

ERROR ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS IN THE STUDENTS' WRITING COMPOSITION

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Abstract: This research was conducted to describe the kinds of preposition errors found in the students' writing composition, to discover the kind of preposition errors mostly produced by the students, and to find out the sources of the errors. This study applied a descriptive qualitative research design. The researcher observed the 50 students' descriptive text from two classes who were chosen using purposive sampling. The instruments used were the researcher herself as the main instrument and some tables from Utari (2017) to collect, to analyze, to classify, and to interpret the data. The data showed that there were 74 items where the errors of omission were 15 items or 20.2%, errors of addition were 14 items or 18.9%, errors of misinformation were 44 items or 59.4%, and error of misordering was 1 item or 1.3%. Moreover, the preposition errors made by the students were caused by interlingual errors with 42 items, and intralingual errors with 32 items. Therefore, the preposition errors mostly produced by the students were errors of misinformation which were mostly caused by their first language interference. The researcher could say that the students were lack of preposition mastery, so it made them applying their own rules for expressing their idea. The suggestions for the next researchers are to work more on the solutions of the sources of the errors made by the students and to analyze the other object besides students' text, for example on the students' video project.

Keywords: Error, Error Analysis, Preposition, and Descriptive Text

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the productive skills in English that much believe it is the challenging skill to master it so that many students made errors accidentally in their text. Writing is the process of expressing ideas, information, knowledge, or experience and understands the writing to acquire the knowledge or some information to share and learn (White, 1986). Some researchers stated that errors in writing are considered as an inescapable part of English Foreign Learners (EFL) students writing since English writing is a complicated process for EFL students. It is because a learner should be able to develop ideas, organize the structure of a text, produce words, sentences, paragraphs, and use correct mechanics such as punctuations and connections into a readable text at once. Those complicated steps are needed in writing to avoid misconception, indecipherable meaning, and ambiguity in a text.

However, producing good text is not easy. There are still many errors, mistakes, and slips that can be found in a student's text. According to Akhtar, Suhail, and Rizwan (2017) in their study that the terms of mistake and error are repeatedly used and the definition with one another was misunderstood and interchangeable each other. Unequivocally, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) defined errors as the flawed side of a learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Furthermore, Al-Khresheh (2016) also has made a difference between errors and mistakes, he analyzed that:

There are certain ways to distinguish between an error and a mistake. The first one is associated with checking the consistency of the L2 learner's performance. If a learner sometimes uses the correct form of a certain structure or rule and later on uses the wrong one, then it is a mistake and can be self-corrected. However, if he/she always uses it wrongly, then it is an error. The second way is associated with asking an L2 learner to correct his/her deviant utterance. In case that he/she is unable to, the deviations are errors, and where he/she is successful, they are mistakes (p.51).

Studying a learner's errors cannot be able to be separated from analyzing and classifying processes called error analysis. Corder (1967) pointed out that error analysis is a process done by researchers and teachers which requires gathering samples, determining the errors, describing those errors, organizing them based on their characteristics and the error sources, and evaluating their seriousness. It implies that error analysis is important to be conducted to produce a better understanding of students' profiles in English skills.

Because many students made many errors in their text, Nawangsasi and Wijana (2019) stated that grammatical errors are the most common errors in students writing including in using prepositions such as prepositions in, at, on, and so on. Moreover, Richard (1974) stated that preposition is one of the most complicated categories in learning English that students found. According to Kim, Akkakoson, Odacıoğlu, Suki, and Bating (2017), a preposition is a word that connects two words into a sentence. It is also supported by Crystal (2019) that a preposition expresses a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, most often showing how the two parts are related in space or time. For example, we sat **on** the bench. Another simple example, they left **at** three. According to Strauss, Feiz, and Xiang (2018), there are 25 of 150 English prepositions that are frequently used by ESL or EFL students. To master English

prepositions, Students should recognize many English prepositions and should understand each function of them based on the context since many English prepositions have multiple functions. It is in line with Castro (2019) who stated that an English learner not only should learn the English prepositions in-depth to differentiate each preposition but also she/he should recognize the meaning of them that usually exist in the English language.

