

**CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PREPOSITIONS OF TIME, PLACE
AND DIRECTION FOR FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
AT SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY YOGYAKARTA**

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Abstracts

This study examined the English proficiency of English Language Education Study Program students, with main focus the use of prepositions of time, place and direction. The researchers discussed the difficulties of first semester students in using these prepositions properly in the sentences. The participants of this research were the first semester students of English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University. The researchers invited 43 students in the DPA class. The data of this research were collected from questionnaires and Cloze Tests. The collected data from questionnaires were analyzed based on Likert Scale. The data resulted from Cloze Tests were concluded using Level of Achievement Score. The results confirmed that the students experienced the difficulties in using the preposition of place and direction than the preposition of time. The findings revealed that the students were confused in the use of words in, on, and toward. Furthermore, the findings imply that the students should pay more attention to the prepositions and need to find the best strategies to acquire them.

Keywords: Preposition, English proficiency, difficulties in using prepositions, DPA class,

Introduction

English is one of some languages uses in international social communication. This awareness of the importance of English encourages people to learn English. English becomes a compulsory subject in every school in the world, including Indonesia. Currently in Indonesia, English has been taught from the early years exactly pre-school students.

There are four basic skills have to be mastered in studying English, namely speaking, reading, writing and listening. In addition, studying other components in English is also an important thing to improve English proficiency such as grammar. Grammar becomes the difficult component to be mastered. As mentioned by James, 2007 and Jie, 2008, which they mentioned that “each language has its own set of grammar rules, so there are points of conflict when someone wants to learn a second language”.

There is one important component in English grammar namely part of speech. In part of speech, there are eight word classes, they are noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection. There is a great amount of prepositions in the English language, and several of them have a countless numbers of meanings and uses (Galleguillos, 2013). Prepositions are categorized as one of challenging areas in English Grammar for EFL learners in many countries. Eventhough they have learned about prepositions since a long time, they still feel confused to use prepositions in the sentences properly. Prepositions in English are a well-known challenge for learners of English as a second language, as they are one of the most problematic areas (Lindstromberg, 2010).

Many students have difficulties in understanding and using prepositions, whether they realize or not. Students lack of understanding the context in using appropriate prepositions and they do not know which preposition to use (Cabuk, 2009). Prepositions are notoriously difficult for English Language Learners to master due to the sheer number of them in their English language and their polysemous nature. Moreover, these prepositions has various meanings and usages that make the learning process equally difficult (Saravanan, 2014). Problems in implementing correct prepositions are also experienced by students from English Language Study Program in Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta.

Based on the above statement, the researchers concluded there are many factors make students confused in understanding and using English prepositions correctly. The researchers intend to conduct a study entitled Challenges in Implementing Prepositions of Time, Place and Direction for First Semester Students of English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta. The aims of this study are to figure out how students of English Language Education Study Program think about the difficulties in studying prepositions and how far they can use prepositions in sentences.

Literature Review

Preposition in English

Mahmudah (2011) defined that “preposition is a word that cannot be changed and are usually placed in front of the noun to show a certain relationship with other words in sentence”. English language is characterized by having a large number of prepositions and can express various meanings in a sentence (AlQbailat, 2016). According to Mahmoodzadeh (2012) , “prepositions can be classified according to their form, function and meaning. Concerning form, prepositions can be simple (one-word preposition), or complex (also called two- word, three-word, or compound prepositions)”.

Preposition has crucial role in English language. It is proved by Eddine (2012), claimed that English prepositions link nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. “Most English prepositions have several different functions (for instance, one well- known dictionary lists eighteen main uses of at), and these may correspond to several different preposition in another language. At the same time, different preposition can have very similiar uses (in the morning, on Monday morning, at night)” (Musliyanti, 2012). Moreover, Yu explained that “the usage of English preposition has got great concern

coming from English learners, teachers, and grammarians. As English majors, it is necessary to learn prepositions well. Nevertheless, things are not always the case. The usage of English preposition is an important aspect of testing students' English level, so many scholars choose to study this issue and write books about prepositions, which are increasingly published" (2014).

There are many types of prepositions in English but the most frequently used are time and place (location and direction). Even though those prepositions may seem simple, they cause many difficulties for the non-native learners. ESL and EFL learners encounter some confusion in using the preposition of time such as *in* and *on*. Furthermore, they also find the difficulties in comprehending and differentiating the difference between *in* and *on* when they use as preposition of place.

