposition by is used to show a method. He also knew that preposition on should be added before word foot, but he overgeneralized information that he should put preposition by in the prepositional phrase to show a method. He overgeneralized it and made a mistake in another structure.

The writer also saw that the students are confused and try to combine their information from their native language (Indonesian) and target language they are learning (English), for examples: (1) Sragen is village from my mother. (2) We until Selekt park at 15.00 am.

From the examples above, the writer sees that the structure and the use of prepositions are familiar with the native language of the students. It seemed like the errors happened because of interlingual transfer. In this case, the students' writings were influenced by their native language. In general, the students found difficulties in making English sentences directly. They sometimes make it in their native language first and then translated into target language. It becomes problem when they translated their works, they ignored the rule in the target language. The writer found that they translated it literary. That was the reason why their sentences felt unfamiliar and strange. In addition, it felt strange because the sentences were written in English, but the structure of the sentence was in Indonesian.

Most of students made errors because of intralingual transfer. Since English is their foreign language, it is hard for them to fully comprehend the types of preposition and each function. They also have to comprehend the rules in making prepositional phrase which is quite different from their native language's rules. When they found the rule of one preposition, they often

overgeneralized it. It was one of common errors made by the students. They ignored the rule and used the prepositions for inappropriate context of sentence.

The dominant cause of those errors is interlingual transfer. As it stated before, interlingual transfer is influenced by native language. Unfortunately, this interlingual transfer becomes a negative transfer in language acquisition.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The result of the study shows that from 1002 prepositions found in 72 students' writing, there were 117 incorrect preposition usage or 11.68%. In other words, in general the students are able to use preposition correctly.

The dominant errors made by the students are errors on the use of prepositions of place. There were 78 errors of *preposition* usage or 66.67%. In addition, the possible factor of errors is interlingual transfer. The students were influenced by their native language. They also overgeneralized the information from the target language.

Based on the conclusions above, the writer would like to present suggestions: The suggestions for the teachers are they should be aware of the importance of media used in the class. The teachers could use medium to transfer information about prepositions effectively and efficiently. They could give some practices in using prepositions so that the students will understand and comprehend the use of prepositions. The teachers should give assignment or homework to read more. By giving an assignment to the students so they will read a text or a book, the students will be familiar with the use of prepositions in a context.

The writer hopes the government and syllabus developer could understand the importance of preposition as the part of grammar and the importance of grammar in learning English. Moreover, those reasons can be the consideration for government to allocate more time and portion to include preposition as the important material for the students.

The suggestion for the students is they should give some time to read texts in English. It will make them familiar with English language, grammar, sentence structure also the use of small important material such as preposition. The students will find concrete examples of the use of preposition. They will see how to use prepositions in sentences and some types of preposition they can use. In addition, they will be able to use prepositions in their writings.

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