Another study conducted by Anjayani and Suprpto (2016) revealed that students who do not understand the rules and the meaning of prepositions often getting confused and produce errors. In addition, Setyaningrum and Fatmawati (2020) argued that preposition errors are influenced by inadequate learning of the rules. One simple example, the student writes ‘the book is above the table’. The sentence should be ‘the book is on the table’ because the book is located on the surface of the table. The reader probably thinks that the book is flying if the student uses prepositions **above** in the sentence. Another example, the student writes ‘the white box is below the black box’. The correct sentence is ‘the white box is under the black box’ as the black box is resting on the surface of the white box. The reader probably thinks there is a space between the black box and the white box if the student uses prepositions **below** in the sentence. If these kinds of mistakes are underestimated and happen frequently, they might be an error and fossilized. Regarding analyzing the students’ errors on the use of prepositions, Anjayani and Suprpto (2016) analyzed the students’ dominant errors on the use of prepositions in the students’ writing based on prepositions classifications in the eleventh-grade students and observed how students use prepositions in their writings. The next previous study was conducted by Utari (2017). Utari’s research was to analyze the students’ narrative composition based on the classification of Jha theory (1991) and to find out the most frequent type of errors in the eleventh-grade students. Those previous studies only covered the types of prepositions errors made by the eleventh-grade students and the students’ dominant errors on the use of prepositions; therefore, this study will investigate the same topic at the university students level by analyzing students’ errors on the use of prepositions in their descriptive text based on surface strategy taxonomy theory by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), discover the kind of preposition errors mostly produced and also discuss the sources of errors based on Richard’s (1974) and Jha’s (1991) theory.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative research because this study did not test the theory or hypothesis but explained and analyzed the real phenomena -in this case, the student's understanding of prepositions. The use of descriptive qualitative research is because the purposes of this study are to describe the kinds of preposition errors are found in the students' writing composition, the kind of preposition errors mostly produced by the students, and the sources of the errors. The instruments used were the researcher herself as the main instrument and some tables from Utari (2017) to collect, to analyze, to classify, and to interpret the data.

The 50 students' descriptive text was used as the data in this study; 24 texts from class B and 26 texts from class C as students were taught by the same lecturer and it can help the researcher to make sure that the teaching and the learning condition are likely similar. Moreover, the researcher asked the writing task of descriptive text that has been done by the students to the lecturer. The descriptive text was then analyzed in the term of elements to answers the research questions. To analyze the students' preposition errors, the researcher used the procedures proposed by Ellis (1997) which are identifying errors, describing the errors, and explaining the errors (calculating the errors). Identifying is to analyze the sentences which contained preposition errors. Having done so, the types of preposition errors that consisted of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering of preposition would be classified. This step is the describing procedure. Moreover, explaining referred to finding out the frequency of the errors on every type of error using the following formula from Sugiyono (2015) to verify the frequency of the preposition errors in the students' descriptive text.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

P= Percentage of error

F= Total number of each type of preposition errors

N= Total number of all types of preposition errors

Furthermore, to find out the sources of the errors, the researcher analyzes using non-statistical analysis based on the performance data. The sources of the students' preposition errors were analyzed using Richard's (1974) and Jha's (1991) theory.

FINDINGS

The students' descriptive text was analyzed, underlined, and identified that contained preposition errors. From 50 students' descriptive text, there were 74 prepositions errors found. The researcher also found that the students made prepositions in all types based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's classification theory (1982); they were omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Based on the findings, there were some double preposition errors in a sentence contributed by the students, for instance: there is a mosque **at (in)** the center * **(of)** my neighborhood (see table 1.1). It implied that the students could contribute more than one type of preposition errors in a sentence. Firstly, the student made a misformation error of the preposition **in** using **at**. Secondly, the student also made an omission of the preposition **of**.