Difficulties in learning English prepositions

Learning English is not easy for non-native students since English has many grammatical rules and different pronunciation of each word. Students often perform many and a wide range of grammatical errors while learning English including in the use of prepositions. Many factors influence the difficulties in learning prepositions. Mubarak (2017) stated that "learning English preposition is closely related with the acquisition and learning process as well as the meaning and communicative aspect. This means English for second or foreign language learners have to know the grammatical rules that govern the preposition usage". In addition, he claimed that the vast number of prepositions in the English language also contributes to their trouble, which contributes the language learners' inability to systemize English prepositions. "The acquisition of the English language prepositions is not an easy task for foreigners who study English as a second or foreign language. Mastering of English language prepositions is one of prerequisites to become skilled at English language fluency and accuracy" (Islami, 2005).

Besides, Ibrahim argued that "English prepositions are difficult for any EFL learner because he/she usually relates them to his/her own mother tongue prepositional system. The difficulty is also caused by the difference in number, meaning and usage of the prepositions in the mother tongue and in the EFL". "Moreover, kinds of prepositions contribute in avoiding confusion between preposition and other grammatical elements in the sentence. For example there are many words used sometime as adverb and sometime as preposition the only difference is that preposition govern a noun or a pronoun while the adverb does not (2017)". Moreover, Ozisik claimed that "the reason why students find prepositions very hard to learn is that there are no specific rules in their usage. Since each language has its own rules, the situation varies greatly from language to language "(2014).

In short, it is crucial for ESL and EFL learners to have a significance knowledge and mastery level thus they are able to use the prepositions in the right context.

Regarding the challenges and difficulties in studying prepositions, there were some studies concerned with the use of prepositions previously. The first previous study was done by J. Saravanan (2014), who conducted the research entitled *The Use of English*

Prepositions: An Empirical Study. J. Saravanan focused on the writing skills of the students at the undergraduate level, with a special focus on the use of prepositions of place, time and direction in English between male and female students.

The second study was done by Rif'atul Mahmudah (2011) from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. He conducted a research entitled *Improving Students Ability In Using Prepositions Of Place Through Total Physical Response (TPR)*. He focused on how Total Physical Response improve students' abilities in using prepositions of place at first grade of junior high school. The researcher applied Classroom Action Research (CAR) to solve students' difficulties in using and understanding the prepositions of place.

The third previous study was conducted by Shpresa Delijah and Ogerta Koruti (2013). The title of this study is *Challenges in Teaching Prepositions in a Language Classroom*. The researchers analyzed the difficulties of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face while they mastering prepositions. Moreover, They also intended to identify the needs of English teachers who wanted to improve their teaching skillsthrough a better explanation of prepositions by giving them some practicaltips.

There are some previous studies that have similar discussion with the present research although it is not completely the same. This recent study is going to discuss about the difficulties in implementing prepositions for undergraduate students of English Education Study Program in Sanata Dharma University.

Method

The researchers gained the data at Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta. The participants of this study are the first semester students of English Education Study Program. The researchers invited 43 participants at DPA class, however, a student did not come to the class.

To obtain the data, the researcher asked the participants to answer questionnaire consisted of a question that was the prior look that prepositions is a difficult matter in studying English. Furthermore, the participants were supposed to do the Cloze Test, "completing sentences using appropriate prepositions". They were preposition of time, place and direction. The participants were given 20 numbers of uncomplete sentences which would be completed by 10 prepositions of time and 10 prepositions of place and direction.

The data analysis was defined into two series in accordance with the two problem formulations. First, the researchers analyzed data of students' questionnaire. The Likert Scale was used to figure out students' perspective toward preposition. "A Likert Scale assesses attitudes toward a topic by presenting a set of statement about a topic and asking respondents to indicate for each, whether they are strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2002).

Moreover, the researchers examined the students' comprehension about prepositions through scoring the Cloze Test. The researchers counted the cumulative scores and the mean of students' scores as shown below:

Measuring students' individual ability

After conducting the Cloze test, the researchers analyzed the result of the test by using scoring as following formula:

$$\text{score} = \frac{\sum R}{\sum N} \times 100$$

S = score

R = total number of the correct answer

N = total number of items

Measuring students' achievement

After calculating the students' scores, the researchers measured the students' achievement in prepositions. The measurement of the students' achievement which is stated by Brown (2004) is drawn as below:

Table 1

Test score	Level of achievement
91-100	Excellent
71-90	Good
51-70	Fair
31-50	Less
0-30	Poor

After giving the scores the researchers calculate the mean of students' scores using the formula as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum f}{n}$$

X = the mean

f = the sum offset score

n = the number of the students

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the data was presented in this section. The researchers obtained the first data from questionnaires to answer the first problem formulation. The second problem formulation was answered by conducting CLoze Test.

The students of English Education Language Education Study Program thought about the studying prepositions.

Investigating the level of difficulties of English Foreign Language Learners as well as the first semester students of English Language Study Program thought about the use of prepositions, it showed amazing result. By implementing Likert-Scale the researchers obtained data to answer the first problem formulation. The participants chose the options as follow strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, strongly disagree concerning the first matter that studying prepositions is difficult.