Based on the classification, it was counted the total number of errors was 74 errors which consisted of omission 15 errors, addition 14 errors, misformation 44 errors, and misordering 1 error. Furthermore, it could be said the percentage of errors of misformation was the most error made by the students. It was shown by 59.4% in the range of interpretation category. It can be considered as the errors mostly produced by the students than errors of omission with 20.2%, errors of addition with 18.9%, and errors of misordering with only 1.3%. (See table 1.2)

Finally, from 74 preposition errors made by the students, interlingual errors were the main cause of the students' errors on the use of prepositions with 42 items and 32 items caused by intralingual errors. (See table 1.1)

Table 1.1 Identified and Classification of Preposition Errors

No.	Identified Sentences and Phrase	Classification of Errors	Sources of Errors
1.	I make some baskets for her in my motorcycle.	Misformation	Interlingual
2.	...when I'm busy Rebecca accompanies beside me.	Misformation	Interlingual
3.	I'm worried, I ask to my neighbors...	Addition	Interlingual
4.	So, I'm waiting * her until fall asleep.	Omission	Interlingual
5.	And at the morning, when I open my eyes...	Misformation	Intralingual
6.	I thought it's because * Rebecca.	Omission	Interlingual
7.	She is a doctor my every pain for .	Misordering	Intralingual
8.	... especially in inside of his house.	Addition	Intralingual
9.	Every morning we had breakfast in on time.	Addition	Intralingual
10.	Every kind * food that she cooks is always yummy.	Omission	Interlingual

11.	He always makes our family warm and close, because * his joke.	Omission	Interlingual
12.	...he wants to give me in the powerful study for change my experience in life.	1. Addition 2. Misformation	1. Intralingual 2. Intralingual
13.	I am very proud with my mom and love with her so much.	1. Misformation 2. Addition	1. Intralingual 2. Intralingual
14.	My mother is married with my father...	Misformation	Interlingual
15.	...a best friend for his children.	Misformation	Intralingual
16.	I prefer the English language than math.	Misformation	Intralingual
17.	...crying looking at his mom.	Misformation	Intralingual
18.	If his sister cry he will give chocolate for his sister.	Misformation	Intralingual
19.	My father also has expertise in electricity.	Misformation	Interlingual
20.	...he experiences damage to the electricity sector.	Misformation	Intralingual
21.	I've been there since a long time.	Misformation	Interlingual
22.	It can be seen from their songs.	Misformation	Interlingual
23.	...spread motivation for to love our self...	Addition	Intralingual
24.	One that makes me amazed to them...	Misformation	Interlingual
25.	I always wash it at a good laundry...	Misformation	Intralingual
26.	I like to put it in the bed.	Misformation	Interlingual
27.	Dolphin will be pass 276 days for during pregnancy.	Addition	Intralingual
28.	...this system is used to communicate *each other.	Omission	Interlingual
29.	we must be preserve of this mammal animal.	Addition	Intralingual
30.	...particularly at Tegalsiwalan.	Misformation	Intralingual
31.	...we were leaving to Jakarta...	Misformation	Interlingual
32.	I am always happy to stay in my family.	Misformation	Intralingual
33.	Actually in dinner time I like staying in the kitchen...	Misformation	Interlingual
34.	The most room I like is in my bedroom.	Addition	Intralingual
35.	... playing a game in my mobile phone.	Misformation	Interlingual
36.	In addition, many places I found in around me.	Addition	Intralingual
37.	My bedroom is located at front of the living room.	Misformation	Intralingual
38.	I spend a lot of my time at my bedroom.	Misformation	Intralingual
39.	...and sink in the left side.	Misformation	Interlingual
40.	...kitchen situations are calling back * my past memories.	Omission	Intralingual
41.	...I played * the rest of the foodstuff...	Omission	Intralingual
42.	If we want to describe about her appearance...	Addition	Intralingual
43.	One thing that is identical from this mother...	Misformation	Interlingual
44.	Another uniqueness from this brave woman...	Misformation	Interlingual
45.	...the fish production increase about 3.89%.	Misformation	Interlingual
46.	she got appreciation in the Peter Benchley Ocean Award...	Misformation	Interlingual