The figure 1 defined the result about how students of English Language Education Study Program thought about the difficulties in studying preposition.

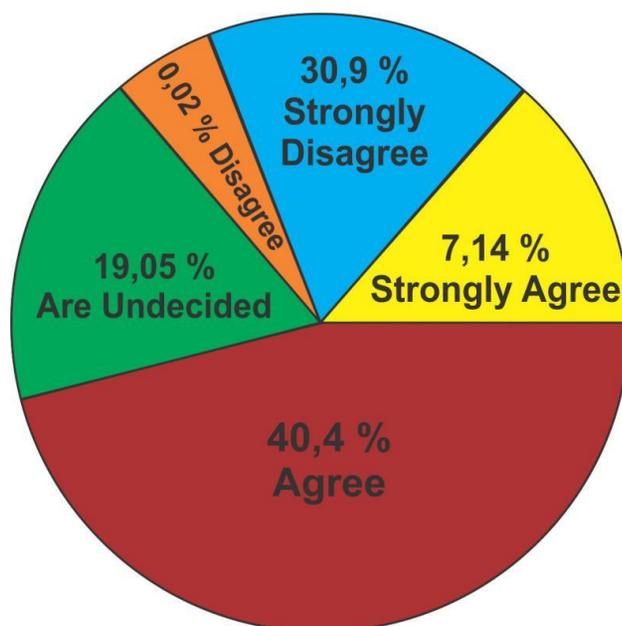


Figure 1.

As mentioned by Lindstromberg (2010) that prepositions in English are a well-known challenge for learners of English as a second language, as they are one of the most problematic areas. However, in this study it was found that some of the participants did not think that prepositions is difficult. The result of the first question concerning difficulties in studying prepositions, it was shown that only 7.14 % of the participants that thought strongly agree that preposition is difficult. It was very few numbers of participant realized that prepositions are difficult. Moreover, the 40.4 % of the participants were agree that prepositions is difficult component of English. There were 17 out of 42 participants measured them selves that prepositions in English are a challenge matter for them. In addition, 19.05% parcipants did not aware that prepositions are well known challenge for English learners, they did not decide the choice which means they neither agree nor

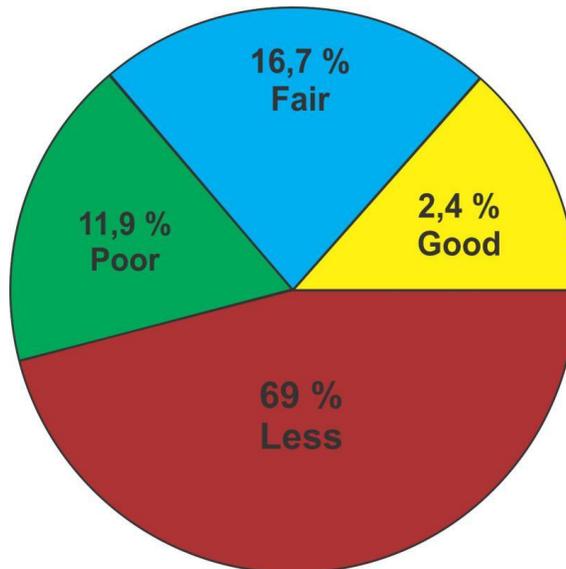
disagree about the subject matter. Next, there were 1 out of 42 participant or 0.02% of the participants who disagree that prepositions are difficult. And the rest of the participants exactly 30.9% participants stated strongly disagree due to the subject matter. They believed that studying and implementing prepositions is easy.

The findings in this study assumed that not all English Foreign Learners thought that studying prepositions is difficult. However, the researcher analysed deeper in the next problem formulation which the data obtained by asking the participants to do Cloze Test. Some of the participants thought that studying prepositions was an easy think, furthermore the researchers presented the type of error in implementing the prepositions in the next analysis.

The result of implementing prepositions in the sentences.