47.	I wasn't born in an educated family with having a title such * a doctor...	1. Misformation 2. Omission	1. Interlingual 2. Interlingual
48.	I've got struggle there to reach out * my dream...	Omission	Interlingual
49.	My journey hasn't stopped on ...	Addition	Intralingual
50.	...my principle of life that "start everything with a dream and you're gonna make it true".	Misformation	Interlingual
51.	...be a grateful person with what I have reached...	Misformation	Interlingual
52.	...you only need 10 minutes with a motorcycle.	Misformation	Intralingual
53.	...there is a mosque at the center * my neighborhood	1. Misformation 2. Omission	1. Intralingual 2. Interlingual
54.	...seems to have become an icon in the island.	Misformation	Interlingual
55.	The uniqueness in this temple...	Misformation	Interlingual
56.	...holiday destination for families because * its calm waters	Omission	Interlingual
57.	I feel so comfortable if I read a book in my bed.	Misformation	Interlingual
58.	Another favorite place at my room is my table.	Misformation	Interlingual
59.	I like listen * music.	Omission	Interlingual
60.	He was standing in the bottom of the dark narrow...	Misformation	Interlingual
61.	A woman is in the top of the stairs.	Misformation	Interlingual
62.	...the city of tourism and the earth * arema.	Omission	Interlingual
63.	Malang is also well known about Educational City.	Misformation	Intralingual
64.	...almost every corner in this city has many beautiful flowers...	Misformation	Interlingual
65.	...the nickname was given for Malang City.	Misformation	Interlingual
66.	She is also an alumni * a well-known university in Indonesia.	Omission	Intralingual
67.	...a news media which is called by "narrative".	Addition	Intralingual
68.	I first met her in this college...	Misformation	Interlingual
69.	I asked her * the way	Omission	Interlingual
70.	...often, I ask to him to read it for me.	Addition	Intralingual
Total		74	74

Note: * (Omission Error)

Table 1.2 The Number of Errors in Each Category Made by the Students

Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Per-centage
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Omission	15	20.2%
Addition	14	18.9%
Misformation	44	59.4%
Misordering	1	1.3%
Total	74	99.8%

DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings with the theories that are related to the research.

Errors of Omission

An omission is defined as the absence of an item that must appear in a well-performed utterance because the students did not know there were some components or certain words that must appear in their utterances. There were 15 preposition errors or 20.2% in the total showing of omission and the majority of omission errors were errors of omission in omitting preposition **of**. Most of the students omitted the preposition **of** to show what thing apart. They might be influenced by their first language which had different structures from the target language they were learning.

- For example: There is a mosque at the center * my neighborhood.

From the sentence above, it could be seen that the students wanted to express that the mosque is a part of the neighborhood. Cobuild (1991) stated that the preposition **of** is also used to indicate what group something belongs to or what thing apart or amount belongs to. Therefore, the researcher suggested the following correction to the sentence.

- There is a mosque at the center of my neighborhood.

Based on the fact above, the researcher could explain that the students were lack of preposition mastery, so it made them applying their own rules for expressing their idea.

Setyaningrum and Fatmawaty (2020) stated that the reason why English learners tend to make errors in the preposition is because of the incomplete learning of rules.

Errors of Addition

Addition is defined as the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance. They are indicated by the presence of an unnecessary preposition in a sentence. There were 14 items or 18.9% showing in the total errors of addition. Mostly, the students added the preposition **in** which was not needed in a sentence. Based on the data, the researcher found double prepositions in the sentence. It is because the students may ignore the rule restrictions on the use of prepositions; therefore, they used their pattern to express their idea.

- For example: ...she doesn't like it if the house looks dirty especially **in** inside of his house.

The researcher found that there were two prepositions of place to show the position of something, it was indicated by the presence of the preposition **in** and the preposition **inside**. It was categorized as the error of addition. The preposition **in** should not appear in front of the word 'especially' and the preposition **in** must be omitted because the student emphasized that something is inside of something. The researcher proposed correction:

- ...she doesn't like it if the house looks dirty especially inside of his house.

Therefore, the researcher could explain that the errors of addition that made by the students were because they did not understand the meaning of each preposition deeply. Most of them tried to use their own rules to express their idea in the text using a preposition. They forgot that each preposition has its function and meaning to construct a meaningful sentence. It might happen in the process of new language learning. Suzanne (2017) stated that errors and mistakes are natural in learning a new language since they can give a serious effect on the improvement of a learner's language ability.

Errors of Misformation

Misformation errors are characterized by the incorrect presence of an item in an utterance. There were 44 preposition errors (59.4%) in showing misformation, and the majority of the misformation is on the use of preposition of place **in**. In this case, the researcher could see the weakness of some students using the preposition **in**. On one hand, errors in the use of prepositions of place **in** are usually in the form of interlingual errors which is the English learners usually tend to translate their first language rules into the target language.

- For example: I like to put it **in** the bed.

It might seem that the sentence is correct at glance, but the researcher identified a preposition error in the sentence which is an error in the use of preposition of place **in**. In Indonesian, the preposition **in** has meaning *di* to show a position of something. However, In the English context, every position of an object has a different preposition. The preposition **in** in the sentence should change with another preposition of place. Hence, the researcher suggested the following correction to the sentence:

- I like to put it on the bed.

From the sentence above, it was shown before that the student used the preposition **in** to express where the thing was placed; moreover, the student placed the thing on the bed surface. Cobuild (1991) stated that preposition **on** is also used to something that is put on a surface, then it is supported by the surface. Based on the preposition function, it was clear that the preposition **in** should be changed into the preposition **on**.

Errors of Misordering

Misordering errors are categorized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterance. The researcher found 1 item or 1.3% of errors of misordering occurred in the errors made by the second-semester students of the English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of University of Islam Malang. It meant that the student still got difficulty and did not understand yet the structure or pattern in constructing a sentence using a preposition. It was shown just 1 item found by the researcher. The students placed the preposition **for** in the incorrect order.

- For example: *She is a doctor my every pain for*.

Based on the sentence above, an error of incorrect replacement was found. It was shown by the incorrect order made by the student. The preposition **for** should not appear in front of the noun 'pain' in the sentence. The researcher proposed the following correction:

- She is a doctor **for** my every pain.

In this case, the preposition **for** should be put before the possessive pronoun 'my' in the sentence to show the purpose of the noun. So, it would give a clear meaning to the sentence. Based on the error of misordering, the researcher found that there was still a student who did not understand yet the language target structure.

In short, it can be concluded that the most frequent errors made by the students were misinformation errors with 44 items or 59.4% in the total showing of misinformation. And the majority of misinformation errors were errors on the use preposition of place **in**. In this case, the researcher found the students' weakness in the use of prepositions. Mostly the students used incorrect prepositions in their sentences. They might be influenced by their first language which has different rules in English contexts.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis showed that the students' understanding of the use of English prepositions was still low. It was evidenced by the students' prepositional errors fulfilling all types of errors based on surface strategy taxonomy theory. Moreover, the most often error type on the use of prepositions in the students' text composition was misinformation. It was shown by the findings that misinformation type is considered as the errors mostly produced by the students with 44 items or 59.4% of the total prepositional errors. The interlingual error was the most cause of the students' errors in the use of prepositions because the students tended to understand the English prepositions from their first language rule and interpreted them into the target language.

The suggestion for the lecturers, the researcher hoped that the lecturers can often discuss prepositions in their class. Moreover, the lecturers can pay attention to teaching prepositions and can find an effective technique to improve students' preposition understanding such as giving more written exercises. The lecturers also should motivate their students in learning English especially to read a lot so that they can be familiar with the target language rules.

The suggestions for the next researcher, the researcher suggests to observe specific topics in the students' descriptive text, for example describing a place, so that the students will produce more prepositions and to work more on the solutions of the sources of the errors made by the students. The future researcher also can analyze the other object besides students' text, for example on the students' video project.

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