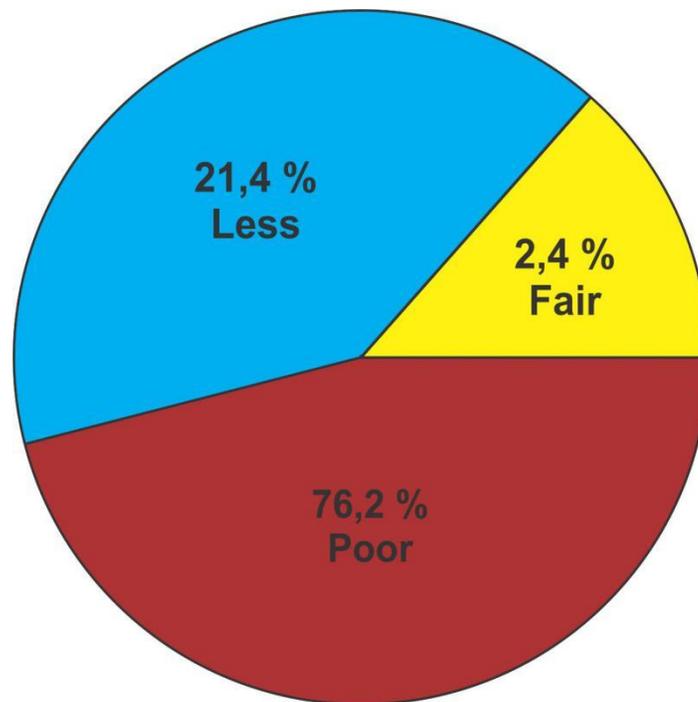
In the process of studying English, students tend to think that English is an easy language. Some problems come during the learning process. First, in the process of completing sentences using prepositions of time, the students write several incorrect prepositions in which they delivered the types of error. According to Bram (2005) and Chodorow, M., Tetreault, J. R., & Han, N. R, (2007), “there are three types of errors in relation to the use of preposition, those are Omission of Preposition – learners fail to use a preposition in a sentence where it is obligatory, Insertion of Preposition – learners add on preposition in a sentence where it is not needed and Selections of Incorrect Preposition-learners use the wrong preposition in a sentence”. In this study, the Cloze Test results were determined the type of errors “selection of Incorrect Preposition” in which the participants wrote some incorrect prepositions in the sentences.

The chart below defined the level of achievement scores of the First Cloze Test about implementing prepositions of time in the sentences.



As shown in the chart above, only 2.4% participant or 1 student who got good score in which the student did a little errors in implementing prepositions of time in the sentences provided. Moreover, there were 16,7 % of participants who were categorized as 'fair' score. They made some errors in doing the prepositions of time cloze test. Furthermore, it was clear that most of the students exactly 69% of the participants got score between 31-50 and they were categorized as 'less' score. They made many errors in completing the sentences using prepositions of time. Next, as shown in the result there were 11.9% or 5 students out of 42 students joined in this study who got 'poor' score. In the range of 100 score, they were in the position of under 40 score. The result of implementing prepositions of time in the sentences showed that all the participants committed the same error in the use of word *from-to*. Moreover, they experienced some confusion over the use of *in* and *on* in the sentences. It can be concluded that the participants found difficulties to implement the correct prepositions event though there 30,9% participants stated strongly disagree that studying and implementing prepositions is a difficult matter.

The result of the second Cloze Test which was about the students' understanding in implementing prepositions of place and direction showed that the types of error also happened as they did in the first Cloze Test. The results were shown in the chart below.



Looking at the chart above, the errors produced when implementing preposition of place and directions were very serious. Only 2,4 % of participants or 1 out of 42 students got 'fair' score. Moreover, there were 21.4 % of participants got 'less' score in which they

made some errors. In addition, the most participants or 76,2% participants did many errors in implementing prepositions of place and direction, therefore they categorized as students who got 'poor' score. Regarding to the errors in answering the Cloze test, all of the participants committed the same error in the use of word *toward*. They could not identify the appropriate answer that must be used to complete the sentence. Besides, most of them did not have good understanding in using the word *out of*. Thus, all the participants found difficulties in choosing the correct preposition.

Comparing the result of the understanding between prepositions of time and prepositions of place and direction, the result of the study showed that students had more serious difficulties when implementing the preposition of place and direction. The difficulties in implementing prepositions due to English is not their first language. Learning English is different from learning Indonesian. Language proficiency is affected by many factors such as age, motivation, talent and whether the learners is in the country the language spoken or in a classroom with little or no contact with native speaker (Fromkin, Victoria, Rodman, and Hyams, 2003). Thus, the difficulties in understanding prepositions due to English is not their first language and do not use in their daily life conversation.

Conclusion

This study has shown the findings on the use of preposition of time, place and direction. Based on the results, the first semester students of English Language Education Department faced the difficulties in implementing those prepositions. The participants were not able to comprehend and to use the correct prepositions in sentences. The result of the Cloze test showed that most of them experienced the problems in the preposition of place and direction rather than the preposition of time. With the poor understanding and knowledge about prepositions, the researchers suggest that the participants who will become the future English teachers should pay more attention to their English proficiency in the area of grammar. In the aspect of professional development in English language learning, they need to figure out the best strategies which can be used to overcome the problems in the use of prepositions of time, place and direction. The assistances from the teachers are strongly needed in order to build better understanding about English prepositions for the students.

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